Charles Andrew

COATES

V33 Misc Ministry on NT Thessalonians-Revelation

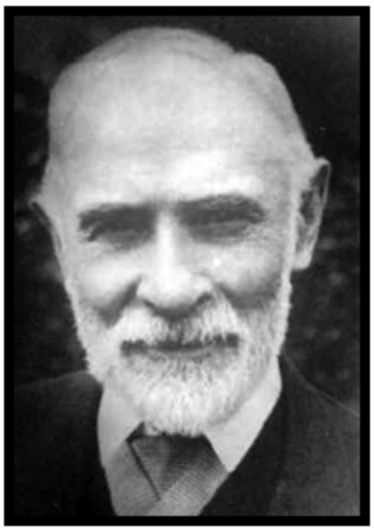
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1 THESSALONIANS 4 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 Thessalonians 4: 1 - 18

CAC If saints walked rightly it would not be very difficult to help them in the truth. Our difficulties are more practical than doctrinal; a consistent walk so that we live on the principle of what pleases God would settle a thousand questions. What will come out at the coming of the Lord is what already exists, I suppose; it makes the present time very important. We may have the consciousness of pleasing God. If a saint does something solely to please God it is a very happy moment.

This would show that they had taken up Romans 6. The members are yielded in righteousness to God as under grace — to the blessed God as instruments of righteousness (the hand, foot, etc.). Then there is the fruit unto holiness. There is the sense of obligation founded on ownership; it is the effect of being under grace. The young convert can take it up the first day of his life. There is no bondage in it, but great delight to one turned to God. It is then walking in the light of One raised by the glory of the Father — that is newness of life. It is to put its mark on the walk of the saint. Old Testament saints had not that, but they will be seen in the life of Christ in that day; all will be made alive in Christ.

Rem "What then shall we say?" (Romans 6: 1). It demands an answer, a practical one, to the baptism. It comes first, morally like Him as regards life, but awaiting the glorified body.

CAC It speaks here of possessing our own vessel; the body is viewed as taken possession of by me to be held for God. We are entrusted by God with a vessel. Each one of us possesses a vessel irrespective of our stage of growth. It is a vessel inasmuch as it is held for God, and yet that is the place of the youngest believer.

Rem Walking precedes talking.

CAC Yes, that is rather good.

Rem This is taken up as a trust.

CAC The question of the body is a most vital matter.

"In your mortal body", it says (Romans 6: 12); it is a very great triumph for God.

Rem If the eye is single the whole body is full of light.

CAC Sanctification — you see it absolutely in Christ, "who from God is made to us ... sanctification" (1 Corinthians 1: 30, Authorised Version).

Rem We need to view things at the level at which God holds them. What helps us is always to have before us what God has before Him.

CAC And the Holy Spirit would not deviate from that.

Rem The rights of the brother are the test (verse 6).

CAC The consciousness of his own works being evil puts him on the line of hating his brother. If there is a talk of love, there is generally some practical defect behind it. "For ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. For also ye do this towards all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia". It indicates that we have a sphere that comes within our range — not exactly local and not to all saints. It would preserve us from being parochial in our sympathies. It shows the kind of people ready for the truth of the rapture.

Rem It would prepare us for that truth in our minds and hearts.

CAC Yes, I thought so. Thinking of His coming back would influence the present.

Rem Divine Persons treasure every expression of Christ down here. He is bringing it all back with Christ (cf. Luke 10).

CAC It is a wonderful interval of which very little is told us. Very little is given as to it, and it has been left to be expanded in the hearts of the saints, and has been in hundreds of hymns.

Ques Why should it be "in the clouds", not heaven?

CAC Well, I suppose the saints will disappear from view.

Rem It speaks of the Son of man coming on the clouds (Matthew 24: 30).

CAC There is no scripture that suggests the thought of a long interval, is there? It is open to us to be in the grace of His coming now.

CONCERNING THEM THAT ARE FALLEN ASLEEP

1 Thessalonians 4: 13, 14

It is of the deepest interest to consider the state and happiness of departed saints. Countless thousands in the course of past centuries have "fallen asleep", and each day adds to their number. But the subject is not only of general interest as referring to the present state of millions of saints beloved of God, and redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. It appeals to us on very close and personal grounds as we think of those we have known and loved, and with whom we have enjoyed christian intercourse and fellowship, who are no longer here.

And in times of personal bereavement it is a very real and divine comfort to have distinctly before our hearts the character of the blessedness which our departed loved ones enjoy. The Lord has most perfect consideration and sympathy for us in these times of grief. And one very distinct form which His consideration for us has taken is that He has been pleased to tell us what the blessedness of the departed is, while they await the full and final triumph of divine love and power which will invest them with spiritual and glorious bodies like the body of Him who sits as a risen and glorified Man at God's right hand.

If the Lord has seen fit to give us such a clear view of the happy state of those who are fallen asleep, we may be well assured that there is that in it which will prove of the greatest comfort to us in our sorrow. But I think we shall find that there is much more than this in it; we shall find it possessed of power to carry our hearts into a region where no sorrow can come. How blessed to be brought in mind and affection to such a region by the grace of the Lord, and by the power of the Spirit! That is, to be brought to taste and know in a deeper and fuller way what the Lord Jesus Christ is: and to know that we, and all His saints, are for ever bound up with Him, to possess and enjoy through Him and in Him and with Him the precious fruit of the love and victory of God!

It is this which departed saints enjoy, without any hindrance from the flesh, or creature weakness, or circumstances. Their joy is not in its character different from that which is the present portion of saints; so that the more clearly we see *their* blessedness the better shall we apprehend *our* own. And this brings the true blessedness of christianity home to our hearts in a very simple and effective way, and shows that it lies completely outside this world. To enjoy it we have to be in spirit, as the departed saints are actually, quite apart from this world. And the more our affections entertain the thought of what *they* enjoy, the more shall *we* be drawn to the present good of that Person who is their portion and happiness.

There are four passages of Scripture in the New Testament which speak of the state of departed saints. As to number of words, they are few, but as to significance, what they convey is blessed beyond expression. They are as follows:

"And Jesus said to him, Verily I say to thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23: 43).

"We are confident, I say, and pleased rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5: 8). "Having the desire for departure and being with Christ, for it is very much better" (Philippians 1: 23).

"And I heard a voice out of the heaven saying, Write, Blessed the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them" (Revelation 14: 13).

How plainly do we see from these scriptures — particularly from the first three — that the blessedness of departed saints lies in the company of a Person! The full title of that Person is the Lord Jesus Christ, and these scriptures show us that each part of that title gives character to the divine felicity of those who are with Him. In the first scripture it is the blessedness of being with Jesus that is emphasised; in the second it is the thought of being with Him as the Lord; while in the third the "very much better" portion is to be with Christ. How great is the happiness thus brought before us! May our hearts burn as we consider it!

"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise" was the word of Jesus to one who had only known and trusted Him for a few minutes — one to whom infinite grace brought blessing in the last solemn hour of a sinful history. In his case, at any rate, there could be no question of human merit. Whatever he got in those last wondrous moments of his life on earth — whatever happiness paradise itself could afford him — was brought to him by the Person near whom he hung upon the cross, and secured to him in divine righteousness by the death of that blessed One.

Think of the One who was there! Think of Jesus, the blessed Vessel of divine grace, as the Holy Spirit presents Him to us in this gospel of Luke! He was God's salvation for sinful men; the One anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor; the One who said that He came not to call righteous persons but sinful ones to repentance! He was indeed the Creditor, but here to pronounce a frank forgiveness to all His debtors! The Samaritan freely expending divine wealth and resources in compassion upon the misery of man ruined by sin and Satan! The One who told of the great supper of grace, and of the blessed invitings and compellings of divine love! The Shepherd who would go after the

sheep which was lost until He found it! The One who as the Vessel of all the grace of heaven told of the joy of God in receiving a repentant prodigal! The One who by the grace of God tasted death so that the river of that grace might flow forth for world-wide blessing through a channel of divine righteousness!

As we gather all this up in our thoughts — if we can speak of gathering up such infinite things in our feeble thoughts — does it not fill us with wonder to think of being *with* the One in whom such matchless grace shone forth, and in whom it all subsists as the risen and glorified One?

We may consider that the penitent thief of Calvary knew but little of the fulness of grace that resided in Jesus. And there are many indications in the gospels that the disciples, and even the apostles, failed to realise that grace in its proper character and glory. But it was all there in Him. No dullness of apprehension on their part, no want of capacity to take it in, could make that grace one whit less than it really was. It was God manifest in flesh, not imputing trespasses, but winning men's hearts by presenting to them all that He was in grace, and all that His grace delighted to do for them, without looking for one scrap of merit or goodness on their part as the condition of blessing. Would that our hearts understood better what He was, for what He was is what He is and will be eternally!

There are feeble believers today, but the question is, On *whom* do they believe? Is it Jesus, the blessed Son of God? Then their blessing is measured by what He is, and by the grace which He brought, and which He died to secure in righteousness for them — lost, guilty and ungodly as they were.

What a prospect opened up before that young convert on the cross! "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"! With the One in whom all the grace of God was! The guilty past left behind, cleansed from every sin by the precious blood, no trace of evil remaining: *with Jesus*! What happiness!

And this is the portion of every departed believer in Jesus. Dear bereaved one — whatever the link of affection that death has torn — if you would know what is the present joy of your loved one who died in Christ, consider Jesus. How great He is — the Son of God, the Son of the Highest! How low He stooped in grace — even to the death of Calvary! What a great salvation began to be spoken by Him: how deep and dire the need which it meets, how glorious the favour of God into which it brings! And every believer who has fallen asleep is *with Him*! The scene of temptation and trial, of sorrow and suffering, is left behind for ever. The spirit has passed altogether away from the flesh, the world and Satan's power. Now it is with Jesus, the blessed Mediator who brought God in grace so near to men, and did that glorious

redemption work which enables Him to bring men in perfect justification and acceptance so near to God. If we think of Jesus, how perfect the grace that shone in Him, that told itself out in His words and His deeds, that wrought redemption, and that is now radiant with glory in His face at God's right hand! Departed saints are with Him. It is enough. We bless God for their happiness; and we pray that *we* may know better as a present living reality the Person with whom they are.

"We are confident, I say, and pleased rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5: 8). The dissolving of "our earthly tabernacle house" is a deeply solemn event, for there is nothing in which the utter weakness of man is so apparent. While in the tabernacle we groan, being burdened, and this is weakness; but the putting off the tabernacle is the extreme point of creature weakness. In prospect of such an event, what is the language of faith? "We are confident ... and pleased rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord". How blessed to think that the saint dies "to the Lord" (Romans 14: 8). That is, he dies in view of that glorious Person who "has died and lived again, that he might rule over both dead and living" (Romans 14: 9). The Christian, whether living or dying, has *the Lord* before him. We have learned Him as supreme in the administration of grace. We know that every heavenly, earthly and infernal power will yet have to bow before Him. His power is not yet asserted publicly, it is hidden in the heavens, but one of the greatest realities in the universe is that Jesus is the Lord.

There are tremendous powers of evil in the world which may well be feared, but Jesus is the Lord and protects those who confess Him. The mightiest power of all is death, but in the dread domain of death Jesus is Lord. At the right hand of God, supreme in power and glory, sits Jesus the Lord. There is no might so great as His; the world powers will all ere long have to give place to Him. He is, and soon will be manifestly, King of kings and Lord of lords.

In the domain of death He is the great Conqueror; He has entered the dark stronghold and borne away in triumph its gates and bars. He now in resurrection holds the keys of death and hades, and the hand of faith can be put forth to lay hold of death itself as part of the spoil of *His* victory. "Death ... yours" (1 Corinthians 3: 22). What far-reaching authority, exercised in the beneficent activity of divine goodness and love, lies in that title — the Lord! What comfort and peace and joy are found in the recognition that Jesus is Lord!

But how sweet to remember that to the saint His lordship not only implies authority exercised against all evil and to secure all blessing, but it implies His personal ownership. "Both if we should live then, and if we should die, we are

the Lord's" (Romans 14: 8). We belong to Him; He has rights over us which He will not surrender. He claims us in *life* — may we own the claim more fully and gladly! — and He claims us in *death*. The believer is claimed in that solemn, yet blessed, moment by the Lord. We are apt to think of our loved ones as possessions of ours, but the moment comes when we have to surrender them. But the Lord holds them when our poor hearts have to let them go. He holds them even in death in the power of redemption, in the power of the love in which He gave Himself for them. And on their part, in the peaceful and happy recognition of His claim and ownership, they "die ... to the Lord".

Then as absent from the body, they are present with the Lord. He receives their spirits. They are immediately in the region of power, for they are with Him who is supreme in authority and might. Henceforth no other power but His will ever touch them, and that power is the servant of a well-known love. With what blessed confidence does this fill the soul!

"Having the desire for departure and being with Christ, for it is very much better" (Philippians 1: 23).

We can understand Paul's desire to be with Christ, for we know what a sense he had of the love of Christ, and of the unsearchable riches of the Christ. It is he who told us that saints are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, that all God's promises are Yea and Amen in Christ, and that He is made wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption to those who are in Him. With what keen zest, and with what intelligent joy could he anticipate being with Christ, for he had known here "the fulness of the blessing of Christ" (Romans 15: 29). And his great longing here was to have Christ for his gain. Hence when he spoke of being "with Christ" there was no vagueness or uncertainty in his mind as to what those words conveyed.

He had long before learnt that in himself good did not dwell, but that every divine thought of good and blessing had been brought in and established in another Man. The Christ is God's anointed Man in whom all His thoughts for men are fully made good. He has taken up all that we were, and glorified God about it in bearing its judgment, and now we are entitled through infinite grace to see Him as the divinely appointed Head, and that a world of holy blessing centres in Him.

In Him we are justified from all things, and have redemption; He is the door of liberty by which we escape from all that we were involved in as fallen and guilty children of Adam. But then we see also everything that is positively good and blessed, and according to God's delight, in Him. Man in everlasting righteousness before God, in the most blessed favour and acceptance, having every quality and characteristic that can yield pleasure to God! How blessed to

open the eyes upon a Man like that! And to know that He was once made sin for us upon the cross, and tasted death, meeting all the power of Satan and glorifying God, so that there might be nothing left to hinder us from having the full blessing of God in Him! And now we see Him in the condition of a risen and glorified Man, eternally before God for His pleasure. God's delight in Man — in Christ — is perfect, and changeless now to all eternity.

We know the qualities of Adam, the fallen man. They are a grief and trial to us; how much more so to God! But, thank God, He is relieved of that man by the death of Christ, and He has the Man of His good pleasure now ever before His face. Let us think of the qualities and characteristics of the accepted Man! They are not much in public admiration now, but they very soon will be. The world of lawlessness, and lust, and hatred, and man's glory is all soon passing away. Everything that is not according to Christ will have to pass out, and the whole of God's reconciled universe will be filled by the qualities and characteristics of Christ the glorious Man — the Head.

How blessed the portion of the believer today! He is still in the scene where he once exhibited the qualities and characteristics of Adam, the rejected man, but he is now a believer in Christ, the accepted Man, and he has received the Spirit of that glorious Man that he may delight in, and be formed in, the features and characteristics of Christ. Is it not a profound joy when we get favoured moments in which no other but Christ is present to our thoughts and affections? And, on the practical side, is it not a joy when a little that has been found to be carnal or worldly or merely natural is allowed to drop, and a little more of Christ brought in by His Spirit? Could you think of greater happiness than to be removed from the presence of every trace of the Adam-man or his influence, and to be introduced to a region where there is nothing to distract from Christ, and from all the qualities and characteristics of Christ which are to be the delight of God, and the delight and life of saints eternally? That is the "very much better" portion of those who are with Christ. They enjoy what they truly enjoyed on earth, but they enjoy it now with Him in a state where there are no distractions.

We may well turn to God with joy and praise as we think of our loved ones with Jesus, with the Lord, and with Christ. We do not think of praying for them, but the contemplation of the Person with whom they are may well lead us to pray earnestly for ourselves that we may know Him better. We want to know the One we are going to be with, do we not? Every bit of evidence we have that the preciousness of that blessed One was cherished in the minds and affections of our dear departed ones is very sweet to us. The more He was known to them here, the greater their link with what is there. We need to

strengthen our links with what is outside the death scene, and outside all the confusion here. Let us not be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And as He becomes the treasure and glory of our hearts we shall know even here the character of joy that is the portion of those who are with Him.

One more word remains for our consideration in connection with this blessed subject:

"And I heard a voice out of the heaven saying, Write, Blessed the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them" (Revelation 14: 13).

We do not fail to note that this scripture has direct application to saints of a future period, who will die in the Lord during the terrible time of tribulation after the rapture of the church, and before the appearing of Christ to judge and to reign. But what the Spirit says of them is true of those who die in the Lord today. There may be a special sense in which they will "die in the Lord", as martyred because of their faithfulness to Him, in the confession of His name amidst surrounding apostasy. But it is our privilege to be in the line of the same witness today — to own the lordship of Jesus as those who are truly His bondmen, and who gladly recognise what is due to Him, and who are set to maintain His interests in the scene from which He has been rejected!

How blessed to be "in the Lord"! To be in the consciousness of His supremacy, and of His support in a life here dedicated to His service! No labour is vain that is "in the Lord". Nothing that is done by a loyal heart in subjection to Him, and only seeking His pleasure and glory, could possibly be in vain. No human eye may have seen it, but His eye has marked the quality of its conception and execution with deepest pleasure. Those served may not have known how to appreciate the service rendered, but the Lord took full account of its value. How blessed to recall the features of a life here that has been in any measure in a true and real way "in the Lord"! No part of such a life has been in vain. Whether long or short, it has been freighted with that which has divine and eternal worth, and their "works follow with them".

We may be sure that those who live in the Lord die in the Lord, and they go into His presence attended by all the works which have been the fruit of their having come under His lordship here. What a comfort and joy to recall, as to those we have loved, that they lived and laboured "in the Lord", and to know that they have gone to Him attended by such a train and retinue!

We cannot dwell on what has passed before us without being reminded that the state of the departed saints, blessed as it is, is not the consummation of

their joy. For this they, and ourselves, await the coming moment when the Lord will utter His assembling shout, and gather all His own to Himself in the air. Then will the Son of God receive us to Himself, and set us with Him in His own place in His Father's house, conformed to His image in bodily condition that He may be the Firstborn among many brethren, all set eternally in the glory and affections and condition of sonship for the satisfaction of the Father's love.

This crowning glory also we contemplate in the same blessed Person — God's glorious Son. So that to learn Him is the key to everything. That we may do so is often the reason why we are called to tread the valley of the shadow of death. It was only in going that way that the sisters of Bethany could learn Him who is "the resurrection and the life". Their sorrow passed, as ours will, but the gain of learning such a Person abides as an eternal wealth of the joy in the soul.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

The mystery was made known to the apostle Paul by revelation, and it was bound up with the glad tidings which he preached, as we learn from Romans 16: 25 and Ephesians 3: 2 - 12 and Ephesians 6: 19. He spoke of it to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 2:7; 1 Corinthians 2:12,13), and to the Colossians. This truth is universal, and is for the enlightenment of all. It is in no way limited to anything local.

Another important part of Paul's teaching is that the assembly is the house of God (1 Timothy 3: 15). There is one foundation, one corner-stone, and in Jesus Christ "all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also [Gentiles] are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2: 21, 22).

Paul speaks further of the saints as being called by God "into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1: 9), and that their fellowship is set forth in the cup which we bless and the bread which we break (1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17). He assumes that all believers bless the cup and break the bread, for he says, "we". It is evident that there cannot be two divine fellowships.

The apostle, or the Spirit of God by him, gives no hint that the assembly, in a universal sense, was an invisible body. He regards it as one body on earth, gifts being bestowed with a view to its edifying, that it may work for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love (Ephesians 4: 1 - 16). The saints are called in one body to let the peace of Christ preside in their hearts. There is no thought of an invisible body.

I Corinthians gives us the truth as it is to characterise each local assembly, for it is addressed not only to Corinth, but to "all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". The saints universally are set in the light of that epistle, which makes known that all saints are baptised in the power of one Spirit into one body (chapter 12: 12, 13). "The Christ" (verse 12) is clearly a corporate designation of the saints as one body, which could not be limited to one locality. The saints at Corinth were "Christ's body, and members in particular" (chapter 12: 27), but only in virtue of having part in the universal unity of chapter 12: 12, 13.

In that epistle we see that assembly administration is to be carried on locally. The saints at Corinth were directly responsible to the Lord to exercise discipline upon an evildoer in their midst. Such an act was to be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and according to Matthew 18 it would be

bound in heaven. If, after the Corinthian assembly had acted thus in discipline by the Lord's commandment, the assembly at Cenchrea had said that the act did not bind them, the latter assembly would have been marked by pure lawlessness. It was binding, if for no other reason, on the ground that there is "one Lord" who had entrusted responsibility to act for Him in such matters to the local assembly, and whose name was connected with their action. In apostolic times "the power of our Lord Jesus Christ" was formally associated with His name when the assembly dealt with evil (1 Corinthians 5: 4).

Now, to pass from the days of the apostles to our own, we find that, in the revival of the truth over a century ago, what was prominent in the minds of the spiritual was the truth of the assembly. We have been told that the light broke into the soul of Mr. J. N. Darby that there was a Head in heaven.

Then, said he to himself, there must be a body on earth. If we read his early writings, such as *Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ* written in 1828, we find that it is the assembly which is before him, and its moral and spiritual features. The coming together of saints was to be in the light of those features which pertain to the assembly universally. The revival was definitely on the line of Paul's glad tidings, and of Paul's ministry of the assembly.

The brethren who were spiritually instructed had no such thought as that it was the divine intent that the assembly in its universal aspect should be, or should become, invisible. On the contrary, they felt deeply the fact that it had become so; that 'the true Church of God has no avowed communion at all' was a grievous evil to be mourned over and confessed. They felt that the body is here as a substantive reality to be edified, and to increase with the increase of God. Christ is sanctifying and purifying the assembly, and nourishing and cherishing it. This is not in heaven, but down here on earth.

But alongside this revival of Paul's doctrine there was developing amongst the brethren an entirely different system of teaching. There were those who held that the assembly in its universal aspect had become invisible, and that nothing now remained but to set up local assemblies, each being a self-contained body, having no responsibility with reference to other such bodies, and free to receive any individual believer supposed to be personally sound in the faith and consistent in life, without taking any account of the associations in which he may have been previously. The truth of *the* assembly in its general unity, calling for recognition in a practical way by those who have the light of it, thus entirely lost its due place. According to this system of teaching, each separate meeting is an independent 'assembly', even if there are several in one town. Scripture never speaks of different assemblies in one city. At Jerusalem,

where there were thousands of believers, and where they no doubt met in many different places, it is always "the assembly" — in the singular. The idea of independent churches, without any recognition of a universal bond of *responsible* partnership, is quite foreign to Scripture.

There are thus two different conceptions in the minds of brethren. One was governed by the thought of the unity of the whole assembly as one body, one house, one temple, and by the thought of all the saints everywhere being called to one universal fellowship. The other was based on the idea of each meeting being an independent 'assembly'. The moment was bound to come when these two different principles would be found to be entirely out of keeping with each other. It was not long before circumstances arose which brought this to light. But it is important to recognise that what happened at Plymouth did not bring about the difference of principles. It only served to expose what was there before.

Mr. Darby and others separated from the original meeting at Plymouth in 1845 because clericalism was set up there, which they rightly judged was not of God. But the Lord in His wisdom did not allow this particular matter to become the general test. In 1847 it was discovered that Mr. Newton held and taught most serious error as to the Lord's personal relationships. This false teaching definitely raised the question as to whether *fellowship* involved a *responsible* partnership or not. The extreme gravity of false teaching as to the Lord's relationships ought to have helped the brethren to be very sensitive in their affections, as well as in conscience and intelligence. They ought all to have weighed well that fellowship (or partnership) with such error was most serious in the sight of God. The ground was taken eventually at Bethesda, that the error was condemned, but that fellowship with it by breaking bread with those who held it was no bar to communion, and that no individual believer was to be held responsible for what he might be walking in partnership with, unless he actually avowed the error himself.

Thus where this principle is adhered to, no assembly bond of partnership which involves saints in common *responsibility* is admitted. Each is regarded as an individual who is not to be held responsible for any associations he may have been in, but only for his personal views and conduct. There is no thought of *fellowship* in this, for fellowship means a common equal sharing, or joint participation, and this, when it is a question of breaking bread, in a most solemn way as before God.

The fact that defilement is contracted by touching what is unclean is clearly laid down in the Old Testament, and the New Testament expressly says, "Touch not what is unclean" (2 Corinthians 6: 17). It is also clear in Scripture

that a much less thing than breaking bread with a person may involve one in responsibility for what he does, for John says that the one who gives a friendly greeting to a man who does not bring the doctrine of Christ "partakes [the verbal form of the word fellowship] in his wicked works" (2 John 11). One is viewed as in fellowship with his wicked works if simply greeting him. This shows what a very small thing, as men would say, involves responsibility as before God for one's associations.

If to break bread with an evil-doer does not, in the minds of believers, involve any complicity in his evil, neither does breaking bread with faithful saints involve the recognition that we are in the most intimate partnership with them. The sense of the divine bond is lost; persons break bread as so many individuals without any sense of responsible partnership. So that, according to these principles, the local assembly takes independent ground in declining to be bound by any assembly action other than its own, and the individual is held free of any responsibility, even in his own assembly, for anything that may have taken place there save his own views and his own conduct. This principle annuls responsibility in regard of associations, which Scripture so carefully maintains; it entirely sets aside the true thought of fellowship.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IN A DAY OF RUIN

The questions raised in your letter are important, and they involve much that can hardly be dealt with briefly. But I will endeavour to answer them as far as I can according to the exercise which I have in the light of Scripture.

It is true that J.N.D. or J.B.S. would have received to break bread 'a godly clergyman', or 'a person known to be godly and sound in the faith who has not left some ecclesiastical system ... as to which his conscience is not enlightened, nay, which he may think more right'. And the question is now raised as to whether brethren still do so, or whether they are on sectarian ground if they do not.

It is evident that J.N.D. and J.B.S. had in view, in writing as they did, the spiritual conditions of the time. They did not contemplate persons being received who came from associations leavened by all kinds of worldliness, or by evil teachings on vital matters. Their uncompromising separation from Bethesda, and all who espoused its principles, in 1848, showed that they regarded associations with evil as a definite bar to christian communion.

Truth and divine principles do not change, but it has not been the way of God — either when first giving the truth through the apostles, or in reviving it during the last century — to give all the truth at once, or the full bearing of it. He has brought it out as the needs of the church required, according to the exercises of the time, and with regard to the conditions obtaining in relation to His testimony. It is well to inquire what the conditions were, under which J.N.D. and J.B.S. wrote as they did.

At that time those in the sects were marked individually and collectively by a very considerable degree of separation from the world, and by much true devotedness; they preserved in large measure purity of doctrine as to fundamental truth. Before the movement of separation began, it is obvious that whatever light there was, or whatever faithfulness or testimony there was, was found in those bodies. There were "a few names" in Sardis of whom the Lord could say that they had not defiled their garments, and that they should walk with Him in white, for they were worthy. Such had preserved in holy integrity what was consistent with the truth so far as they knew it. If there had not been such, there would have been no material suited to receive the Lord's further testimony. But there was material out of which something truly Philadelphian in character could be formed as ministry was given from Christ as Head.

Now I do not learn from Scripture that it has ever been God's way suddenly to disown, or break the link with, what has been, in its day, of Himself when He brings in further and greater light. He acts in patient consideration for His people. He respects, if one may so say, His former ways. He has regard to that which He may have been pleased to use even though it fell short of what was in His mind. It was so when judaism was superseded by christianity; there was a transition period during which the separation between the old and the new was not definite. The faithful remnant entered into the blessings of the new order without altogether severing themselves from the former system — now really set aside by God. It was not until the epistle to the Hebrews was written that they were definitely called to "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach".

There is a certain analogy between what the epistle to the Hebrews was to the believing remnant of Israel, then made partakers of the heavenly calling, and what 2 Timothy is to us as calling us into separation from those things in the christian profession which are not suitable to the present testimony of God, and which largely have the character of judaism. But the application of 2 Timothy was accompanied by much consideration — which was, I believe, at the time, of the Spirit of God — for faithful and pious souls,

even though they were not fully prepared to take the path of complete separation to the Lord. The practice of eighty or ninety years ago was probably, at that time, of the Lord, for it was important to make manifest that the spiritual movement was in no way a sectarian one, but that it opened up a path, through divine favour, for all saints.

But every exercised Christian must see that there is an immense and solemn change in the whole condition of things since those days. Evil has come in like a flood; there has been no power to keep it out of religious bodies; all kinds of leavening influences are at work. No grave and exercised mind can be unaware of the tremendous change. It calls imperatively for greatly increased vigilance and care on the part of those who desire through grace to maintain what is due to the Lord, and to preserve a purity of associations which shall be in keeping with the truth of God's assembly, and with the principles of 2 Timothy 2.

Then it must not be overlooked that if there has been a terrible downgrade movement affecting more or less all the organised bodies, there has been another movement marked by the following of righteousness, faith, love, peace, and by calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is evident that the breach between these two movements must necessarily have been widening all the time. The separation between them becomes continually more

definitely marked. And I have no doubt that this is felt, and that it has the effect of restraining persons from wishing to break bread who are not prepared to break their links with what is, in the light of Scripture, unrighteousness. So that it becomes increasingly rare for any to wish to break bread while still retaining their links with the systems. I think the incompatibility of the two positions is felt by many who have not even seriously weighed the reasons for it.

Things can only be maintained for God as we act on the principles laid down in 2 Timothy. The twofold seal of God's foundation is that "The Lord knows those that are his; and,

Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". We cannot have christian fellowship in any definite or practical sense except on this line.

God works by the ministry of what is positive — by the truth. Certain things have been seen to be evil, and they have been withdrawn from because they have been judged in the light of the positive truth. The lordship and headship of Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the truth of the body and the house, the divine order of the assembly, the spiritual character of all that is for God's pleasure, the heavenly calling of the saints, and much more that might be mentioned in detail, are the great and precious realities by which saints have been revived and moved in these last days.

In the light of these things the present condition of the christian profession generally has been discerned to be one of great departure from the truth, and this we have to own humbly as having our part in the responsibility of it. But the instructions of 2 Timothy have provided an open door by which to escape from things which are inconsistent with the truth, and with the fellowship to which believers are called. This open door is available for all saints. The truth of the fellowship is only known practically as we avail ourselves of it. The fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and of the body and blood of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, and of the apostles, is the only fellowship which Scripture recognises as being a divine one. It is because the truth of this fellowship could not be realised in systems characterised by human order and clerical office, or where a sectarian bond was recognised or boasted in, that so many have definitely separated from such systems. Souls have been freed from these things by the power of positive truth, as they have moved after Christ, and after what is of God, with a desire to realise the true position and wealth of the assembly in the Holy Spirit. And in proportion as there has been separation to Christ, and giving place to the Holy Spirit as practically recognising His presence and action in the saints, there has been great

enlargement in the communication and apprehension of the truth concerning Christ and the assembly.

It is impossible to say that there is anything sectarian about this. It is a path clearly indicated in 2 Timothy, and it is open to all saints, and every one who has truly found that path would earnestly wish that all saints might also be found in it. And there is an unrestricted ministry of positive divine wealth going on all the time, through what is spoken and printed, by which what is spiritually attractive is put within the reach of those whom the Lord loves, and for whom He cares, and to whom He sends light and food that they may find His path, and know the blessedness and the bond of the fellowship. If souls take this path, they will find the privilege of the Lord's supper awaiting them.

Every Christian is divinely called to the fellowship, it is there for every one who has faith and affection to take it up. And I think it must be admitted that being true to the fellowship morally precedes the eating of the Lord's supper together. 1 Corinthians 10 precedes 1 Corinthians 11. We get first "the teaching and fellowship of the apostles"; then "breaking of bread and prayers" (Acts 2: 42). But the truth of the fellowship clearly raises the question of associations. It did so at the beginning. How much more so — may we not say? — in the midst of all the confusion of the last days. Can there be any doubt that 2 Timothy is given to us as a special guidance for the last days? And does it not raise the question of associations very definitely? It is a powerful divine call to take heed to our moral condition, and to look well to our associations.

In the last days, fidelity becomes of the utmost importance, and the faithful word must have its place. "For if we have died together with him, we shall also live together; if we endure, we shall also reign together", etc., "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". It is needful to purify oneself from vessels to dishonour in separating from them, if one would be a vessel to honour. And we are to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". I would submit that the title of any Christian to be received to partake of the Lord's supper has now to be conditioned by the principles laid down in 2 Timothy. Our companying with saints is clearly to be on those lines. This raises the grave considerations as to how far those should be received to the eating of the Lord's supper who are obviously not maintaining fidelity to the truth of the fellowship. To partake of the one loaf and to drink of the one cup is the most intimate and holy expression of our participation in the fellowship. It is a serious thing for any to commit themselves in a most solemn act to a fellowship which in their minds they are not prepared to take up. No doubt

many look upon the Lord's supper merely as individual privilege and do not consider that it involves any definite fellowship. But it is really the most definite commitment to the fellowship, and to all that the fellowship involves. To sign a deed of partnership is a serious matter even in human things; how much more so in the holy things of God! If souls are not prepared for the path of separation from evil, in the light and blessedness of all the good that is of God, they would do well to wait upon the Lord until they are assured as to the path in which He would have them to walk.

Members of religious bodies stand publicly committed to the acts of those bodies, and these are often such as to raise a question as to whether those who remain identified with them could be regarded as calling upon the Lord out of a pure heart. Not, of course, forgetting that we can only take account of what becomes manifest, and of what persons are identified with in public profession. Present-day conditions call for careful and godly doorkeeping.

There is a further serious aspect of this question which we have to face. The course of the testimony during the last hundred years has been attended by many conflicts. And succeeding separations have tested the saints, and have left permanent results in a form that is sorrowful and humiliating, but which cannot be ignored. We cannot now say that we are free to receive Christians without raising any question as to their associations. It would mean confusion and looseness, and would commit us to the practical acceptance of principles which we believe to be contrary to divine assembly order, and to the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ. So far as we have learned the mind of God, we wish to maintain it in a practical way. The principles which govern the fellowship are universal and abiding. They have had to be maintained in times of conflict at the cost of separation from many brethren. But it is impossible to accept identification with principles which we have definitely separated from as not being of God. The door is widely open for any to acknowledge the divine principles which they may have formerly refused. But to receive them without this would be to deprive them of the spiritual gain of the exercise which the Lord permitted to be raised.

It may be truly said that many now know nothing of the conflicts which have resulted in their being where they are; many, perhaps, converted long years after such conflicts have taken place. In such cases, if the Lord were drawing one by the attraction of increased knowledge of Himself, and of spiritual light and food, it would be manifest that spiritual motives were at work. Such a soul, finding the Lord amongst His saints, and prepared to move as having the Lord before him, would find no difficulty. He would be received as having moved, through spiritual exercise, from his former associations.

THE MYSTERY OF PIETY

1 Timothy 3: 14 - 16

Ques Is it one great thought of the assembly that it is God's house?

CAC I trust that we really value the privilege of forming part of God's house and having a place in His assembly. It is a place where we have to learn how to behave ourselves. The ways and manners of the world will not do for God's house. We have to learn to set them aside and to acquire the manners suitable to God's house, God's assembly. Wonderful things are said of the assembly, "the assembly of the living God", the place where God dwells, His house. It is a place where everyone must learn how to conduct himself or herself. There is a place for each servant, each vessel, and piety is the livery; each one must wear that. There is nothing much more important than piety.

Rem And this does not contemplate us as come together but as before men.

CAC Yes. It is the assembly as "the pillar and base of the truth". It is God's pillar in this world, always standing. There is stands. It is a reference to Genesis 28: 10 - 22, Jacob at Bethel. He "took the stone ..., and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el [house of God] ... . And this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house". There is the thought of a pillar there. We have to recognise that God's pillar is in this world, set up in the power of the anointing; therefore there is ability to maintain the truth in the Spirit. There is power to maintain the truth in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never deviate from the truth. That is very plain.

Rem He is "the Spirit of truth".

CAC Yes. "The Spirit is the truth" (1 John 5: 6). The Spirit is never going to move a hair's breadth from the truth.

One Person, the Spirit of God here, will stand by the truth.

Our great privilege is that we are to stand by the Spirit of God; that is how we become the pillar. If I stand by the Spirit of God, then I can be a pillar. We may be conscious that we are a poor and feeble folk, and know that people laugh at us as they did in Nehemiah's day, saying, "Even that which they build, if a fox went up, it would break down their stone wall" (Nehemiah 4: 3). But we are identified with God's pillar and with the Holy Spirit. An old man used to say to us, 'Boys, keep on good terms with the Holy Spirit'.

The Holy Spirit is never going to deviate from the truth and, by God's grace, we are going to stand by the truth and by the Spirit and count on God to

support us all through.

The house of God is marked distinctively by confession. "And confessedly the mystery of piety is great". That confession marks the house of God. Each one in the house is marked by that confession. In one sense the support of God's pillar is piety. Not one of us here will be any good for the pillar or suitable companions for the Holy Spirit if not marked by piety.

Ques. What is piety?

CAC Piety at the present time is a mystery. It is not mysterious but you have to be instructed, initiated into it, let into the secret of it. Piety is the secret of the people of God; we must be let into the secret to know it. It is the greatest favour to be let into it, so as to become really pious. These six things that follow (verse 16) show us what the character of piety is. They are not mentioned in historical order at all, not put together in order of time. For example, Jesus was received up in glory *before* He was preached among the nations. But they are put in the order in which we have to take them up spiritually to be instructed in the mystery of piety.

Firstly "God has been manifested in flesh". God has actually brought to pass what He had in His mind from the very beginning. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1: 26). Man should be in His image and likeness. God wanted to give expression to Himself, the invisible God. As long as He was that, He could never be known. We could not know the invisible God.

Rem "Whom no man has seen, nor is able to see" (1 Timothy 6: 16). "No one has seen God at any time" (John 1: 18).

CAC We can know *about* Him in creation, "both his eternal power and divinity" (Romans 1: 20), but that does not give us to know Him. Just as we might examine a table or a watch in which we could see the ability of the workman, but not the workman himself. Creation does not make God known to me. He wished to be known. So the first thing is the true knowledge of God as manifested in flesh in Christ. What is going to make piety work? We want the *spring* as with a clock. The spring is, first, what God has set forth of Himself in Christ. We were in flesh as created. He would come very near to us "in flesh", "manifested in flesh". A nobleman was once calling this in question and, pointing to some ants, said, 'How could I make myself known to them?' A sister answered, 'You could do it very well if you could become one of them'. That was very fine. It is the way God has taken. A lowly Man in this world, but who could say, "Before Abraham was, I am".

'Thou wart the image, Lord, in lowly guise, Of the Invisible to mortal eyes'.

It is a wonderful thing to consider as we look at Jesus. A lowly Man with no position, no wealth (He had not a penny), but "who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9: 5). A Man feeling, speaking, etc., but all that comes out in the expression of God. We might well say that "the mystery of piety is great". We *confess* that it is great. What marks all who are in the house is the confession that God is fully revealed in a Man. There are no questions, no misgivings, we know the blessed God Himself revealed in Jesus. There things get a place in our hearts and form a secret spring that sets piety in movement. How it would affect me and bring everything in my life under the influence of what God is!

God has His place in everything in the hearts and lives of those who compose His house.

Rem We are controlled from *inside*.

CAC Yes, and with a view to the same kind of thing coming out in our flesh that came out in the flesh of Jesus.

God is dwelling here is His house. He was here in Jesus, and now by the Holy Spirit in His house. We are in His house and if marked by piety we shall learn to give all these things their place.

Secondly, "Has been justified in the Spirit". We learn to recognise that. Though everything that was of God and pleasing to God was in Jesus, it was never honoured by men, not even by those nearest to Him. "Neither did his brethren believe on him" (John 7: 5), and on one occasion His relatives "went out to lay hold on him" (Mark 3: 21). He was not justified in this world. Those thirty years of the private life of Jesus ("the hidden manna") were justified by the Holy Spirit coming down on Him (Matthew 3: 16, 17). The people who lived in the same house with Him did not justify Him, but the Spirit did. The Spirit justified Him in all His works. He was left alone of men but the Spirit justified Him. Are we prepared to follow One who was not justified by men but always justified in Spirit? Piety would be content with that, no vindication or justification by men but content to be justified by the Spirit. If the Spirit justifies, it does not matter who condemns. The blessed Lord was always justified in Spirit.

Thirdly, "Has appeared to angels". Piety always takes account of the angels.

Rem "On account of the angels" (1 Corinthians 11: 10).

CAC Piety takes account of unseen spectators. Every step in the pathway of Jesus was followed with intense interest by myriads of angels. See them at His birth, in the wilderness and in the garden. We are always under the

observation of angels. It is a great mark of piety to recognise the angels. Angels are mentioned 172 times in the New Testament. They are unseen spectators. With what adoring delight they followed Jesus! They never had to learn obedience, they had always been obedient. And now they saw the One whom they worshipped ("When he brings in the firstborn into the habitable world, he says, And let all God's angels worship him", Hebrews 1: 6), their Creator, come down and learning obedience, what He had never done before. They watched it and wondered at it. Obedience at the cost of suffering was seen in His sufferings. What a sight for them! They sat "one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (John 20: 12). "Which angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1: 12). It is part of piety to recognise that. Angels are watching us. As another has said, we are 'a lesson-book for angels'. "In order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3: 10). Think of angels looking down at what we do in the assembly. What would they think if they saw a woman with her head uncovered or with her hair cut off? Angels would be perfectly horrified at a woman having her "glory" cut off (1 Corinthians 11: 15).

"Therefore ought the woman to have authority on her head, on account of the angels" (verse 10), not because there are any men looking on. It is part of God's wisdom. Man prays with head uncovered. The truth of headship is to govern all in the assembly. The question is, what do the angels think? They are watching us when the brethren are not. What about the angels? They are watching.

Rem After the obedience they saw in Jesus, they could not tolerate lawlessness in us.

CAC Obedience, dependence and subjection were all seen in perfection in Him.

Fourthly, "Has been preached among the nations". The whole scope of the testimony of grace has been preached among the nations. We have to be careful that we do not belie or spoil that testimony. Gehazi spoiled the testimony. A Gentile had been cleansed and he wanted to pay a very large sum for it, but that would not be consistent with the grace of God, and the prophet would not have it. Naaman is sent back to testify of free grace to the Gentiles in Syria. But Gehazi by his subsequent actions would leave an impression of covetousness and selfishness on Naaman's mind. It is a dreadful thing if a Christian leaves that impression on the world. What sort of conduct are you going to show to the Gentiles? A spirit of grace? We must take heed that we do not belie the preaching or spoil the testimony. A man to whom I

was seeking to present the gospel the other day said to me, 'I have had a lot of nasty things done to me in my life and they have all been done by professing Christians. I do not want to hear what you have to say'. Those 'nasty things' were not piety. We need to be careful in our ways with men that we do not spoil the testimony of God. It is a very important part of piety.

Fifthly, "Has been believed on in the world". There is a great company of persons in this world who have believed on Jesus in whom God has manifested Himself. It is God's treasure, the household of faith. We should like to know every one of them. They are the only thing of real interest to us in the world. Our interests, service and care are bound up with those people. They do not believe in man after the order of Adam at all but in the Man in the image of God. Piety takes account of them all. We are linked in our affections with all the people of God; we have a vital link with them.

Ques. Past and present?

CAC Yes, quite so. You seek to get into touch with them and to help them to believe. John's first epistle is to those who have believed. All our confidence and joy is centred in the Man who is the image and likeness of God.

Sixthly, "Has been received up in glory". Piety recognises the present place of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. Everything now for us turns on the place where Christ is. If Christ were on earth, earth would be the place for us. The German emperor once sat down by mistake at the wrong end of the table, at the foot of the table. His attendants drew his attention to the mistake he had made, but he answered, 'Where I sit is the head of the table'. This may serve as an illustration. Where Christ sits is the place of importance. If He were on earth we would like to build a wonderful place for Him. He will have one.

Luke 9: 51, where we come to "the days of his receiving up", is the turning-point in the gospel. After that the Lord says to the seventy, "rejoice that your names are written in the heavens" (chapter 10: 20). Our place is where Christ has His place. He has been received up. Everything in Him was suitable to be received up. He was invested with a glory suitable to be received up. Piety would cultivate those things that will be received up in glory. God is our glory now. It is said of Israel that "they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass" (Psalm 106: 20). We often change our glory, what we know of God. We are often ready to give it up for something worthless. Jesus went up in the glory of it all.

Rem He adorns heaven.

CAC He has carried into heaven what adorns it. We are here to be waiting for the moment when we will be received up. Our names are there now. We are

citizens of heaven. Enoch was translated, but "before his translation he has the testimony that he had pleased God" (Hebrews 11: 5). Enoch was not missed in the theatres and art galleries of the world; he was not always reading newspapers, etc. "Enoch walked with God", and he went on walking with God higher up. "He was not, for God took him" (Genesis 5: 24).

It is very helpful to put these things together as forming the hidden spring of piety in our souls; as they are in us and abound, they qualify us for the house of God, the assembly of the living God. We shall stand firm for God "as mount Zion, which cannot be moved" (Psalm 125: 1), and God will be known in His house.

THE TESTIMONY

2 Timothy 1: 1 - 18; Numbers 1: 1 - 4

Ques Why did you suggest the scripture in Numbers?

CAC Well, I suggested adding the four verses from the book of Numbers because Numbers is the book of the testimony.

Ques. The wilderness?

CAC Well, it is so. The testimony belongs to the wilderness. It is important for us to get hold of that because the teaching of the New Testament is based on the Old. The testimony is a word with a specific meaning in the Old Testament, and the Spirit of God in speaking of the testimony in the New Testament has in mind the Old Testament presentation of the testimony, and in the book of Numbers we find the tabernacle of the testimony, and the people are taken account of in connection with it. That is why I suggested the verses in Numbers. What do you think?

Rem I think that is very good; please go on and open out a little more.

CAC Well, I think we have to gather up the thoughts from the Old Testament if we want a proper idea, and we find that primarily the thought of the testimony was written on the two tables of stone and put into the ark, so that the prominent feature of the book of Exodus is the ark of the testimony. Then we find, in the end of the book, a reference to the tabernacle of the testimony, and what stands in relation to it. It is not developed in Exodus as it is in Numbers, and there is no reference to it in Leviticus. You would not expect in the book of approach to God that you would get the thought of the testimony developed.

Ques You mean, it is more for man?

CAC Yes, it is a testimony given on God's part to what is in His own mind. The first thought of the testimony is that the will of God is to prevail; what was written on the tables,

that is to prevail. That is the primary thought in connection with it. But then, has it prevailed? Now it is our privilege and joy to say, 'yes', the will of God has prevailed. The tables are in the ark. What a blessed thing to start with! The testimony is fully secured in the ark. That is the great subject in Exodus. You have a redeemed people, a people who know God in the love of the covenant. That is our position through grace: redeemed and illuminated. And now the great thought of God is to show us that His will has prevailed; it has been fully secured in the ark of the testimony.

Ques What is "the testimony of our Lord" (verse 9)?

CAC I think what the apostle has in mind is the truth of the testimony as God had already brought it out in the Old Testament typically. It had been brought out typically; and what was brought out typically, in the last days becomes in a peculiar way the testimony of our Lord. I do not know that we have any such expression or anything like it anywhere else. It is a term peculiar to the last days.

Ques You would not have it in the first epistle?

CAC No, the testimony of our Lord suggests to me the testimony to which our Lord is committed. He is definitely committed to it. And He is never going to depart from it. He is going to maintain it right through. But we are in great danger of being ashamed of it, because it is in conflict, and the chances are, if you identify yourself with it, you will be taken prisoner by the enemy. Now are we prepared for that?

Ques. Why should that be?

CAC That is the idea, it is what the Lord is committed to, absolutely committed to at the present time, and He wants us to be committed to it. We are to be *committed* to it. We are to be "numbered" for the defence of the testimony. That is the thought in Numbers. Now there is the exhortation to be "not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner". I am in prison, why? Publicly Paul is in the enemy's hands. But though he is publicly in the enemy's hands the testimony is not. And the testimony was maintained valiantly by a man in prison, and that suggests to me that we have to be prepared for restricted conditions outwardly. Paul in prison is the proper example of a man identified with the testimony.

Rem He does not speak of himself as any man's prisoner; it is the prisoner of the Lord.

CAC Yes, it was just because he was identified with the testimony of our Lord that he was in prison. He says, "All deserted me ... . But the Lord stood with me ... that through me the proclamation might be fully made" (2 Timothy 4: 16, 17). What, a man in prison, bound with a chain? Yes, there is the testimony.

Timothy represents a man of God in the last days, marked by natural timidity. I do not think the Lord is likely to take up what would be called a very strong man for the testimony, but he takes up a man naturally timid and a man of tears. He makes him a valiant soldier in the testimony. The idea of the testimony is a military idea. It is only maintained by soldiers. That is why I

suggested Numbers. Numbers is the book of warriors, it is those who go forth to war, those who are competent for military service. The testimony is not a matter for babes in Christ.

Rem You would not exclude sisters.

CAC Many sisters are mighty men of war!

Ques Why does he open the epistle to the Corinthians with the testimony?

CAC You get there the introduction of the testimony of God in the gospel, and the first establishment of the testimony of the Christ in the assembly. You get the initial suggestions. So that Paul comes to Corinth with the testimony of God, and he came there with no outward strength, but came with weakness and fear and much trembling, and his speech was not with enticing words, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in God's power. Now that is how the testimony started. The gospel coming in divine, spiritual power in a vessel, and no human ability about it; that is how the testimony came to us Gentiles. And then when people were converted and the assembly of God in Corinth was formed, they were endowed with every spiritual gift that was necessary to maintain the testimony of the Christ. They were enriched in Christ, they came behind in no gift, and the testimony of the Christ was confirmed there. It was there amongst them. They might not be in the good of it, but it was there. It was set up by the power of God amongst them. That is the beginning.

Ques What is the meaning of the cross?

CAC The cross is the shutting out of the man after the flesh altogether.

Ques What is the difference between the testimony of the Christ and the testimony of our Lord?

CAC I thought the testimony of the Christ was that there was a spot in Corinth where there was divine testimony, by the Spirit, to God's anointed Man. Whether they fully understood it, or were in the good of it, is another matter, but there was a spot in Corinth where the candlestick was set up. There was the shining of the testimony to God's anointed Man in a heathen city.

Ques Has the character of the testimony been always the same?

CAC Well, yes. It is in type in the Old Testament. You have the thought of God's pleasure fully secured in Christ: that is Exodus. The great central point in Exodus is the ark of the testimony, that the pleasure of God is fully secured in Christ, and then you get a whole system of things identified with that. The whole tabernacle system had its centre in the ark of the testimony. And the

tabernacle became the tabernacle of the testimony, and the people were all set around it. They were all set in relation to it, and it was a military position. So that they had to be numbered as soldiers, and the assembly of Israel. The early chapters of Numbers do not include women and children. They only include the fighting strength of the company. Now it is only such persons who are really identified with the testimony of the Lord. It is a company where there is fighting strength.

"God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion", and Paul goes on to speak to Timothy about being a good soldier. *Soldiers* are wanted for the testimony.

Ques. For defence only?

CAC Well, I suppose it was that nothing should impede the testimony. And, more particularly in Numbers, the testimony is moving through the wilderness, which answers to the present position of the testimony, it is moving through the wilderness in the face of everything that is adverse, and it is only soldiers that are any good. The question is, have we been enlisted as soldiers? This is not a matter merely for believers, it is for soldiers.

Ques What is the difference between this and the apostle John in the Isle of Patmos?

CAC Well, he was a soldier, and there is another man in prison! The enemy has got him. You may be taken prisoner. You may find yourself greatly restricted outwardly, but the testimony never held on its way more victoriously than when Paul and John were in prison. It was fully maintained by those faithful men. The testimony is not bound. Paul may be in prison, and John, but the testimony was liberated. The testimony went on its way. It is a fine thing. There is no such thing as defeat. Being in prison does not mean defeat. Getting out of prison often means defeat. If you want to be enlarged in the present state of things that means defeat.

Rem The ministry of Paul was largely written in prison.

CAC Yes; in all Paul's epistles you see what he is driving at; he is trying to make *soldiers* of the saints. Look at the military vein that runs through Paul's epistles; you can see that what he is after is soldiers.

Rem He is the only one that speaks of prayer in relation to the testimony. That is very remarkable.

CAC It is good if you get in prison for the testimony. Suppose you lose all your old friends. That is the sort of prison. You must be prepared for it. You might have had a wide circle of friends, you might have been the most popular man

in the town, and your affections get attached to the Lord. He does not say the testimony of the Lord, it is the testimony of our Lord. Now you are identified with that, and that big circle of friends will drop off. It is like a man in prison, but that means spiritual enlargement. It means that the testimony is going to move.

Rem You take account of yourself as being the Lord's prisoner.

Rem "Prisoner of the Christ Jesus for you nations" — not only prisoner of the Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3: 1).

CAC And he says many of the brethren are waxing confident through his bonds. It made soldiers of them. He says, I know you are fully identified with me in my fighting, and my defence; you are shoulder to shoulder with me (Philippians 1: 9 - 14). He has a fighting company whom he can number as men of war.

I think the testimony can only be taken up by people who have learnt the teaching of Exodus and Leviticus. Numbers supposes that you know Exodus and Leviticus. That is, you know what it is to be redeemed, and you know the grace that is an unfailing resource in the wilderness; and it is by learning redemption and by learning grace that you can be separated in the wilderness to become a fighting man. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they were men that had to be shielded and God had to lead them around where they would not meet with enemies; they were not able; and God in His grace shields young saints, babes in Christ. He does not expect them to be fighting men; you must be 20 years old before you can fight, but the children of Israel soon grew up to be men. They came out of Egypt as babes, but in Exodus 17 Moses says, "Choose us men".

Ques Do we see this too with Gideon's army?

CAC Yes, they had to be thinned down.

Ques Does this military service begin with ourselves?

CAC Well, yes. You have to declare your pedigree before you will be put on the military list. That is very important. That is, they had all to demonstrate that they were Israelites. It did not suffice that they should have descended from Abraham. Some people like that to settle everything.

Is he a believer? Then that is all right. But it is not all right.

You may be descended from Abraham and not be fit for the testimony.

Ques. Like Ishmael?

CAC Yes, Ishmael was not fit for the testimony, and nor were any of his descendants.

Lot was a kinsman of Abraham. He was a believer, but he was not in the testimony because there was no separation there; he was found in Sodom, miserable man he was too! He had no power for testimony. He was not numbered, he was not counted for the testimony. What I want to know about myself and everybody here tonight is, have we really been numbered for the testimony? Or are we content to be believers, and that if we died we should go to heaven? It will not do to be satisfied to be connected with Abraham. Abraham is the head of the believing family, but that is not enough for the testimony.

So Ishmael went out. And Paul has to tell the Galatians that in going back to law they were really taking the place of Ishmael's descendants. They were taking the place of having the bondwoman for their mother. Now those people cannot be numbered for the testimony. If people are on the line of improving the flesh and bringing divine and spiritual influences on the flesh so as to correct it and make it what it ought to be, those people have no place in the testimony. They cannot declare their pedigree. They are not of Israel.

Rem It is not sufficient that we are breaking bread with a company of believers.

CAC No, I may be breaking bread as a babe in Christ,

and quite right. The Lord loves to see the young people breaking bread. Never discourage the young people from breaking bread, if they know at all what they are doing, but they should know that they are coming into identification with the most wonderful testimony that there ever was, and that they may grow up to be fighting men. Then they will be identified personally as well as positionally with the testimony.

Ques What is the meaning of the word testimony?

CAC To be identified with what is wholly for the pleasure of God at a time when there are all sorts of mixed conditions around us. What is for the pleasure of God takes a more distinctive character in the last days than ever it did. The public profession has all drifted; it is on the line of Lot, or Ishmael or Esau. The whole christian profession is on the line of one of these three men. Lot is the man who would not separate; that is to say, separation is essential to the testimony. If you name the name of the Lord you are to depart from iniquity, you are to withdraw from all that is unholy and untrue. And then Ishmael represents a believer who is trying to make something of the flesh; and Esau descended from Abraham, typically a believer, but he despised the

birthright and he minds earthly things. These things are all inconsistent with the testimony, so that we have to prove that we are not on these lines. Can we really prove before Moses and Aaron and the brethren — can we stand up boldly and prove before Jesus as Lord and as Priest and before the brethren — that we are not on the line of Lot or Ishmael or Esau but that we are of Israel? Could we prove it? Such are the men for the testimony.

Rem Timothy proved it by his tears.

CAC Yes, I do not doubt at all that Timothy had been enlisted for a long time.

Everything has to come into line with the will of God, and the saints are to be identified with it and set for it. It calls for subjection to the authority of the Lord. It is what every Christian should do, but can I say, I am doing it?

Ques How far does the question of voluntary action enter into the matter?

CAC If we know what it is to be a redeemed people, taken out of the world for the pleasure of God, and have known what it is to be supported by divine resources in the wilderness (we have had flesh, and manna, and water from the rock), and know the covenant, the love of God, so that we really love Him, there will be a great desire to be numbered for the testimony. It will be nothing to shrink from; you will want to be numbered. It does not take long for a babe to become a man. We shall not have to wait twenty years literally. Paul began as a babe and he was a man in Christ in a day or two. It does not take long. If a babe walks in the Spirit, it will be very few days before he is fully grown in Christ. That is, as fully grown in Christ you have an apprehension in your soul by the Spirit that all your blessing is in Christ, and you stand to it intelligently and affectionately. That is what Paul means when he says that he announced Christ to the end that he might present every man perfect in Christ. 'I want them to see what is in Christ'. A man is twenty years old when he sees that.

Ques Is the Ethiopian eunuch an example of this rapid growth?

CAC As he went on his way with the book of Isaiah in his possession he was probably a full-grown man in Christ before he got home.

Then there is what brings you to the side of God's election. Now you have Jacob, and you have had to learn that it was all hopeless on your side. You have to be reduced and humbled on your side, and learn that God must do everything for you. He takes pains to cripple you, and then you become Israel. We have to prove that we are of that stock. We have learnt our own weakness, we have had our thigh put out. It is declaring the pedigree. So Paul

speaks of God's purpose and grace, etc., God's election and grace, and His powerful working with Israel.

The first epistle to Timothy is according to the command of God our Saviour, so that you have injunctions and charges. But when you come to the second epistle it is according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus. You have the thought of a living system, a system that stands in living relation to the work of the testimony.

It is most important to see the great tests of things is the lordship of Christ. That is why it is Moses and Aaron and the princes who have to do the numbering. None of us can be numbered unless we pass the inspection of Moses and Aaron and the brethren. Now mark that! There is no one numbered for the testimony who cannot pass that threefold test. No one will be numbered for the testimony if they cannot pass Moses and Aaron and the brethren.

Ques. Why the brethren?

CAC Because that is vital. The princes represent the brethren; they represent those who have an assigned position of responsibility amongst the brethren.

Ques. Who are they?

CAC If you want to be numbered you will have to find them! If I cannot prove to the Lord that I am fit to be enrolled as standing in defence of His testimony, I need not try to prove it to anybody else. His authority is the great test. It is only as coming under subjection to the Lord's authority that we can have anything to say to the testimony of our Lord. And then there is Aaron too, representing the priestly discernment of the Lord. He has not only authority, but He has priestly discernment, and He is exercising it tonight. He is looking for soldiers. When He walks in the midst of the candlesticks that is what He is looking for — soldiers. He singles out the overcomer; that is the man that is numbered.

It is most encouraging, most touching, that the Lord should say, "I also have overcome". He has been the Soldier of God. The testimony was never so maintained as when it was all centred in one blessed Man. He overcame every hostile power, and now He is looking out for the overcomer; that is, the soldier. It is only the overcomer who is really for the testimony. I believe that is a very solemn reality.

Ques Does that not narrow up the testimony?

CAC Yes, but then, think of the value of it, and the dignity of it. If anything that is of God is brought in, and it is, it is brought in as secured in Christ, and

it is brought in to be secured by the Spirit in the saints; and if that is so, what a dignity! It is possible for two persons in this place to be enrolled as soldiers in defence of the testimony. What a dignity! Then, if you pass the Lord as the Priest, you have to pass the brethren. That is, you have to commend yourself to those who are already identified with the testimony.

There is a definite principle for anyone who wants to walk with the saints, a definite principle that they be introduced as commended by those who have responsibility amongst them. It is a definite principle, and if we see that the Lord has a testimony and that certain persons through grace are identified with it, we should like to be approved by those persons. I should like to be approved by certain persons. I should be very sorry to be so conceited as to be satisfied with my own appraisement of myself. It is not enough that the Lord should be satisfied and that the Priest should discern that I am an overcomer. Now that brings it home to all of us — how am I going on before the saints? If they cannot approve me I shall not be enrolled. The saints can recognise whether I am on the line of Lot, or on the line of Ishmael, or on the line of Esau. Spiritual persons can recognise whether I am really an Israelite.

Ques How does that link with chapter 2?

CAC Those calling on the Lord out of a pure heart are really identified with His testimony. Every one who calls on the Lord out of a pure heart is identified with the testimony. Now I am to walk with those. If I am to walk with them, I must approve myself to them. Anybody who was right would be delighted to be under the scrutiny of his brethren.

Ques What does it mean, to call upon the Lord out of a pure heart?

CAC It is that the affections are really set. The Lord has become everything to you and you do not want to be identified with anything that is not of the Lord. And you find that you have not strength for it except you call upon Him. Jacob has to be crippled, he has to cling to the One who wrestled with him. That is what calling on the Lord out of a pure heart is.

There is such a thing as having to do with the Lord with a consciousness of perfect integrity. And if we have not got the consciousness that we can come to the Lord with no unworthy motives in our heart and no reserves, we are disqualified for His testimony. It is no use talking about the testimony of our Lord if we cannot go to the Lord and say, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things and Thou knowest that I want to be for Thee'.

Ques What is an "honest and good heart" (Luke 8: 15)?

CAC What it means is this, that nothing counts but the work of God. There is nothing pure about me inside or out, except the work of God. Now that it is the thought in connection with Jacob. Jacob has to be taken to pieces and put together in an entirely new way. And we have all got to come to it, that there is nothing about us that is of any value, except what God has wrought.

It characterises certain persons that they call upon the Lord. It distinguishes them. Instead of forming a committee to see how things can be done, and trying to work up a cause, or making arrangements so that the wheels go round, the only source of power that they know is to call on the Lord. People will be brought in by the enemy amongst the saints, people that are on the line of Lot, or Ishmael, or Esau, but none of those persons will ever call on the Lord out of a pure heart, though they may be believers.

The testimony period is practically running out. We are just at the end of it, and therefore if we want to have any distinction in connection with the testimony, we shall have to be quick about it. If the Lord's assembling shout were to ring out tonight the testimony would be over, and we should never have the chance to be identified with the testimony of our Lord again. The testimony is the present witness in the power of the Spirit to what will shine out in display in the world to come.

2 TIMOTHY 1 (FROM CAC'S NOTES)

2 Timothy 1: 6 - 12

Paul looks to Timothy to rekindle his faith *himself*, he does not look to the Lord to do it.

Any support we get from the brethren is an extra support. There should be power with us to go on if *everything* is contrary. I have no other business than to serve others. "For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion".

It is a threefold cord that would carry us through everything. This epistle supposes a general state of decline, and I am not to be part of it. This blend needs "wise discretion", or the good may be lost of the other elements. The "testimony of our Lord" is all that He is rendering, all He would bring out, not merely that we are giving testimony to Him, but His testimony from heaven. The subject is what follows in verses 9 and 10 — all enters into the scope of it. (Reference to chapter 4: 17.) It brings people into the glorified state. We ought to boast in such testimony — not be ashamed of it! Every preacher is representative of the Lord as Administrator. (cf. Revelation 1: 1. It is revelation given to the exalted Man. It is His own revelation, giving peculiar interest to the book.)

2 TIMOTHY 2 (NOTES OF A READING)

2 Timothy 2: 14 - 26

CAC This passage reminds us of the craftsmen in Zechariah 1: 20, "cutting in a straight line the word of truth". We ought not to be occupied with things that have no constructive element in them.

Ques What is, "cutting in a straight line the word of truth"?

CAC To minister the word so that it is not distorted, so that our application of Scripture is according to the truth. I am afraid Scripture is often handled to please men. We should be more definite and accurate in what we say as to the word. It is astonishing how mixed up and inaccurate the thoughts of many believers are as to Scripture — I suppose the result of wrong teaching. The result of the revival of the last century has been that accurate attention has been paid to Scripture and to the statements of Scripture, so that any deviation from them can be detected by the saints.

Rem The test is the plummet.

CAC Yes, things must bear the test of the plumb-line; the man using it is the kind of workman that is valuable. "Iniquity" is 'not right', out of the straight; it will not bear the plumb-line. Every thought on divine things is either right or wrong, there is no middle course, so none of us should be content to have loose ideas. God's things are precise, and specially when He communicates His mind in the Scriptures. So the devil discredits the Scriptures to get rid of the measuring line. He has a subtle object in quoting Scripture (cf. verse 18).

Rem God's ministry has a definite end in view.

CAC If twisted, the whole building is thrown out of line. All must fit into the plan, or all is spoiled. Wrong teachers get worse and worse. Subversion of Scripture is more dangerous than outright denial of the truth.

Rem We need to ask whence come and whither lead such statements.

CAC It is overthrowing — the opposite to building. God intends that things should be built up in the souls of saints, in persons. It is not much good for the truth to be only in the Bible! *The saints* are the pillar and base of the truth, the living witness and support of the truth. We should definitely stand in the truth.

Ques The foundation is in resurrection, would you say?

CAC I think the point here is that *the saints* are the foundation. "Those that are his". The seal examined is seen to be the saints, God's firm foundation on

this earth that cannot be destroyed. If the devil destroyed all the bibles the foundation would still remain in the saints. It is a remarkable statement, like, "And on this rock I will build my assembly". There are those that are owned of the Lord, He does not own any bad material. The seal shows something on earth marked by this, that there is something on earth owned by the Lord as His (cf. the signet in Haggai 2: 23). And then there is the responsibility to withdraw from iniquity. What delight for the Lord to see something of Himself in a human heart — some appreciation of Him, or a desire to be faithful to Him or to suffer for His name. How the Lord loves it wherever it is found.

Rem The apostle appeals to God — "God is my witness".

CAC "Before the Lord". It was important for Timothy that everything should be done before the Lord. What is the use of anything done merely before men or before the brethren?

There is also a public side, "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". That brings the saints into evidence publicly. They are only known to be such as withdrawing publicly from what is not right — particularly in the profession. There is a tendency with us to water things down.

Ques What is naming the name of the Lord?

CAC To call on the name of the Lord marks a Christian, and he names the name of the Lord. We ought to bear that in mind, that we name the name of the Lord when it is suitable. It is a great matter to do it, and it has power, for it is a name of great power. But then I must not connect it with what is wrong. The name of the Lord is what takes the place of the Lord in His absence. His name is here and confessed by the saints. We are identified with His name.

"By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong" (Acts 3: 16). It is the gathering-point, we are gathered to His name, not to the Lord. One day we shall be gathered to Himself.

Rem "For the name have they gone forth" (3 John 7).

CAC There is only *one* name. It is characteristic of us that we "name the name of the Lord", and that we call upon His name. Everything about us must be consistent with it, otherwise I am only a hypocrite.

"Iniquity" is 'unrighteousness' — what is not right. This is a very important scripture, because it defines our position. "The Lord knows those that are his" — J.T. has called this objective knowledge (cf. "I know him" [Abraham], Genesis 18: 19, i.e. I know how he will carry on; and, "I know them" [my sheep] in John 10: 27). He recognises what is of Himself. Lots of people

pretend to be His, but He says He does not know them. It is not enough to say, I know the Lord. Does He know me and see features in me that are of Himself? Nothing else is built into His house. The way to begin the day is to say, 'Something of Christ is to be in my heart and under His eye which is of Himself', and at the end of the day take stock of how much has been of that character, and then have it all out with the Lord.

NOTES OF A READING 2 Timothy 2: 22 - 26; 2 Timothy 3: 1 - 17 What is a "pure heart", spoken of in verse 22? Could every Christian be said to have a pure heart?

CAC I suppose it is characteristic of Christians as such. Speaking of the conversion of the Gentiles in Acts 15: 9, Peter says their hearts were purified by faith.

Rem In his epistle, Peter also says, "Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth" (1 Peter 1: 22).

CAC Yes, it says, "Love one another out of a pure heart fervently". I think a pure heart is a heart delivered from selfishness by the knowledge of the love of God. The love of God gives one a pure heart because it breaks the power of the selfish motives that had governed us. Nothing will break the power of selfishness but love. A heart brought under the influence of the love of God is free from all those things that mark the natural man. If God has given me everything in His love, I do not need to be seeking and grasping after something for myself; and then one can call on God with a simple reference to God's will, with nothing but a true desire to walk in the path of God's will. We see the model of all those things in the Lord; it is very encouraging to see that.

Rem We get an instance of the reverse of this in those who said, "Lord, Lord", and did not the things that He said.

CAC Yes, that illustrates it exactly; that would be calling on the Lord out of an impure heart, a pretence to calling on Him with no intention of doing what He says. A pure heart calls on Him because it is set to do what He says.

Rem It is happy to own His authority; it is not doing so in an empty way. Many Christians choose their own path.

CAC That is a denial of the lordship of Christ. It is a fundamental truth of christianity that Jesus is Lord.

Rem There is a company which recognises that; it is "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart".

CAC It is the owning of Jesus as Lord that brings us together rightly; it marks us off as true Christians.

Ques Is it walking in self-judgment?

CAC That would be involved in it.

Ques Does it suggest that in this day there are those who do not call on the Lord out of a pure heart?

CAC It suggests there is christian profession without a pure heart. Men have no intention of doing what the Lord says. The exercise with us should be to be here for God's will; we are set to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace; all these things are in the will of God.

If people are caught in Satan's snare, the servant is to seek to recover them. Satan is doing his best to get Christians to be here for their own will, which is really for Satan's will, but our object should be to be here for God's will. There is a beautiful word in John 7: 18: "He that speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but he that seeks the glory of Him that has sent him, he is true, and unrighteousness is not in him". It is what the Lord was; you see righteousness there, a blessed Man seeking the glory of the One who sent Him. When we begin to measure things by the will of God it throws a new light on everything. Christendom is full of good things which we like and even approve, but when we put them in the light of God's will there is no justification for them.

Rem The beginning of the passage is, "If any one desire to practise his will, he shall know concerning the doctrine" (John 7: 17).

CAC Yes: the one who is said to practise the will of God has a pure heart. God has His right place in the thoughts of such a one; that is a Christian characteristically. It may make us very ashamed of ourselves, but that is a Christian.

Rem We are not always prepared to do God's will.

CAC If we examine our motives we find them very mixed, and this necessitates self-judgment. We have to remember there is the snare of the devil referred to in the passage we are reading. The snare of the devil is anything that takes us off the line of God's will, and of righteousness, faith, love and peace.

Rem It supposes something definite.

CAC It is a perversion of things brought about in a man's mind which results in his opposing the truth. The servant is to recover him. He is not to be left as a bad job. This shows the recoverability of a bad case.

Rem Speaking of the qualities of an overseer it says, "The overseer then must be irreproachable ... . apt to teach, ... mild, not addicted to contention" (1 Timothy 3: 2, 3).

CAC Yes: it speaks of what the Lord was Himself. The devil did his best to take that blessed One in his snare; but nothing moved Him out of the path of God's will.

Rem It is said of the Lord, "He shall not strive or cry out, nor shall any one hear his voice in the streets" (Matthew 12: 19).

CAC Yes: it is a most important principle. When one has to do with all sorts of evil there is such a danger of getting into contentions. If we have the truth it keeps us quiet because we trust in the Lord to support it. We have to put it before people in a spirit of meekness, and the Lord supports it. We have not to contend. This gives us great peace as to controversies in which the truth is in question. The path of the testimony in the last days is beset by controversies. All the truth we have has been maintained notwithstanding controversies; we do not need to be alarmed about it.

Rem Division may result from it.

CAC Division among saints is the fruit of self-will. If no will is at work, brethren would never divide. If we are really brethren we shall never divide, but there are those among us who do oppose the truth, as we find in verse 25. If they are not really bad they will be recovered by the servant "in meekness setting right those who oppose". If there is nothing bad at the bottom of a man's heart he will be recovered, but if self-will is working he may be allowed to go on and fall over the precipice.

Ques Our attention is called in chapter 3 to those we have turned away from (verse 5). There are those God may give repentance to (chapter 2: 25), but it is a serious thing when we have to turn away from any. What is the difference between the two?

CAC The men in chapter 3 are clearly unconverted persons; they have "no love for what is good"; they are "lovers of pleasure". You cannot do anything with them, there is nothing of God there. You do not keep company with persons of that sort. The Lord tells us not to cast pearls before swine. If people have no love for what is good, what can you do with them?

Rem One has been exercised about persons who are professedly servants of the Lord, as to how far one should combat that sort of thing.

CAC The Lord said of the Pharisees, "Leave them alone" (Matthew 15: 14). But another class is contemplated, not at all like these who come into

opposition with the truth. We find brothers at a time coming into opposition, but they have to be dealt with in gentleness and meekness so that they may be recovered. We have to act in such a way that they may be won.

Ques In what way would they recover themselves?

CAC By repentance. If God gives it to them in the acknowledgment of the truth, they wake up and see they have just been in the snare of the devil all the time.

Rem It is a great deliverance when a man who has been opposing the truth is led to see it, and wakes up and repents, and is found once more for God's will in this world.

CAC It is a blessed deliverance! It can only be brought about by coming into the atmosphere of Matthew 11. The Lord says, "Come to me". 'Just stand where I stand; look at things as I look at them', and then He says, "Learn from me;

for I am meek and lowly in heart". It is very beautiful. We are to be characterised by His Spirit; this is how He always had to do with opposers; He endured such contradiction of sinners, and those cavilling. See how quietly He answered them, and how gentle He was.

Rem He had to meet opposition in His disciples and in all around.

Ques Would you say there is restoration when they recover themselves?

CAC Yes: the snare is broken. To my mind it is very important that we should count on more power for recovery. Nothing exercises me more than the lack of power of recovery. If people get wrong it seems impossible to get them right again.

Ques Is it lack of exercise on their part?

CAC That may be, but what troubles me is my part. I feel I ought to have more power to get them right. We have to bear in mind that if there is anything of God in a soul it will respond to the Spirit of Christ. If a man is wrong and I can approach him in the Spirit of Christ, in the faithful grace of Christ, he will respond, and then I must not let him go till I have got him back for God's will.

Rem The Lord says, "Those thou hast given me I have guarded" (John 17: 12); but Cain said, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Ques Do you not think we fail in not having drunk sufficiently into the Spirit of the One who came down to recover men?

CAC Yes; a new order of man is brought into the world — man in Christ Jesus, not as glorified in heaven, but brought in morally down here. We find it all through this epistle: "Faith and love which are in Christ Jesus"; "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus"; "Live piously in Christ Jesus". Paul spoke of his ways "as they are in Christ" (1 Corinthians 4: 17). That is, the qualities of Christ Jesus are brought in morally down here; it is down here they are seen. If we are in the line of what is in Christ Jesus we shall show His qualities. If we have not the Spirit of Christ we shall pretend to have it. In principle we are all men of God or magicians, we all either have the Spirit of Christ or pretend to. Jannes and Jambres imitated what Moses did; what he did by divine power, they did by human, or perhaps Satanic, power, but in the end the finger of God triumphed. There came a time when it was a question of life, and then they could do nothing. When Moses and Aaron turned the dust into lice the magicians tried with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could do nothing, and they had to say, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8: 19). The moment it was a question of life they were baffled. You can imitate what is external in a Christian, but it is irritation and will sooner or later be exposed.

Ques Would you say that *we* could imitate?

CAC I think there is a great deal of imitation in Christendom, and I find all the evils of Christendom in my own heart. Whatever is current in Christendom you find in yourself. But if you get on to the line of what is in Christ Jesus, that is the vital line and that will triumph.

Rem What I find in myself is assuming to be what I am not.

CAC Yes: there is an outward show that has nothing behind it; it is very humiliating. If we were only content to be what the grace of God has made us, how happy we should be!

Rem Even our quietness is a pretence sometimes.

CAC On the principle that "even a fool when he holdeth his peace is reckoned wise" (Proverbs 17: 28).

Rem We want the continuation of Christ in His people.

CAC Christianity is the continuation of Christ in the saints. I do not understand anything else. We want to keep clear of all imitation. Let us have the real thing. If people can get gold they do not want brummagem! What a contrast the apostle draws. Some are "found worthless as regards the faith" and the end is, "Their folly shall be completely manifest to all". Then the contrast is in verse 10: "My teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, endurance". There are the imitation and the genuine. Timothy had followed up

the genuine; he had seen it in Paul, and that was the line Timothy was on. We have to be on that line too; we have to follow up what is vital.

Rem The Lord could say of Himself, "Altogether that which I also say to you" (John 8: 25), and Paul could point to his manner of life for us to follow.

CAC There was perfect transparency in the Lord and transparency in the apostle. We ought to consider more than we have done the life and character of Paul. You see Christianity in Paul, if I may say so; you cannot quite see it in Christ; that is to say, you do not see the divine triumph in Christ, because He was a Man out of heaven. But you see the divine triumph in Paul, "who before was a blasphemer and persecutor, and an insolent overbearing man" (1 Timothy 1: 13). It is in such a man you see the divine triumph. People say we must be occupied with Christ. Yes, I say, and with Paul also. He is put before us as a model, and the spirit and service of Paul are an integral part of Christianity. He says, "Thou hast been thoroughly acquainted with my teaching, conduct". That is the triumph. In Christ you see the power and grace that could effect the triumph. But in Paul *you see* the triumph. If ever a man was marked by what was diabolical it was Paul, and yet you see such a man transformed, the spirit and life and ways of Christ reproduced and perpetuated in a man who still has the flesh in him, who is still, as we say, in mixed condition. There is the triumph of God.

Rem Yes; the Lord only could say, 'The devil has nothing in me'.

Rem We read that Saul was to be "turned into another man" (1 Samuel 10: 6).

CAC Yes, those early chapters of Samuel show us the moral road to the kingdom; they are most instructive.

NOTES OF A READING 2 Timothy 2: 23 - 26; 2 Timothy 3: 1 - 9 Is there not a right and a wrong way of contending? Jude speaks of contending for the faith. A verse in Proverbs says, "Answer not a fool according to his folly", and then, "Answer a fool according to his folly" (Proverbs 26: 4, 5).

CAC It is better to avoid some foolish questions altogether as waste of time. It might be better to ask such a man if his sins are forgiven! We should all avoid contention, and should be able to tell him something — if he will listen — so that things are met by the truth. It speaks of "setting right" those who oppose the truth; somewhat different from contending with them, is it not?

Rem With a mixed condition, men with their natural minds bring in unspiritual thoughts. In some parts of the country such terrible thoughts have been brought in as to make readings of the Scriptures impossible; only addresses

can be given. Proverbs 8: 5 speaks of finding "sense", "Ye foolish, understand sense" (or heart, see note a, Darby Translation). What comes out of and into the *heart* is then of God: "Those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2: 22). The Darby Translation has a footnote to verse 23 about a man following his own mind and will.

CAC The *truth* is to be maintained; there is to be no surrender of it.

Rem It is a question of bringing in the truth as governing the position, something positive, where there has been something negative.

CAC The Lord did not always answer questions, but dealt with the questioner's state of soul. Wisdom and spiritual power are needed to meet such questions. To bring forward what is positive truth is the thing, and they may be set right. "If God perhaps" — it is doubtful, but there is the possibility. There are professing believers who may be taken in the snare of the devil, a very solemn thing to contemplate. People who are wrong may not be subject to Scripture; I have no more to say to them if they do not submit to what Scripture says.

With the preaching of the gospel you open people's eyes, whether they accept it or not; that is, you give them the truth of the position. Their eyes are opened all the same and they have the opportunity of seeing things as they are.

Ques That they might wake up for God's will, could you say (verse 26)?

CAC Yes. One may have a thought not according to God's will, and then wake up to it.

Rem We may be brought up in what is erroneous, and the light comes and releases the wrong thought.

CAC It is a wonderful thing for any of us to be brought into harmony with God's will, having always wanted to pursue our own. It is the greatest miracle conceivable. There is nothing we are more fond of than our own ideas.

Ques Is there the side of proving all things by the Scriptures?

CAC It would refer to what is said in the assembly.

Rem We ought to be glad to be adjusted to the truth. The point is to be balanced in the truth, not to 'specialise'. Some get taken up with an idea and never get away from it the rest of their time.

Ques The product of the underlying will comes out in detail in chapter 3. Self-expression comes out in this sad category, would you say?

CAC Much of modern philosophy would encourage a man to develop greatness on that line, but it is correspondence with the devil, nothing of God in it. It is increasingly difficult in an environment like this to get a man's ear for the gospel, or for what is of God, so as to make headway. It will be more and more difficult to maintain anything that is of God. It will lead up to men reverting to the original type — what they were as natural men before christianity came. As christianity is given up they will revert. It is going to be more and more difficult to maintain any testimony for God.

Ques Is there any difference between "the latter times" (1 Timothy 4: 1) and "the last days"?

CAC "The latter times" are more the things seen in popery, more what was seen in the last century. "The last days" would be more the giving up all that there is of God — what is morally like God given up. Along with it all there is a certain imitation, "A form of piety but denying the power of it", like Jannes and Jambres. So the antichrist is always like a man, as Christ is, though his voice is like a dragon's.

NOTES OF A READING 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17; 2 Timothy 4: 1 - 8 What is meant by "instruction in righteousness"?

CAC Righteousness is an extensive subject and there is need for constant instruction. It is a subject for the higher classes as well as the lower ones. It is educational. We are learning what is eternal; the new heavens and new earth will be marked by righteousness dwelling. It is an eternal state, the dwelling there of righteousness.

Ques Does it not enhance the triumph of God that He can teach us this in a time of lawlessness?

CAC In the psalms, righteousness is regarded as an attractive subject. Would it contain everything that is in the will of God?

Ques Would you say more what is in your mind?

CAC I was asking a question!

Rem We speak about righteousness reigning.

CAC At the present it is more a question of righteousness reigning, but the assembly should surely go beyond that in apprehension and should be the dwelling-place of righteousness as it will be known in the eternal state, when the will of God has taken the place of every other element. It would now include the mystery, the thought of the assembly; that is, what is right. It is a great thing to be instructed in what is right in the divine estimate; it is

instruction in what is eternal. Perhaps we have been a little limited in our thoughts of it. We are favoured to be here this afternoon to be instructed in what is to be eternal, and we find it all in a written and permanent form as a record. We are all, seniors and juniors alike, set together to be instructed in what is going to subsist eternally. We are accustomed to what is all wrong.

We are to pay attention to every word of God to us. We are encouraged by instruction to go from a scene of lawlessness into a scene of righteousness. The assembly and our relations with the brethren are things we do not come into suddenly; they are not like being born again, but they are things we get into by instruction. As it says, "They shall be all taught of God" (John 6: 45). "Born of God" is initial. We must put the instruction in righteousness into practice or we get a bad conscience.

Rem So a position physically is not sufficient.

Ques "He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalm 23: 3). Is that what you were referring to in the Psalms?

CAC A number of psalms refer to righteousness and our having pleasure in it, delighting in it, loving it. *Loving* righteousness is a great thing.

Ques What would "every good work" mean?

CAC That goes with what was said as to working things out practically. Preaching and the ministry of the Lord's servants are all part of this great instruction. The assembly is the only place where you can get a good education.

The man of God is qualified, having passed the test, and so can be trusted to impart the right kind of instruction.

Rem The disciple shall be as his teacher.

CAC Very good indeed. The object is to bring us up to the measure of the teacher. It applies in the fullest way to the Teacher.

Rem A divine work is going on to produce meekness for the place we are to occupy.

CAC "Blessed they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for *they* shall be filled" (Matthew 5: 6). It is something to live on, is it not?

Rem The enemy would discredit the Scriptures, and we can see why.

CAC All Scripture is divinely inspired, every word of the Scriptures coming to us as giving what is in the mind of God. And all this is in view of the appearing.

Ques Does this charge, "Before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge living and dead", show the great issue at stake?

CAC It is a most solemn appeal, is it not?

Ques Is that why he says, "Proclaim the word"?

CAC Yes. He has in mind the general departure and the need for the word to be authoritatively proclaimed.

Ques Would you distinguish between the three things in verse 1: Christ Jesus, who is about to judge living and dead; His appearing; and His kingdom?

CAC They are three very solemn things; they all will actually happen in this world — He is about to do this. Everyone will have to pass His scrutiny.

Rem God "has set a day in which He is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the man whom He has appointed" (Acts 17: 31). We are to be linked with the glory of that day and the righteousness of it now.

CAC Yes. Hundreds of millions alive on the earth will see Him coming with the holy angels.

Rem One sees the need of setting things right before the incoming of these events.

CAC The rights of Christ are soon to be asserted publicly. The thought of the rapture has taken too great a place in the mind of the saints, and it has tended to looseness, J.B.S. said. The great objective is the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. The rapture has come in by the way, in two scriptures only, while the appearing is mentioned in numerous Scriptures. It is the secret of the assembly that we are coming with Him; "When the Christ is manifested ..., then shall *ye* also be manifested with him in glory" (Colossians 3: 4). It might be asked, 'How can we come with Him?' The answer to that is the rapture, when He will descend from heaven for us with a shout, etc. What is in view is *coming with Him*. This is the reason of the alteration of the line of 235:6 to, '*bring us* with Thee as Thine own'. The old hymn book had given far too much prominence to the rapture, it was felt, so several hymns relating to it have been left out to restore the balance of the truth. "And to await his Son from the heavens", 1 Thessalonians 1: 10 says. We are waiting for Him to judge the living and the dead and bring in His kingdom.

Rem "Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13: 43).

CAC So it is a test of righteousness. If I pursue the line of righteousness I shall get the crown of glory. I could not love the appearing otherwise, though I

might look for the rapture to take me out of pressure.

Rem The rapture has not quite to say to a moral state, the appearing does.

CAC So the Master takes account of His bondmen (Matthew 18: 23). "Trade while I am coming" (Luke 19: 13) is to carry on in the light of the coming kingdom. What I am doing *this week* is going to stand the scrutiny of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. The Lord would have us consciously standing at the judgment-seat all the time.

Rem Timothy is told, "Fill up the full measure of thy ministry".

CAC All is to further righteousness amongst the saints, and it becomes more urgent as things get worse around us. What little measure we have, we are to go on with it and not be limited to available opportunities. "Do the work of an evangelist". Timothy was not an evangelist, but that does not absolve him from the work of an evangelist. We cannot let ourselves off from doing the work of an evangelist, any one of us.

Rem We only have one evangelist named as such in Scripture, and that is Philip.

Ques What is the work of an evangelist?

CAC The work of an evangelist is summed up in three words. A verse in Isaiah says, "O Zion, that bringest glad tidings, get thee up into a high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest glad tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up,

be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God" (Isaiah 40: 9). I should say *that* is the work of an evangelist, that is the gospel in three words, to get people, if we possibly can, to look at God as we know Him. Zion and Jerusalem are looked at here as bringing in glad tidings and crying to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" and the gospel is what God is for poor fallen man.

"THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST"

2 Timothy 4: 5

It is impossible to know the Saviour without longing to make Him known to others. His unspeakable love claims the utmost devotion of every ransomed heart, and kindles the desire to make Him known far and wide amongst the sinners for whom He bled. The woman of Sychar cannot rest until she has said to the people of the city, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?" (John 4: 29). Andrew has no sooner found the Messias than he runs for his brother Simon to share the blessing (John 1: 41). Philip has no sooner beheld the beauty of Christ than he is found bringing Nathanael to the Saviour (John 1: 45). And thus, in some measure, it ever is.

Answer, every believing heart! Is not this a cherished desire? Hast thou not deep longings to make known thy Saviour's name in all its living power? Wouldest thou not be delighted to see multitudes at His feet, joyful in His salvation and rapturous with His praise? Does not thy spirit kindle with joy at the thought? In the Old Testament, God's witnesses were impelled by a command from *without*, but in the New Testament there is also a constraint of love *within* (2 Corinthians 5: 14). It is characteristic of the dispensation that Moses reasons with the Lord to be excused from going at all (Exodus 4: 10); while Paul reasons with Him to be allowed to stay at Jerusalem (Acts 22: 19, 20). Yes! there is a desire in every believer's heart to make known the Saviour.

It is our blessed privilege to sound out the word of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1: 8), and to hold forth the word of life (Philippians 2: 16), but this demands a path of decision and self-denial which our hearts often shrink from, and thus the desire to do so is nipped in the bud. The sword of violent persecution is sheathed at present, but in the fear of misapprehension and ridicule, Satan has found a more potent means of silencing our lips. How often, 'It will be thought out of place'; 'They will think me odd and peculiar', have closed our mouths! Shame on our coward hearts!

Let us cry to the Lord, like the disciples in Acts 4, that we may speak His word "with all boldness". It was the earnest desire of the apostle (Ephesians 6: 19, 20) that he might open his mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the glad tidings; that therein he might speak as he ought to speak. This spiritual boldness is what we need. Not the forward flippancy of the flesh that irritates without convicting, but the calm courage of the one who can say, "I have a word from God unto thee" (Judges 3: 20).

Nor let us be discouraged by the consciousness of our own weakness; rather let us glory in it as that which makes room for Christ's power. How sad that we should be considering difficulties and probabilities, which would never have a place in our minds if self was not before us instead of Christ, while souls are perishing around us! Why should we calculate our abilities and resources, as if we were sent to warfare at our own charges? Have we not received the Holy Spirit to empower us to be witnesses unto Christ? Then let us lay aside indifference and sloth, and be followers of him who said, "I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that *they* also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2: 10).

The sovereignty of God in grace was not distorted by the apostle into an excuse for indolence and indifference, but with him it formed the spring of an energy in service which never tired, and is a blessed fact pregnant with encouragement to every worker in the gospel field. To know that there are elect souls whom God will bless, and that if we do not seek them out God will send somebody else to do it, ought first to fill our hearts with prayer that we may be guided like Eliezer to the very spot where we shall find them, and then it ought to make us very earnest in dealing with souls when we reflect that, in the sovereignty of God, their eternal salvation may depend, instrumentally, on the few words we say to them, or the tract we put in their hands.

Oh! brethren, this is a day of good tidings, let us not hold our peace. Let us imitate the blessed example of those believers who "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8: 4, Authorised Version). Let us arise to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4: 5). Let us not attempt to cast off the responsibility of this great privilege. Let us not ask in guilty indifference, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Let us consider these striking and solemn words, "Deliver them that are taken forth unto death, and withdraw not from them that stagger to slaughter. If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not, will not he that weigheth the hearts consider it? And he that preserveth thy soul, he knoweth it; and he rendereth to man according to his work" (Proverbs 24: 11, 12). Nor let us forget that "A true witness delivereth souls" (Proverbs 14: 25), and "He goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for scattering; he cometh again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves" (Psalm 126: 6). "So then, my beloved brethren, be firm, immovable, abounding always in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15: 58).

In conclusion, we cannot be too solemnly reminded that gospel testimony in conjunction with a worldly walk has a terribly hardening effect on sinners. If, like Lot, we live near the world and like the world, the world soon comes to the conclusion that there is not so much in it after all. Small wonder that

loving invitation and solemn warning alike fail to awaken souls when they come from those who are identified with the world. In Lot's case, "But he was as if he jested, in the sight of his sons-in-law" (Genesis 19: 14). It is the one who comes to the world as Jonah went to Nineveh — out of the jaws of death, in resurrection power, a man of another sphere, without a single moral link with the scene against which he denounced judgment — whose testimony takes mighty effect. May there be a complete divorce between us and the ways of the world; and in the power of this Nazariteship may we bear witness to sinners of redemption accomplished and judgment approaching.

2 TIMOTHY 4 (NOTES OF A READING)

2 Timothy 4: 9 - 22

CAC What belongs to this age will be broken up and set aside at His appearing, so it would not be possible to love both, would it?

Rem Loving His appearing involves a course down here just as loving this present age does; it is not just looking forward to the time for Him to have His rights, but it governs our present conduct. Demas went in for everything that was current on the earth.

CAC Loving His appearing is not merely an event, but the state of heart that values all that is coming in at the appearing.

Rem Both the rapture and the appearing are calculated to produce certain effects in us, and would work out in a certain way, as with Mephibosheth who neither showed outward gladness nor took up any position.

CAC Everyone in Jerusalem could see what he was looking out for. The slothful bondman who hid the talent could not be said to love His appearing. It would imply an extreme degree of faithfulness.

Rem So the crown of righteousness would be something superlative in that way. On the mount, Peter is engaged with that glorious Person.

CAC Yes, and he carried all the time the impression of what he had seen.

Ques Would the testimony be maintained at full height in that way? "He received from God the Father honour and glory, such a voice being uttered to him by the excellent glory" (2 Peter 1: 17).

CAC Yes. The Lord loves persons of that type. The Lord preserved certain saints; their walk and ways and state of heart were such as to call forth the love of Christ.

Ques What did the apostle refer to in verse 10, "Demas has forsaken me", and, of Mark, in verse 11, "He is serviceable to me for ministry"?

CAC It looks as if Paul himself was a great test. He was so personally representative of the Lord that it was a very solemn thing to leave him. All in Asia had turned away from him, he had said.

Rem It would be a test today regarding our relations with the brethren. If we love His appearing it is a question of finding companionship, etc.

CAC It is part of our necessary exercise to take account of persons; not only doctrine, but persons, everybody that we come in contact with, how they

really stand in connection with the Lord and His testimony. You do not commit yourself exactly to everybody.

Rem It is not altogether what a person holds, but how he conducts himself, showing what is in his heart.

CAC That is very important. We are called upon to discern the character of persons, especially those having the appearance of serving the Lord.

Rem It was not very commendable to go to Thessalonica.

CAC When we go wrong, we go to persons who are congenial to us. We are all tested by the kind of people we associate with. We should be on the lookout for the most spiritual persons. It was the greatest privilege of that day to be with Paul; there was great comfort for the spirit, but probably not for the body.

Rem Paul was living in the presence of the righteous Judge, and it would be a test to be with him.

CAC Tychicus had a very good reason for leaving Paul, for he had a mission. Sometimes service has to take precedence over privilege; there might be a service calling us to give up privilege. Even spiritual privilege may become a selfish thing.

Rem "Serviceable to me for ministry" — ministry was before him.

CAC Departure marked so many, but there was at least one who sought Paul's company — one who formerly refused his company.

Rem Mark was to be brought with Timothy.

CAC He has to be content to accept a subordinate position, which is a test.

Rem Tychicus is a spiritually affectionate link between Paul and the brethren.

Ques Would this suggest that Mark's gospel would be useful as supporting Paul in a peculiar way in service?

CAC Yes, I think that is good. In service Mark was one who could give help. It would lead us to peruse Mark's gospel, and "Luke alone is with me" would lead us to consider Luke's gospel. Both would support Paul. I suppose John had not at this time written anything.

"Books" and "parchments" make us think of what was written — they are not to be overlooked, whether the Scriptures or other profitable writings. I do not think you would have found any worldly books in Paul's library.

Ques Is there any difference between the books and the parchments?

CAC It seems to show that amongst things recorded in written form there might be different grades of value. We need not attach the same value to every book published. Parchments would be intended to be permanent, something that would bear a good deal of handling. There is certain ministry of that character; other ministry would be for the time.

Ques What would the cloak be; it has been said it was his purse?

CAC That would not be of much value. The cloak would suggest the measure of the man, a big or small man.

Rem "Come before winter". We are liable to forget that side — the needs of the servant.

CAC Legitimate needs are considered by the Lord and allowed for in His arrangements. Paul had left a good bit at Troas as well as his cloak.

Rem You are speaking of his address at Troas (Acts 20:9).

CAC I would give something to have notes of that address! He gave them a wonderfully comprehensive outline of the ministry of the assembly.

Rem Daniel knew by the books.

CAC He had paid attention to Jeremiah. Had he been careless he would not have known that the captivity would be seventy years.

If we pay attention to the ministry, we know what is going on in the ways of God; we should not know what is going on in the world by reading the world's literature.

Rem Would the books suggest what had been put in order, current things? There were things to be set in order by the assembly for all time. What is particularly important is that which is current, the other may be basic and holds for all time; there is that which is special to the period. Parchment would be something loose in contrast to books. We are left to speculation.

CAC It calls attention to the importance of what is written and available in a permanent form.

Rem Parchments might refer largely to the New Testament writings prior to Paul, because he came in after.

CAC Yes, you can picture Paul's delight if he could have got hold of one of the gospels, if any of them were written in his lifetime.

Then it says, "Alexander the smith did many evil things against me".

Ques Do you suppose he was a Christian or just an opponent possibly?

Rem Paul leaves him with the Lord, as in verse 8, "The Lord, the righteous Judge".

CAC It is a statement, "The Lord ... will render to me in that day". It is a fact.

Rem There is a withstanding of the words of Paul today, we must beware of this.

Rem He seems to have felt very much that all deserted him.

CAC It refers to those who had been with him; they had run away from the colours.

Rem It was what the Lord had to go through, "And all left him and fled" (Mark 14: 50).

CAC It is the difference between weakness and will — I suppose it was a wicked will in Alexander, he was a definite adversary. It was a will which must be dealt with in judgment, but these brethren deserted him through weakness, they could not stand the test, they deserted him. There was a great difference morally between the two. They saw what was coming, his execution. A great deal that transpires is through weakness, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

2 TIMOTHY 4 (NOTES OF A READING)

2 Timothy 4: 16 - 22

CAC Paul was a man with the glory shining in his heart.

Ques "The Lord stood with me". What does that mean? Deliverance out of the lion's mouth was something Daniel proved.

CAC In this case there was much more than the deliverance of the servant at stake. "That through me the proclamation might be fully made", etc. We should like to have a report of that address, would we not? We have to gather it from the writings of Paul and what he said on other occasions.

Rem The vessel is nothing without the power for what is entrusted to him.

CAC This was just the one occasion he had, and perhaps he did not speak for more than half an hour, probably less, and yet to put the whole proclamation into it without leaving out any essential part of it was a wonderful preaching.

Ques Could it have failed to have result?

CAC You can hardly suppose it went for nothing, but it is an official kind of thing. The importance of what was proclaimed was far greater than any results that might follow, so we are not told how many conversions there were — Paul speaks of "my first defence". It was what he stood for. He was "set for the defence of the glad tidings", it says elsewhere (Philippians 1: 16).

Ques "The lion's mouth" — what do you think of that?

CAC He was delivered from the mouth of the lion. He was set at liberty, it is said, for a season and went to Spain. On the return he was taken prisoner again, then his second epistle was written, and his execution took place. Verse 18 shows that his confidence in the Lord was unshaken, and today *we* have the same source of power and the same assurance to be helped. "The Lord shall deliver me from every wicked work, and shall preserve me for his heavenly kingdom". This would not be interfered with by Paul being executed. At the close he brings in the thought of what is heavenly.

This proclamation was the completion of his service and a great official occasion when great gentile dignitaries were present — the whole gentile world in principle — an important event in the history of the world as he stood there as a personal representative and ambassador for God. What can you do to intimidate a man like that spoken of in 2 Corinthians 1: 9?

'The power of the gospel is in the facts of the gospel' (J.N.D.).

TITUS 3 (NOTES OF A READING)

Titus 3: 3 - 7

CAC Questions often arise in the minds of young believers, and old ones too sometimes, as to the Spirit, and it is well for us to see how the Spirit is given and for what purpose. We find in this scripture that it is one great expression of the kindness and love of the Saviour God to man. There is not a feature on man's side which is commendable; Paul says, "We were once ourselves also without intelligence, disobedient", etc. (verse 3). That is the condition on our side, and the kindness and love of our Saviour God appeared in those conditions; and His mercy appeared, not on the principle of works which we had done, but it is all God's doing from first to last. God's doing and what we have done are plainly contrasted. God's object in appearing in kindness and love to man was to introduce an entirely new condition, which is spoken of here as the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. All is from God's side, and it is pure mercy; it is important to see that.

Ques How far does the renewal of the Holy Spirit go?

CAC I think it involves everything; it is the basis of everything right through to eternal life. What strikes one in the scripture is the extraordinary readiness of God to give the Spirit. My impression is that God gives the Spirit as soon as ever He can; that is, no one ever had any desire for the Spirit that was ever anything but a very feeble desire, but it was the purpose of God to give us the Holy Spirit, and He was set upon giving the Spirit.

Rem That is very important; it is God's gift.

CAC Yes, because many people do not recognise there is nothing scanty about the Spirit. Many people are like a man who has an estate: he has some property, but he does not know there is a gold mine on the estate. Some day he wakes up to the fact, and that changes his whole attitude of mind. He has not worked it out yet, but he has that which can be worked to produce wealth to an unlimited and incalculable extent.

Ques What would make us desire these things?

CAC Nothing but mercy; the point is, am I content to go on in verse 3? I do not suppose there is one person here who would say, I am content. It shows that the mercy of God has reached us. It is extraordinary in Scripture how many different ways the Spirit is presented and received. It seems as if it were to prevent any cut-and-dried dogma (Proverbs 1:20-23). It is put that way, as it were: If you will only turn from the foolish (those in Titus 3: 3) I will pour out My Spirit. That is the greatest pleasure of God. We get it in type in the

prodigal son; he has turned in his mind. What happened? The father sees him and runs to the far country; that is the type of the gift of the Spirit.

Rem It is striking the way it is put in Proverbs 1.

CAC Yes; because it shows a turning round; God is so delighted to give the Spirit; washing of regeneration and renewal of the mind, that is the way. A time comes when the soul realises it is a privilege to be separated from the world by the death of Christ. I do not think repentance has its right place till, like Isaiah, we judge the world. He says, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6: 5). So Peter says, "Be saved from this perverse generation". "Repent and be baptised ... . For to you is the promise and to your children" (Acts 2:40; Acts 2:38,39). God says, I want to give every one the Spirit if they will have It.

Rem And so the Spirit fell on Cornelius's company.

CAC Yes, Peter says, "As I began to speak" (Acts 11: 15). The moment Christ was presented, the Spirit fell upon them — he had not said many words. It shows how God delights to give the Spirit. It is the way of God's salvation. He is saving people out of the world.

Rem Peter's remark was striking for an evangelist when he says, "Who indeed was I to be able to forbid God?"

CAC That is very fine. The whole system is wrong and he recognises that; many a believer feels that, and feels he should be glad to know of anything to come between his heart and this naughty world; the death of Christ comes in. Peter says, "Which figure also now saves you, even baptism" (1 Peter 3: 21), referring to the flood. Every one here can say, 'Thank God, I can accept His salvation'. If we have never accepted before, we can now. It really severs the link with the world.

Rem That is a very important point.

CAC Yes; it is the question of the kindness and love of a Saviour God. I can look up and see nothing but kindness and love, and they have appeared to make it possible for me to have the death of Christ between me and the world; so that I do not want to have part in the world; and it links us with all that is of God, with everything in God's world; God has a world of His own.

Ques Is that a progressive movement?

CAC I think you will find you have a gold mine and you have to work it out. If people would only get on to the right side; they get thinking about whether they have the Spirit; but the thing to be occupied with is the One who gives

the Spirit. It is poured out richly. At the beginning of every gospel, the Lord Jesus is introduced into the world as the One who came to baptise with the Holy Spirit — to immerse His own entirely in the Holy Spirit.

Ques Do you think there are many believers who have the Spirit without knowing it?

CAC Yes, I do; a man told me he had been praying for four years for the Spirit, and thought it was very hard that God would not give him the Spirit; then he suddenly found he had had the Spirit all the time.

Ques How do you account for that?

CAC The kindness and love of a Saviour God has not been taken in by the soul. If a *soul loves* the Lord Jesus Christ, He says, "I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter" (John 14: 16). Another scripture says, He gives the Spirit "to those that obey Him" (Acts 5: 32); then another, to those "that believed on him" (John 7: 39). The moment Christ gets a place before the heart — not because there is anything good in the soul — the moment Christ is appreciated, the soul sets to its seal that God is true. God says, I will give you the Spirit; that is what I have been waiting to do all the time.

The Samaritans got the Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8: 14 - 17); but there was a special reason for that: Samaria had been a rival city to Jerusalem. If God had poured out the Spirit on Samaria apart from Jerusalem there might have been a division, but it was all linked together, so that God was pleased that they should wait till the apostles came over.

Ques Do you judge the eunuch had the Spirit?

CAC Oh yes, he went on his way rejoicing.

Rem That was the evidence of the presence of the Spirit.

CAC Yes, if you read the epistle to the Romans, you do not find how people get the Spirit. You find they get forgiveness and justification and redemption, all through our Lord Jesus Christ; then suddenly you find the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit; they have got the Spirit. So great is the value of Christ and the work of Christ that it frees the heart of God to bestow the Spirit; I can thank God that He has ever thought of such-a thing; God does it, it is His kindness, love and mercy; He could not act in any other way.

Rem He speaks of giving His Spirit to those who ask (Luke 11: 13).

CAC Yes, in John 4 He says to the woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of

him, and he would have given thee living water". He actually prompts her to ask.

Ques It does not always come that way, does it, that we pray for the Spirit? Is it not the normal way that we are engaged with the Lord Jesus and God seals that with the Spirit?

Does not the asking apply to those who have the Spirit?

CAC Yes, these instances are to show the willingness of God.

Ques Some people are looking for a second blessing; is that not a mischievous thought?

CAC Yes; I think people on that line are occupied with themselves and not with Christ. The Lord is the One who baptises with the Holy Spirit. My point is to get round to the divine side. Suppose that one has real pleasure in the things of Christ, that would be an evidence of the presence of the Spirit: suppose one is happy in the love of God and can say, "Abba, Father", it shows that the Spirit of God is there.

Ques Is not salvation prominent in the previous chapter?

CAC Yes, it is that complete divine deliverance that takes us out of verse 3, and puts us into that world where eternal life is.

Ques Would it have a bearing on our life now?

CAC Yes, a great bearing. It is the renewal, so that instead of wanting to gratify the flesh, we begin to be exercised in relation to God, and our place in the body. I was thinking of Romans 12: 2 when I said that: "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind". It seems to me that this exercise is connected with the renewal of the Holy Spirit; there begins to be a new character of thinking and we begin to be exercised as to the place God would have us fill in the body; that comes in in a practical way.

Rem That is helpful.

CAC That is how deliverance is found practically. First you have your gold mine, now you have to work it, so that the wealth may be utilised in a practical way. God has put you into a new position in the body of Christ, and deliverance is realised as we fill our place in the body. Renewal of the Holy Spirit leads to renewal of the mind, and we realise we are set here and have an appointed place to fill according to the mind of God.

Ques This question leads to a transformation, does it not?

CAC Yes; the apostle says, "I say ... to every one that is among you, not to have high thoughts above what he should think, but to think so as to be wise, as God has dealt to each a measure of faith" (Romans 12: 3). Every one of us has faith to do something.

Ques Not faith for everything?

CAC No, it is a question of intelligent service, service connected with the renewed mind. It is interesting to see the different minds spoken of in Romans. First there is the reprobate mind — one without moral discernment. If people do not like to retain God in their thoughts they get a reprobate mind judicially, they lose all power of moral discernment and do uncomely things (Romans 1: 28 - 32). Suppose the converse is true, I shall get an exercised mind, as in chapter 7. The mind there has little knowledge of God as "our Saviour God", he has not a renewed mind, but he has an *exercised* mind. He has not yet the knowledge of the kindness and love of a Saviour God; he knows the law and is striving to keep it, but has no power.

Ques What is the deliverance at the end of the chapter (Romans 7)?

CAC When I was a youngster, I used to think it was a shame the apostle did not say more about it. I used to wish he would tell us more plainly, I wished he had put in a few more verses to tell us how it came about, but he seems to get all tied up in a knot and then suddenly says, "I thank God". It is like touching a button and the whole thing is illumined and works. If God has come out in kindness and love through Jesus Christ, that very fact involves deliverance. To know God so as to thank Him is the solution to the whole question. A man then has a new way of thinking — he is now thinking down from what God is, and is on the line and current of the Spirit, and in that current there is liberty and happiness, and so he is moved on a stage further. What marks the renewed mind is faith. God has dealt to every one a measure of faith. One of the things God gives faith for is to show mercy with cheerfulness; if you have faith for that, do it. What we have faith for we can be with God about, and what we can be with God about, He can be with us about.

Ques Why does it go on to say, "We should become heirs"?

CAC I think the renewal of the Holy Spirit prompts us to enter into all that God has before Him, "that, having been justified by his grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life", in view of the inheritance.

Rem I should like to have a thought of what that involves, because it would tend to deliver us from things here.

CAC You get filled with new expectations; they are expanded into all the breadth and blessedness of God's world — eternal life. The renewal of the Holy Spirit works in this way, brings us into spiritual expectations and delivers us from this world as an object in our pathway here; so that frees us to let the heart go out in spiritual expectations.

Ques What are we taught to look forward to?

CAC That coming world where Christ is the Centre and Sun; that is the world we belong to, and in heart and spirit we are to be moving that way. "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). God loved the world in view of eternal life; I would say reverently, God coveted that His creature man should have eternal life; that was ever before the heart of God.

In John 7 the Spirit is like a fountain of water springing up to eternal life, so that the desires are the same as those of God. We are so apt to waste ourselves like the woman in chapter 4 who had many objects, and her affections scattered; the water the Lord would give us would unify the affections, gather them up, and centre them in view of eternal life, and then we move in spiritual liberty.

SPIRITUAL ABUNDANCE

Titus 3: 5, 6; Romans 5: 5; John 4: 13 - 15; John 7: 37 - 40

These are familiar scriptures, but one feels the importance of having present with us the thought of the *abundance* connected with the Spirit. It was said of the Son of God, "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him, he it is who baptises with the Holy Spirit" (John 1: 33).

We often get little practically because we look for little, so that one would desire to be encouraged to look for much. The first scripture we read speaks of the Spirit being poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. On the divine side it is the outcome of the kindness and philanthropy of our Saviour God. The manner of His salvation, the character of it, consists on the positive side in the pouring out on us richly of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ our Saviour. He is the blessed Channel of communication. There is a river, a mighty river, of divine fulness, and it finds in Jesus Christ our Saviour an adequate Channel to bring it to us. So that the wonderful wealth of it is immeasurable; it is only measured by the kindness and love to man of a Saviour God, and the ability and competence of Christ to be a Channel to us of all that is in the thought of God; and all is included in the gift of the Holy Spirit. It gives one a great thought of the character of the renewing which God would bring about.

It is said here to be "poured out", showing the immensity, the volume of it. It is not here the reception of the Spirit, or the Spirit indwelling, but the marvellous abundance of what is poured out on us. There are many different thoughts as to the Spirit which are very suggestive. In Titus it is the thought of the abundance — the pouring out on us. That is not exactly Pentecost, but it is the character of the actings of a Saviour God in His kindness and love to man, that He would pour out this immense flood of divine power. He pours it out for the complete deliverance from everything we were under formerly. It is we ourselves (verse 3), not somebody else. He tells us what we ourselves were; every word of it is true, but then the kindness and love to man of a Saviour God have appeared with this flood tide of heavenly power poured out on us.

Then the Lord is introduced as baptising with the Holy Spirit (John 1: 33), taking up those who believe on Him and immersing them in the Spirit. It views the Spirit as an ocean of divine blessedness and power, and the Son of God is competent to take us up and immerse us in the fulness of it. People think of the Spirit as something that comes in and gets a tiny corner in one's heart, so that oftentimes it is a question with believers whether they have the Spirit or

not. I think that shows how little the abundance is known. If the abundance connected with the Spirit were consciously known, no one would have any question about having the Spirit. God would encourage us to think of the abundance of the gift from His side so that we would cry out, 'O Lord, enlarge our scanty thought'. If we could get a sense of the abundance of the pouring out it would prepare us to be filled. There is such an abundance, enough to fill and overflow every vessel under it. We are placed under this abundance like a thimble put under Niagara. We feel we are too small to contemplate it, and that is the proper feeling for christian blessing. It leads to a great cry and exercise for enlargement so as to be able to receive it.

When Paul speaks of the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts, it is a pouring out; not a few drops or a trickling stream. I have been thinking of the abundance of what lies in the Spirit, so that in the believer there is a fountain of water springing up to eternal life; it is an abundant flow. It was never God's thought that believers should have the Spirit in such a way that they hardly know whether they have or not. Many a believer hardly knows whether he has the Spirit or not, and only concludes that he has from statements of Scripture. That is not God's thought. If I have to conclude I have received the Spirit because of what Scripture says, I have not much of the abundance. The wonderful wealth and abundance that lie in the Spirit would fill the soul so that things would be known consciously, and not supposed because of certain statements in Scripture. One admits them and they are divinely true, but the Spirit of God in the soul is a divine presence, not a statement or theory. There are wealth and abundance and divine power coming in which give everything a new character. So there is the renewing of the Holy Spirit, everything getting a new character; instead of what marked us once, there are these new characteristics connected with the pouring out on us richly of the Holy Spirit.

The washing of regeneration comes in to deal with all that former state of things. The death of Christ is brought in to cleanse from all that was there formerly; so that exercises in relation to God may take the place of all the lusts of the flesh; then there comes in the wealth of the Spirit in answer to those exercises.

I think the renewing of the Holy Spirit reviews the matter from the divine side; it is all what God does. There is also the renewing of the mind by which the saint is transformed; it involves exercises on the part of the saints. Being transformed by the renewing of the mind follows exercise of soul. One has to learn to distinguish between what is of God and what is not of God; we have to go through the moral exercise of having our senses exercised to distinguish between good and evil, and to learn to love righteousness and hate

lawlessness. In that way the mind is renewed, it is the result of exercise. The mind is not renewed in five minutes; it is the result of moral exercises which have the effect of transforming the believer, so that, instead of carrying the impression of the present age, he carries the impression of God, he comes out as having the seal of God.

I thought it might be good for us to suggest the thought of the abundance, not so much as a matter of information, we all know it well, but so that we might be stirred up to more earnest prayer and diligence in regard to what is available. I think we reach things practically on the line of the mind being renewed. As having the Spirit, there is great capability for discernment, so that there is intelligent discernment of the things of God. It is a great thing that the mind should be morally educated; as having the Spirit we become capable of moral education. The fear of God becomes effective in the soul and we begin to be exercised in distinguishing good and evil, and refusing what is evil. You find certain things have an injurious effect on you, and you learn to judge them as not being favourable to what is spiritual. All this produces exercise and, as we are faithful in pursuing it, there is a getting rid of things that hinder — all that hinders the abundance being experimentally known. We cannot have real experimental knowledge of things apart from serious exercises in a practical sense. Then the soul becomes capable of taking its place intelligently in the assembly, and being engaged with what is of God, what is connected with divine Persons and Their activities, so that all the wealth of the Spirit is available in the assembly. In the assembly we expect to find a quantity of water. We see in Leviticus 11: 36 that a quantity of water is immune from defiling things. So in the assembly there is a quantity of water — the abundance of the Spirit is normally known there — and there is a power to keep out defiling things.

We have to be exercised as to how we stand personally in reference to the Spirit as having bodies which are the temples of the Holy Spirit; we have to mind the associations into which we allow our bodies to come.

Then we have to be careful over our relations with the brethren; because it is in unworthy relations with the brethren that the Spirit is continually grieved. If the Spirit has formed certain links with the brethren, whatever is contrary to those links is a great grief to the Spirit. If the Spirit has set us together as one body in Christ, we must be careful not to violate the bond. We all feel how dreadful it is to violate a natural bond, as the marriage bond; but there is a greater bond than that. The bond of the Spirit exists, and whatever is inconsistent with that bond is a violation to it. If there is a bad feeling between saints, it is a violation of the bond. No amount of wrong done by a saint is any

excuse for a bad feeling. We often make excuses for bad feeling because of the bad behaviour of a person, but it is no excuse and altogether out of place to have a bad feeling towards a person because he has done wrong; if a feeling is allowed the Spirit is grieved. If my brother is doing wrong there is no excuse for bad feeling on my part. I should take him to the Lord in prayer; there is no reason why I should have a bad feeling, least of all because he has done something against me! These things hinder the Spirit practically on our side, and therefore the abundance is not enjoyed or manifested. Perhaps, instead of finding a full flow of the Spirit, we find restraint and limitations. These things occur because of moral conditions. The sense of the abundance of the Spirit should lead to great exercise. The more sense we have of the abundance which lies in the Spirit, the more exercised we should be with regard to anything that would check the flow of the Spirit.

I think we should look for great development of holy sensibilities. The saints as found as the body of Christ are a very sensitive organism; there is nothing in the world so sensitive as the body of Christ, sensitive of every breath of evil and every movement that is unholy and untrue.

Offering is clearly priestly work, but note that in the types the offerer and the priest are distinguished.

"Having made by himself the purification of sins" is not exactly priestly but what lies in the greatness of Christ's Person.

Is the Sanctifier a priestly thought? It would seem to bring Him to our side, as He and the sanctified are "all of one". We are the brethren of the Sanctifier.

Being "a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God" includes making propitiation for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2: 17). "Every high priest taken from amongst men is established for men in things relating to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; ... on account of this infirmity, he ought, even as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins" (Hebrews 5: 1, 3). "Who has not day by day need, as the high priests, first to offer up sacrifices for his own sins, then for those of the people; for this he did once for all in having offered up himself" (Hebrews 7: 27). "For every high priest is constituted for the offering both of gifts and sacrifices; whence it is needful that this one also should have something which he may offer" (Hebrews 8: 3).

The offering up for sins was done once for all before He set Himself down on the right hand. It is as being seated there that He is Minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle. The offering for sins does not enter into the present priestly service.

But then it remains a fact that "every high priest is constituted for the offering both of gifts and sacrifices", so that this High Priest must have an offering service. But it is quite different from the offering of gifts according to the law. That was done by certain persons amongst whom Christ could never have been. As living on earth He would not even be a priest. Others had that office, but it was only serving the representation and shadow of heavenly things. But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry; this linking on with "minister" in chapter 8: 2.

Gifts and sacrifices unable to perfect as to conscience him that worshipped were offered. But Christ, "by his own blood, has entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption ... . how much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from dead works to worship the living God?" (Hebrews 9: 12, 14). Offering is essential to the whole system which stands connected with Christ as High Priest. But it is the perfect offering of Christ for

sin. His whole ministry as Priest is bound up with the mediatorship of a better covenant established on the footing of better promises (Hebrews 8: 6).

SALVATION IN HEBREWS

The subject of salvation, as spoken of in Hebrews, is an interesting consideration. The Lord is giving a general desire to know more of salvation as a present reality. It has been too much thought of in connection with what is future, but really it is in the present time that salvation is needed. This present world is the scene of the enemy's power and of all those evil things in which the flesh finds its life, but which are not of God. Salvation is connected with the passage of the Red Sea — that by which the people got quite outside Egypt and into a new place (Exodus 14: 13, 15: 2).

In Hebrews we are viewed as "those who shall inherit salvation". That is, salvation is looked upon as the birthright of the saints. Those who despise it are profane persons — like Esau — who have no real appreciation of what is of God, and who think more of the gratification of their natural tastes than of all the blessed things in God's world.

One does not wonder that the question is asked, "How shall *we* escape if we have been negligent of [made light of] so great salvation ... ?" This question is meant to produce exercise in the hearts of all who take christian ground. The great salvation began to be spoken of by the Lord. He brought in deliverance from all that was evil here, and He spoke of a new and blessed place for men in the circle of God's favour — outside the range of sin and death (Luke 14, Luke 15).

Salvation in Hebrews 2 is to bring us out of *the scene of death*. The Lord Jesus has been into death and has annulled him who had the power of death, and He is now the Leader of salvation to draw our hearts after Himself to that bright and blessed scene of glory where He is, and to which He will soon bring us actually.

Then in chapter 5 He is Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. This seems to be salvation from *the action of will*. All the breakdown in the wilderness was through the action of will. The erring heart, the evil (or wicked) heart and the hardened heart (see chapters 3, 4) were all the result of unjudged will. The people had never learnt to hearken in the spirit of obedience to the word of God. In coming under obedience to Christ we find salvation from our own will.

In chapter 7: 25, *infirmity* is more in view. We are constantly liable, through infirmity, to fall under the influence of things connected with this life — cares, trials, bodily weakness, and so on. For all this there is the unfailing

intercession of the Priest, so that we may not be hindered by these things from enjoying our privilege of approach to God.

Chapter 9: 28 gives the consummation of salvation, when the saints will be taken altogether out of the circumstances and condition where the power of evil has had place. But ere that moment comes, God would have us to be *inwardly* apart from all that is not of Himself, and thus in the good of soul salvation (chapter 10: 39). *Christ* is the wisdom and power of God to bring all this about. May He be daily more precious to our hearts!

THE GREATNESS OF THE SON

Hebrews 1: 1 - 14

This epistle opens abruptly without introduction or prelude. The usual style of Paul's epistles (and I do not doubt that he wrote the book) is absent, and for a beautiful reason. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ", would have been out of place in an epistle in which Jesus Christ Himself is presented as the Apostle. The *writer* of the book is out of sight; its subject is at once and gloriously prominent. The statement that God has spoken in the Person of the Son leads at once to a sevenfold declaration of the greatness of the Son. The past, the present, the future, creation, providence, redemption, the glory of God, and the sins of His people are all brought in, not because of what they are in themselves, but on account of His relation to them all. They all proclaim the greatness of the Son, and for that purpose they are introduced.

The universe is mentioned, but it is to state that God has established the Son "heir of all things". Thus, at the very outset, God's object in all the actings of His grace and power is set before us. We shall never understand the actings of God until we know His motive and His object. His motive is love — His own blessed nature — and His object is the glory of the Son. Nothing outside Himself could furnish a motive for God; He acts because of what He is. His own nature is His motive. And His Object is ever the Son, as we have it in the parable, "The kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who made a wedding feast for his son" (Matthew 22: 2). The universe itself would never have existed but as the scene of the glory of the Son. All things were created "for him" (Colossians 1: 16). He is thus presented to us as the blessed and worthy Object of all the actings of God.

We learn first that the Son is the Object of all the Father's counsels, and then we find that He is the Accomplisher of them all. And this even as to the very existence of the created universe. "By whom also he made the worlds". By the Son of the Father's love "were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities: all things have been created by him and for him" (Colossians 1:16). The universe exists by the creative power of the Son; it is through Him that it has its being. In having become "heir of all things" He is to take possession of that which owes its very existence to Himself. It will all be put under His hand, and He will acquire the glory of it all in a public way. And this, let us remember, will be in manhood. As Man He is "heir of all things". He will acquire in manhood the glory of all that has been wrought in the power of His Person, even as to creation. He will be invested

before the universe with the full glory of everything that He has accomplished. All will return to Him; not a ray of glory that rightly belongs to Him will be lost. He is "heir of all things".

But if He created the universe, and is to inherit it, He created it and will inherit it in order to fill it with the glory of God. I apprehend that the expression, "the effulgence of his glory", refers to the place which the Son will take in the universe. He is going to be the Centre and Sun of a universe of bliss which He will fill with the glory of God. The glory of God will come into full and blessed display for the whole universe in the Person of the Son.

The Son is also "the expression of his substance". In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, but it dwells in Him to be expressed. He is "the Word" — the expression of all that is in the divine mind — the full and blessed revelation of God. Until the incarnation God was unexpressed, and therefore unknown, for "no one has seen God at any time"; but, "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him" (John 1: 18). God is in the light; everything that pertains to His nature and character is perfectly disclosed in the Person of the Son.

The Son is also the Upholder of "all things by the word of his power". He maintains the universe which He has created. All the laws and principles of nature are maintained in action by the word of the Son's power. "All things subsist together by him" (Colossians 1: 17). Men of science can tell us something of the vastness and beauty of the principles which operate in nature, and they freely confess that they can only traverse the outer fringe of the wonders of the universe. But how little do they think, in most cases, that everything subsists together by the Son. There is not a bit of creation that is not upheld by the word of His power. God would have us to ponder this — to consider it in all its magnitude — and thus to contemplate the greatness of the Son.

It is this great and wondrous Person who has "made by himself the purification of sins". Other scriptures bring the work of the cross before us as accomplished in weakness and humiliation, done, too, in matchless divine love; but *here*, in keeping with the context, it is *the infinite greatness* of that work which is brought before us. None but a divine Person could take up the question of sins, and of all that was due to the glory of God in respect of them. No creature, however exalted, could be equal to this stupendous work. None but the Son was competent for it, and by Himself He has accomplished it. He has glorified God; that is, He has brought the glory of God into full and everlasting display while making purification of sins, so that God can take up those who were sinners, and can bring them into infinite blessing, yea, into

the knowledge of Himself in grace and love, according to His own counsels. And all this, and the universe of bliss in which it will be displayed for ever, based in righteousness upon that wondrous work wherein the Son has made "purification of sins".

Having accomplished all this according to the greatness of His Person, the Son has "set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high, taking a place by so much better than the angels, as he inherits a name more excellent than they". It is not here that God exalts Him, but in His own personal greatness as the Son He takes the place that is due to Him at the right hand of the greatness on high. It was His rightful place as the Son; no other place was suited to His greatness. May God enable us to contemplate with adoring hearts the greatness of this blessed Person!

In setting Himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high, the Son has manifestly taken a place much better than the angels. In the days of His flesh He was, as to manifestation, "made some little inferior to angels", and this humiliation of matchless grace had been the occasion of His rejection by His people. The Holy Spirit presents Him now to the Hebrews in the place of manifested greatness at the right hand of the majesty on high, but, while thus presenting Him, the Spirit calls attention to the fact that He *inherited* "a name more excellent than they". And what this inherited name is we may learn from the citations of Scripture which follow. The moment the Son came into manhood, He inherited, as the "offspring of David", all the titles and honours of the Messiah. And amongst the dignities and glories of the Messiah, as presented in the Old Testament Scriptures, was "a name more excellent" than could attach to any creature. Angels were well known to the Hebrews as a higher order in creation than man. Psalm 148 gives us the whole scope of creation, with angels at the top and creeping things at the bottom; but the Son inherits a name of greater dignity than could attach to any creature.

"For to which of the angels said he ever, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee?" As born in time, the Messiah is addressed as Son of God. He may be rejected by "the kings of the earth ... and the princes" (see Psalm 2), but He is acknowledged by Jehovah as His Son.

"And again, I will be to him for father, and *he* shall be to me for son". Here He is seen as the true Solomon — the seed of David — the One who will set up God's house in its proper glory, and of whose kingdom God will establish the throne for ever (2 Samuel 7: 13, 14). And God says, "*He* shall be to me for son". Of no creature could this be said. How could any creature, however blessed, be to God all that is expressed in the name of Son? He alone who infinitely transcends all creatures could present to God in manhood that which

called forth all the affections of the heart of God, and which was an adequate object for those affections, and He alone could give to God a response suited to those affections of which He was the blessed and worthy object. He alone could be to God "for son".

"And again, when he brings in the firstborn into the habitable world, he says, And let all God's angels worship him". When God introduces the Son to this world in glory, He calls upon the most exalted creatures to pay Him homage. Great as may be the dignity and strength of these mighty beings, they are but creatures. "As to the angels, he says, Who makes his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire". He has *made* them what they are in His creative wisdom and power. But as to the Son, He uses very different language. "Thy throne, O God, is to the age of the age". The Son is saluted in His own proper and personal greatness. He is above all creatures, and He is the One to whom the universal homage of all God's intelligent creatures is due, and to whom it will yet be rendered. One feels instinctively that such a scripture as this calls for holy contemplation and adoration rather than for exposition.

"Thy throne, O God, is to the age of the age, and a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hast hated lawlessness; therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with oil of gladness above thy companions". Not until the Son takes it will the kingdom be established; but when He takes it, "a king shall reign in righteousness" (Isaiah 32: 1). His kingdom is characterised, as it has been well said, by the perfect discrimination between good and evil — the absolute appreciation of the one and the absolute rejection of the other. Everything will be put right for God and administered for God's pleasure by One competent to do it. The Son alone could bring into manhood everything that was suitable to God, and establish it all in the gracious power of His kingdom. And how unspeakably precious it is to know that He who can be thus addressed by God has "companions". The One who loves righteousness and hates lawlessness has a company who derive from Him morally, a company of those kindred to Himself, because deriving from Himself in new creation according to that wonderful verse in the next chapter, "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren". And it is blessed to note that what here characterises the Son and those brought into association with Him is "oil of gladness". It conveys to me the thought not only that there has there been the perfect discrimination between good and evil, but that good has triumphed over evil, and has found a way of glorifying itself in removing evil and all its effects, so that the Son can bring into the very place where sin was the blessed knowledge of God and of all that is suitable to God. And not only this, but there can be a sanctified company brought into

association with Him outside all the desolation and sorrow of the sphere of sin — brought where there is nothing to intrude upon divine joy. If the whole question of sin is removed out of the way, and the glory of God is fully expressed in the way this has been done, there is nothing to hinder those, who are in the knowledge and good of this stupendous fact, from entering with joy of heart into the blessedness of good as it is found in God Himself. And it is to form us for the appreciation of all this, and to lead us into it, that the Holy Spirit has been given. In His own proper character He is "oil of gladness".

"And, Thou in the beginning, Lord, hast founded the earth, and works of thy hands are the heavens. They shall perish, but *thou* continuest still; and they all shall grow old as a garment, and as a covering shalt thou roll them up, and they shall be changed; but *thou* art the Same, and thy years shall not fail". It would be difficult to find any scripture which gives more striking testimony to the greatness of the Son than the one which is here presented to us. For if we turn to the psalm from which it is quoted, we shall find that these words are Jehovah's answer to the prayer of the afflicted Christ in the day of His trouble. He had said in an earlier verse of the psalm, "My days are like a lengthened-out shadow, and I, I am withered like grass"; and He had turned to Jehovah to say, "But thou, Jehovah, abidest for ever, and thy memorial from generation to generation" (Psalm 102: 11, 12). But when, further on, He goes on to say, "He weakened my strength in the way, he shortened my days. I said, My God, take me not away in the midst of my days!" Jehovah answers Him in the words quoted in Hebrews 2, words which set Him before our adoring hearts as the Man that is Jehovah's Fellow. Yes, the holy Sufferer of Gethsemane is addressed by Jehovah in that hour of solitude and sorrow as the Creator, and as the abiding and unchanging One. Though found in the condition and circumstances of creature man, and brought — in view of His cutting off and having nothing as Messiah here, and of all that was involved in drinking the cup of God's holy judgment upon sin — into an exceeding sorrow which can never be fathomed, and but very feebly apprehended by creature hearts, the Spirit of God does not allow us to dissociate from that unparalleled scene the divine greatness of the Holy One who bowed there in that agony of prayer. Well may we wonder and adore as we contemplate "the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9: 5) thus stooping in the humiliation of matchless grace to bring the testimony of divine love into the very place of sin and death.

Finally we read, "But as to which of the angels said he ever, Sit at my right hand until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet?" Here we come to the point which, it seems to me, the Spirit has had in view all through the chapter.

In verse 3 it was that He "set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high, taking a place by so much better than the angels, as he inherits a name more excellent than they". The place He has taken, according to His own greatness as Son, corresponds with the place in which He is set by God as Messiah. As to the first, He takes a place above all creatures; as to the second, He inherits the excelling name and honours of the Messiah. And that particular feature of Messiah's glory which belongs to the present time is that He is called to sit at God's right hand until God shall put His enemies as the footstool of His feet. That is, Messiah's greatness and glory are in mystery, not in manifestation. It was much for the Hebrew believer, with all his previous history and education, to apprehend this, for it meant a clean break with the earth and all that was reputable and religious here. It meant the bringing home to their hearts, and not less to our own, of the tremendous fact that the One in whom God has spoken — the One who has told all that can be told of God — has been rejected in a way that has left a final breach between God and the whole course of things which obtains here. He sits at God's right hand until victorious and all-subduing judgment shall place His foes as footstool of His feet. The greatness of the One who has been rejected leaves the world without excuse, and accentuates its guilt to a degree which no human words could adequately express. Hence the intense solemnity of the inquiry, "How shall we escape, if we have been negligent of so great salvation, which, having had its commencement in being spoken of by the Lord ... ?" And hence, too, the solemn nature of the warnings which occur again and again in this epistle as to the fearful consequences of apostasy. All turns upon the greatness of the One in whom God has spoken. As it has been justly said, none can speak after the Son, and woe be to those who neglect or turn away from that which He speaks.

But to press the solemnity of this was not my present object, but rather to bring before your hearts the greatness of the Son as that which gives character to christianity. The whole system of blessing, if I may be allowed to speak of it thus, takes character from the Son. It is to emphasise this that we have such a marvellous unfolding of His personal greatness and glory as this chapter affords. Who could measure the greatness of a system of blessing inaugurated by the Son? The more we contemplate His greatness, the more our hearts must be impressed by the blessedness of what is spoken in such a Person. If the Son speaks, it must be to make known the Father's name and nature — to declare the Father's grace and love as unfolded in His own counsels of blessing — and all this revealed according to the measure of the Son, if indeed we may be permitted to speak of *measure* where all is infinite. The prophets were "holy men of God", and they "spake under the power of

the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1: 21); but they could not be adequate to the revelation of infinite grace and love — in short, of the Father. The Son alone was adequate to this, and He has declared the Father. The whole revelation, in the light of which God has set His saints, takes its character and its measure from the fact that it has come out in the Son.

And, on the other hand, the Son has taken a place in which He has become the Object of divine affections and counsels in manhood. It is to a Man that God has said, "Thou art my Son"; it is of a Man that God has said, "*He* shall be to me for son". In becoming thus the Object of divine affections in manhood, the Son has taken a place in which He can be the "firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8: 29). On the ground of His death, and in virtue of new creation, He can have a sanctified company of brethren "all of one" with Himself — His "companions" in the blessedness and joy of the Father's presence. Thus on the one hand He gives character to the revelation but on the other He gives character to the whole company of those who are in the light of the revelation. It is a company of "many sons". The relationship to which all are called is that which is set forth in Him. So that "he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises". He takes His place with His saints, identifying them with Himself, and with His own praise to God. In short, He puts them in the place and blessing of sons. Soon we shall be in the Father's house as sons like Him, and with Him for His eternal glory, who has after such a fashion brought us home to the Father, and for the eternal satisfaction of the Father's heart And even here God would have our hearts to enter into something of the blessedness of this. He would have us to apprehend that we are called to the blessing of sonship — to know that we are loved as the Son is loved, according to those wonderful words, "That the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them". We have the Holy Spirit in this special and distinctive character as the 'Spirit of sonship'. "Because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4: 6).

In short, the whole system of blessing to which we are called by infinite grace takes its character from the Son. Of what vast importance is it, then, that we should have Him before our hearts in all His greatness, so that, on the one hand, our hearts may have a true measure of the greatness and blessedness of the revelation of God, and, on the other, we may know the character of the blessing to which we are called, so as to enter into it and respond to the love that has called us into it, that thus we may be to the Father's pleasure and to the glory and satisfaction of the Son.

THE HUMILIATION, EXALTATION AND SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Hebrews 2: 1 - 18

We have already seen that in the first chapter of this epistle the Son of God is set before us in the greatness of His Person, and in all the excellence of His inherited name as come into manhood. He is set before us in a personal glory which excels that of the most exalted creatures. And His greatness is that which gives character to the revelation which God has made of Himself in the Person of the Son, and it also gives character to the whole system of blessing which He has inaugurated; that is, to christianity in the fulness of its blessings according to God.

In the second chapter, which is now before us, we find the same blessed Person presented in three positions: in humiliation, in supremacy, and in exaltation. We get now the history, if we may so say, of how the counsels of God can be brought into effect in the accomplishment of all His thoughts of blessing, so that in result Christ may be supreme in a universe of bliss when all things — the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth — shall be headed up in Him. We see, too, the ground on which that blessed One can be found in the position of "leader of their salvation" in reference to a company of "many sons" given to Him by God that He may bring them to glory. And we also learn the full privilege of the assembly as introduced by the Son to the knowledge of the Father's name, and we see the place which Christ takes with His brethren as the Singer of praises in their midst. And, finally, He is presented to us as the Deliverer of His saints; delivering them first by power — power which annuls "him who has the might of death, that is, the devil", and which sets free "all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage" — and then delivering them by His priestly grace and succour from what would otherwise be the crushing effect of the innumerable trials and pressures which are incidental to the path of faith and to our present condition of creature weakness.

The very greatness and blessedness of all this would discourage us from making any attempt to set it forth, if we did not know that it is the will of God to have His saints in the light and conscious blessing of His own great and holy thoughts. This gives us strong confidence that His gracious help will not be withheld, as we seek to look a little more in detail at these precious things.

In the first place we learn that it is the pleasure of God that the Son of man should be supreme over all His works (verse 7). Adam was a figure of this, for he was placed at the head of creation to exercise dominion, God thus setting

forth at the very beginning the great thought of His own mind. But Adam was quickly cast down from his excellency, for he proved him self to be unable to stand against the power of evil. Evil could and did touch him, and he fell, we might say, at the first touch. But if the figure has thus broken down, it is that it may give place to the substance — to that which cannot break down, to that which was in the mind of God when He created the figure. For I apprehend it would not be going too far to say that man in innocence was not morally suited to be set over the works of God's hands, and to have all things put under his feet. It was not suited to God that the universe should be set in order without every moral question having its perfect solution. With an innocent man at the head of creation the whole question of good and evil was necessarily in abeyance. Under such circumstances neither righteousness nor holiness could be displayed; the moral ordering of the universe would have been wanting in most essential particulars.

But it was in the wisdom of God to bring all these moral questions into connection with man, and eventually to solve them in the most perfect way, so that man might be set over the works of His hands. That is, God will set the Son of man in supremacy, that there may be in the universe the most perfect and blessed ordering of everything according to all that God is in His nature and moral character. Everything will be subjugated to the One in whom God has been glorified. If God undertakes to set the universe in order, we may be sure that there will not only be the ascendency of power, but the perfect setting forth of everything that is morally suited to God. It is evident that man in innocence (however blessed might be his state in itself) was not competent to take such a place as this, for as yet he knew not good and evil. And certainly it was impossible for man as fallen under the power of evil to be set in such a position. In short, for man to be set in supremacy over the works of God's hands involved the solution of the whole question of good and evil, and for this it was necessary that the One who was above all creatures should be "made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death".

There is infinite moral glory in the humiliation of Christ. The more we ponder it, the more will the greatness, the grace and the moral glory of it astonish our hearts. The One who is above all creatures has been "made some little inferior to angels" to give expression to the wondrous grace of God, and to prove that that grace is greater than sin. Adam aspired to that which was above the measure of a creature, and went down in apostasy from the beauty of innocence to the dust of death. Now the Son in all the competency of His blessed Person has undertaken to bring divine grace and love into the very place of the creature's ruin; He has come into the place of sin and death to glorify God there. And in taking that place, and sustaining all that was involved

in His so doing, the Son of man has been glorified. All the perfection of His blessed Person has disclosed itself, it has come out upon a platform where it can be viewed by all God's intelligent creatures. He has descended that He might maintain everything for God, and all His perfection has been manifested in the way that this has been accomplished. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (John 13: 31).

Every moral question has been fully raised and finally settled. Evil has been exhibited in its full measure, and judgment executed upon it according to the holiness and righteousness of God. But in connection with this the infinite perfection of Christ has been brought into display, and all the goodness, grace, and love of God revealed. So that we know divine perfections, and the blessed nature of God, not as abstractions, but as things which subsist through Jesus Christ, and which have come into contact with evil, and have triumphed over it in such a way that God is free to give effect to all His own purposes of grace and glory. It is evident that the One in and by whom all this has been brought about must be the Centre of God's moral universe. He must fill all things. Nothing else would be suitable to God but that He should be supreme over all the works of God's hands, and have all things put under His feet.

"But now we see not yet all things subjected to *him*, but we see Jesus, who was made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour". The Lord Jesus has not yet exercised the power with which He is invested to subdue all things to Himself, He is not yet in manifested supremacy. But He is in the highest heavenly exaltation — accepted, honoured, and glorified by God. This is the great secret of christianity, if one may so express it. The Son of man is not glorified as yet in any public way; He is glorified in God (John 13: 32). Hence everything connected with Him is of the nature of *mystery*; that is, it is hidden from public view and known only by the initiated. *We* — believers having the Spirit — see Jesus "crowned with glory and honour", but He is hidden from the eyes of men.

It is in the apprehension of Christ as crowned with glory and honour at the right hand of God that we arrive at the true starting-point of christianity. It carries us entirely outside the range of seen things — outside man's world and thoughts altogether — and it introduces us to an entirely new and heavenly order of things. For it is not only that Christ is there personally,

but that He is there as the 'Leader of a chosen race'. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings". It is the great thought of God to bring a company of "many sons" to glory, and Christ is

the Leader of that company. Any company takes character from its leader, and the christian company of "holy brethren" takes character from Christ, the Leader of their salvation. This makes very evident that ours is a "heavenly calling", for a heavenly Christ is the Leader of our salvation. We apprehend the true nature of our calling as we consider Him, and in spirit follow Him in that new place on high. He is to be, according to God's wondrous purpose, the "firstborn among many brethren". The whole company of "many sons" will take character from Him, and be conformed to His image.

When it was a question of the type set forth in an earthly people, Joshua was the leader of their salvation. He led them into the pleasant land of God's promise and purpose, but they had to follow him, and it is not less so with ourselves. The very thought of a leader implies followers, and we shall not take possession of our inheritance unless in spirit we follow our Leader to the glory which He has entered. And I may say here that we should have had no title nor capacity to follow Him there, neither would God have been able to bring us there in righteousness, if the Leader of our salvation had not been made "perfect through sufferings". How could the Son take the place of Leader of a company of *sinners*? He could not lead a company of *sinners* into glory. And, inasmuch as we were under sin and death, there was necessity that He should remove according to divine righteousness everything that attached to us as in the flesh, so that we might be brought to glory in an entirely new state and character — even as "many sons". He could not be the Leader of our salvation — He would not be perfect in this character — apart from those "sufferings" in which He has brought to an end our old state by bearing the condemnation that justly attached to it. It was suitable to God that He should accomplish this blessed work, which involved "sufferings" entirely beyond our comprehension, before He took the place of Leader of salvation to a company of "many sons". He has been made perfect in this character.

And this brings us to a further point. "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren". To sanctify is to set apart for God. The more profound our sense of the holiness of God, and the more we realise the true nature of the flesh, the more conscious we shall be of the immensity and blessedness of the fact that Christ is the Sanctifier of His saints. He has under taken in love to set them apart according to the holiness of God from everything which would not suit that holiness, and to accomplish this He has gone into death. The death of Christ gives one an infinite thought of sanctification. It is impossible to measure it, or to express the completeness of it by going into any detail. The death of Christ is the absolute removal in judgment of all that we are as in the

flesh. Having said this, we have said everything that needs to be said on that side, and there can be no doubt that this is the truth set forth in the cross.

But there is much more to be said on the other side. Christianity is not in any wise a system of mere negations; it is a holy system of divine affections and blessings. If the flesh is judged and ended, it is that there may be a company "all of one" with the Sanctifier; that is, a company in association with Christ as the risen One. "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit" (John 12: 24). And it is important that we should apprehend this as something which is effected by Christ according to the Father's purpose and pleasure. Christ sanctifies His company of "brethren"; Christ bears much fruit; *all* is of Himself, and is the outcome of His death; *all* is entirely outside the history and failure of the responsible man. Indeed, it must be so if the death of Christ is the source from whence everything springs.

Hence "he is not ashamed to call them brethren". He can view them now according to the sanctification which He has Himself effected. He now *appropriates* His own wondrous character; He could say to Mary, "Go to my brethren". His death was only just accomplished. None of the disciples had, as yet, we may safely say, entered into its meaning and value. But *He* knew what had been effected; all was now for Him on an entirely new footing; and by His word to Mary He placed His disciples in this new and blessed association with Himself. His own thoughts concerning them were thus declared. And the one who loved Him was the one who received the communication of His thoughts. Yes, a woman who loved Him got light in advance of all the apostles. There is great encouragement in this. Many of us are very sensible that we are insignificant in gift and energy, but there is no reason why we should not excel in affection. Love will bring us near to the Lord, and then in intimacy with Him we shall learn what His saints are to Him.

"I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises". Christ has declared the Father's name. He could say, "I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known; that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them" (John 17: 26). The great and blessed characteristic of christianity is that the Father's name is declared by the Son. All that God is in His nature — in the activities of His holy love — has been fully made known by the only-begotten Son to a company made competent through divine grace to appreciate that blessed revelation. And then, on the other hand, Christ takes His place in the midst of the assembly to sing God's praises. God dwells, and is known, in the praises of His saints. All the moral perfections and infinite blessedness of God take form in

the praises of His saints, so that the universe may learn what God is through the praises of saints. This makes it essential that God's praise should be in divine perfection, and this is secured by Christ becoming the great Singer of praise in the midst of the assembly. I do not understand this to mean that He sings apart from the saints, but rather that His song finds its expression in the saints. The music of God's praise is found in the assembly, so that in the midst of a groaning creation and of a world where all is discord, and where everything seems to compromise the righteousness, goodness and love of God, there is found a circle whence melodious praise ascends to Him — the praise of all that He has wrought and the praise of all that He is in His attributes and nature. And it is Christ who sings in the hearts of His brethren. The song is such as only *He* could sing, but He sings in the midst of the assembly, and the saints become the mouthpiece of His wondrous song.

The consideration of this may well give our hearts an apprehension of the great privileges and dignity of the assembly. We are of the sanctified company, and as such are entirely divested of everything unsuited to divine love. We are privileged to know our place thus in the sanctuary, and by the Spirit and by the priestly grace of Christ to be abstracted from the world and the flesh, and all things which are connected with our responsible life on earth, so that we may be with Christ as His brethren before the Father's face, holy and without blame in love. Thus entering the holiest we reach a circle where divine love is in perfect rest, and where nothing is seen or heard but Christ — Christ in His brethren, and His song issuing from their hearts. How blessed to realise that we are of such a circle as this! To find our hearts thrilling with Christ's song of praise to God! Thus to be in God's holy shrine, and before His face for the pleasure of His love!

Many believers miss this peculiar and wondrous privilege. They do not go beyond the thought of God's grace to them as sinners, and His goodness and mercy in their responsible life on earth. I trust we may all be more exercised as to how far we have entered upon the true privilege of the assembly. May God give us to pray about it! May every one of us be deeply and continually exercised as to entering in to the privilege which it has been God's pleasure to set before us!

Then, at the end of the chapter, Christ is presented as the Deliverer of His saints, first by His power and then by His priestly grace. Through death He has annulled him that had the might of death, that is, the devil; and the consequence is that His saints are set free from the fear of death and all the terrible bondage which it entailed. Saints in the Old Testament times had not deliverance from the fear of death. Death was not known to them as the place

of Christ's victory, and it was right and pious in them to have the fear of death. Life and incorruptibility were not yet brought to light through the gospel. But now all are in the light of that blessed victory, and are free. No fear of death and no bondage remain for the saint now.

> 'The Lord is risen; our triumph-shout shall be,
> "Thou hast prevailed! Thy people, Lord, are free!"'

Then Christ delivers His saints by His priestly grace and succour from what might be the crushing effect of the innumerable trials and pressures of the pathway here. He is "a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God", and "in that himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to help those that are being tempted". The worldly Christian does not understand the necessity for this succour; he finds himself able to get on without it. But not so the true saint. He finds himself going right against the stream; every influence here is against him; but, through grace, he is set to go on in the path of faith. He is very conscious that the help of Christ is indispensable to him, and he finds that it does not fail him. Christ Himself has suffered from every kind of opposition and trial: He knows exactly the help that is needed; and He does not fail to vouchsafe that help to His tried and feeble saints. In the path of faith you may be misunderstood and discouraged even by your brethren; but Christ will not fail you. He will stand by you, and succour, and strengthen, and encourage you to the end. How blessed to have such a present and gracious Deliverer!

May each one of us prove Him continually as our unfailing resource for each hour of need!

THE SUFFERING OF DEATH

Hebrews 2: 9

The epistle to the Hebrews contains, I believe, a greater number of direct references to the death of Christ than any other book of the New Testament. I have noticed twenty-eight distinct references. The immense importance of the subject justifies our attention being given to it continually. We shall have nothing more wonderful to engage our hearts in heaven.

The Son of man became such in order that He might die; He came into a condition in which He could die. The first aspect of the death of Christ to which the Spirit calls our attention in this epistle is how it stands in relation to the present place of the Son of man as crowned with glory and honour, and to His future place as set over all creation.

The great design of God with regard to Christ could only be carried out through His death. The object in view in His becoming Man was that He should suffer death, and take up all that was in God's purpose for Him on that ground. The present and eternal place and glory of the Son of man depend on His having suffered death. This should have a great place in our thoughts. "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24: 26). The Spirit introduces this aspect of Christ's death to our notice; it is the way by which He enters into His glory. It is not in Hebrews Messiah's glory only, but His widest and fullest glory as Son of man. He enters into it all as having suffered death. He has suffered the sentence passed upon the disobedient creature so that the honour and glory with which He is crowned are the result of His having undergone in grace what had come on the creature as characterised by sin. It is something like Revelation 5: 11 - 14. It is His worthiness as having redeemed in verses 9, 10; but in verses 11 - 14 it is what He is worthy to receive as having been slain.

The Son of man is a title which belongs to Christ as becoming Man to take up all that was in God's thought for man, but when He came in, men were under death, and, on the way to taking up God's glorious thoughts, He entered on God's part into what was on the race of man by sin, thus bringing out how God's heart was towards the fallen man. "What is man, that thou rememberest him ... ?" (Hebrews 2: 6); 'An active recollection, because the object is cared for' (see note c, Darby Translation). Death is a dreadful thing, for it is the evidence of God's displeasure on account of sin, but Jesus has tasted death for every thing so that the whole universe may see how favourable God is to His creatures even when they have come under death. The death of Jesus has a universal bearing. His death is the great expression of the favour of God to

every man or thing. The point is to show that God's favour is greater than sin or death; whatever has come under death through the sin of man, Jesus has tasted death for. So that the sin of man, and the sentence pronounced on it, has given occasion for the favour of God to be expressed in this wonderful way. And the crowning with glory and honour is God's manifestation of His delight in the One who has thus expressed His favour to men as fallen. God will have that to be known; He will have the universe to admire it; He will place everything in subjection to the One who has by suffering death expressed His grace to all that was under death. In this new and glorious way will God be known throughout eternity.

But then there is another thing, connected with the purpose of God's love. God in His supremacy is the One for whom are all things and by whom are all things, and He has formed a purpose in His love to bring many sons to glory. The fact that He will have sons shows that His purpose is a purpose of love, and glory is the consummation of all that such a Being can propose for His own satisfaction. In doing this wondrous thing it was becoming to God to do it in a certain way. He would do it by providing a Leader for this company of many sons, and He would make that Leader perfect through sufferings. The divine thought of sonship included that men should be in God's presence on the ground of God being glorified in love and holiness as to sin. It is not apart from the thought of divine righteousness (2 Corinthians 5: 21). Sonship involves perfect suitability to the holy love of God notwithstanding all that men had been in their former history. They are all to be conformed to the image of His Son; that is, to the image of One glorified after glorifying God here by suffering death. This brings all the value of God being glorified into the place and relationship of the many sons. They are all expressive, and will be eternally, of the holy triumph of God in love where sin had been. What is expressed in Jesus glorified will be expressed in them; it is a position reached by Him after suffering death.

The sufferings of Christ have conferred upon Him complete competency to bring about the great purpose of God's love. God, in bringing many sons to glory, is doing it by making Christ perfect through sufferings, so as to lead them out of all that they were in before and to put them as sons in glory. He is invested with full competency to do this. The point here is that it is done in a holy way, as is implied in the words "sanctifies" and "sanctified" (verse 11). God in purposing to have sons in glory has in mind that Christ shall have the honour of bringing it about — that He should be made perfect, or 'consecrated', to fill that great and wondrous office. So that when the sons are all in glory, they will be there as witnesses to the competency of Christ to lead them there. He was consecrated by the sufferings of the cross so as to be

qualified to carry through this great purpose of love in a holy way. God is entitled to have the full satisfaction of His love, and He is able to bring it about, but He has done it in a holy way by making Christ perfect through sufferings, so that He is seen to be supremely glorious as the One who suffered so that He might carry all through.

Every one of the many sons will be an eternal tribute to His glory.

Until Christ had suffered He could not hold the holy office of being the Sanctifier. But He is now with God on the ground that He has glorified God in death about sin, so that He is entitled to set men apart from sin altogether in the holy value of His sufferings. Sanctification in Hebrews is always sacrificial (see chapters 10: 10, 29; 13: 12). But along with this goes the wondrous thought that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are "all of one". This involves a work of God in the sanctified ones, so that, morally speaking, they have a common origin with Christ, and He is not ashamed to call them His brethren. The thought of "the children" as a special class — "the seed of Abraham" — is distinctly brought before us in this chapter. These are men viewed as objects of the call and work of God, so that they are suited in nature and moral character to be associated with Christ on the wondrous and divinely perfect ground of His own sufferings. The resurrection and glory of Christ are the answer to what He was personally, but the place and glory of the many sons are the answer to His sufferings. He leads into that place as qualified to do so through sufferings. So that while sonship is the gift of sovereign love it is also the precious and eternal fruit of the sufferings of Christ. He leads out all that is here into the blessedness of what is there as consecrated to do so through sufferings. He goes first into that scene of glory in sonship as One whose sufferings have given Him title to lead us there. God brings us into sonship in a way that is morally suitable to Himself.

'There glory bright and fair
Shines with celestial beam;
For He who suffered once is there,
Its centre and its theme'. (225:5)

The place we have in sonship is based upon God being glorified in relation to sin and death. "He has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, 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" (Ephesians 1: 4 - 6). This purpose was formed in sovereign love before sin or death or even the creation of the world,

but God could only bring us into it in a way suitable to Himself through redemption wrought in the suffering of death. This makes evident that when we consider sonship in the light of how we come into it, we must think of it as the precious result of redemption (see Galatians 4: 4, 5; Ephesians 1: 7; Romans 8: 23). In this last scripture, sonship is defined as "the redemption of our body". "The anxious looking out of the creature expects the revelation of the sons of God": all creation will then be set free from the bondage of corruption. The revelation of the sons is their coming out, but as Leader, Christ leads them in. In being the Leader, He is presented to us as the One in whom God's great thought is first set out. He was not in that position until He had suffered, but He is now the Pattern of the whole company of many sons.

The children partake of blood and flesh, and as such, they are subject to death, and the devil has the might of death and would keep in bondage by the fear of death if Christ had not become the Liberator. This brings out another great aspect of His death. "He also, in like manner, took part in the same, that through death he might annul him who has the might of death". He came into the condition of blood and flesh, but He has passed out of it through death. Whatever claim or power Satan might have in regard to men in blood and flesh has been annulled by Christ coming into death as having identified Himself with the children. The devil is annulled so completely that the power of liberation from the fear of death is vested in Christ. He is entitled to liberate the children because He has gone through death on their behalf, though personally exempt from it. He is able to set free all to whom the fear of death brings bondage. This is part of the great liberation which divine grace and love have secured for us in Christ and through His death.

CHRIST SINGING IN THE MIDST

Hebrews 2: 11, 12

Christ singing praise in the midst of the assembly is consequent upon the sin-offering in Psalm 22. He is answered from the horns of the buffaloes. In Hebrews 2 He is the Sanctifier; He has taken up that service; everything essential to the setting apart of the many sons whom God is bringing to glory is found in Him. He is fully qualified for that office, we might say, consecrated to fill it for the pleasure of God. But He exercises that office for certain persons who are sanctified by Him; He does all, and they have the character of "sanctified" entirely on account of what He does as the Sanctifier, so that they cannot be detached from Him or viewed apart from Him in regard to this matter. They are "all of one" or 'all out of one'; what the saints are as "sanctified" is entirely the work of the Sanctifier; therefore there is no flaw in it. (It is, as it were, one piece with Christ, as the cherubim were one piece with the mercy-seat, or Eve one piece with Adam.)

He is the Sanctifier by setting His saints before God in the sanctification effected by His own death. It was God's purpose to bring many sons to glory; so Christ was to taste death for every thing by the grace of God, and He was to be perfected as the Leader of the saints' salvation through sufferings. The Leader is made perfect, or consecrated; He is made fit to be installed in that office, as having gone through the sufferings of death. But then those whom He leads must be sanctified; they must be apart from sins, apart from sin in the flesh. It supposes men of the seed of Abraham; that is, men called of God, men in whom there is divine working. The Hebrews would understand that men must be sanctified in order to have anything to say to holy things. But Christ is the Sanctifier. He has this honour from God, and He and those sanctified by Him are all of one. As before God, Christ and the saints are indissolubly "all of one"; it is a remarkable expression, only found here. He does not say they are one because it is Christ and His brethren. It is not the individual believer joined to the Lord and one Spirit, nor is it the body with Christ as its Head. It is Christ and the sanctified company all of one as being in a perfectly identical suitability to God in His holiness. That could only be as the company is sanctified by Christ. It supposes a work in them, but it is not the work in them that sanctifies them but what Christ does for them. By what He does as "he that sanctifies" they are apart from sin and they partake of His suitability for the holy presence of God. (This links on with being "wholly clean" in John 13, though it is not exactly the same thought. That directs us to a moral cleansing of individuals.) But this sanctifying brings before us what is effected by Christ for a company of persons so that they are made suitable for

God in holiness by what is done for them. They are so "all of one" with Christ that there is no disparity between Him and them as regards suitability to God. How this magnifies Him as the Sanctifier! And we may be perfectly certain that He regards the saints as those whom He has sanctified: "For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren". That is, it is a question of how Christ regards them. The Hebrews had probably entered very little into this, but he is speaking here of Christ and of how He regards His saints. If He was ashamed to call them brethren He would be ashamed of His own work! So that it is as the sanctified company that we are the brethren of Christ, and He can declare God's name to us. It is on the ground that we are sanctified by what Christ has done as the Sanctifier. So that now our hearts can open freely and in perfect liberty to His declaration of God's name. It is a wonderful name, for it covers all that in which He would be known by men; His name is really Himself in revelation.

And this leads to Christ taking a wondrous place Godward: "In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises". We have no example of this in Scripture, except as hinted at in the hymn they sang after the supper, which was no doubt intended to suggest this to us. In Matthew, Mark and Luke the gospel side of the risen position is prominent. But in John 20 it is, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". His ascension stands connected with His movement *towards* His Father and God. So that for the full development of Hebrews 2 we have to bring in John's gospel and the ascension. We are to say, "Our Father", but He says first, "My Father": He speaks Godward, He takes His place with His brethren; of course He is pre-eminent, He is the Firstborn. So that there is a distinctiveness about His singing, just as there is in His being "in the midst". He has His own distinctive place as the Firstborn: He is not one of the many brethren. He will be the Firstborn and the distinguished One among them. So it is, "Will I sing". The Spirit would lead us to think of His singing. Scripture does not even say He *leads* the singing; our thoughts are concentrated on the wondrous fact that *He* sings. But the assembly surrounds Him to learn how *He* sings because how He sings is the way they are to sing, though without ever forgetting His headship. If a divine Person comes as Man to our side, there is something in His relation Godward that transcends the creature. But He is the glorious Head, coming to the assembly to sing in the midst that the assembly may know how He sings. He sings of all that His Father is to Him, of all that His God is to Him, the glorious ascended Man. The assembly is to know that what His Father is to Him is the fulness of what our Father is to us. Not that we can compass it as He can, but it is no more restricted as to us than what it is to Him. What His God is to Him is the completeness of what God is eternally. We cannot rise

above what our stature and spiritual formation are equal to, but each time He sings in the midst should enlarge our apprehension of how He sings, and as we apprehend that spiritually we acquire ability to sing to the Father and to God as our Father and as our God.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Hebrews 2: 11, 12

CAC I might say what was in mind was that we might consider the headship of Christ in its Godward aspect. We had it before us last week in its aspect towards the saints, the ministry of the Head to His saints, the body, as illustrated in the spirit of it in John 13 - John 16. My thought was it would be profitable to look at the converse of this; that is, the Lord in His great service Godward as singing praise in the midst of the assembly.

Rem In Psalm 22 it is the great result of His death.

CAC Yes, quite so, it is the result of the death of Christ in sin-offering character. Psalm 22 gives us more definitely than any other scripture the suffering of Christ in sin-offering character, as a consequence of which He is heard "from the horns of the buffaloes", from the direct point of suffering. He is heard from the extremity to which He went as being made sin. What is brought out then is that He has brethren. It is there that this scripture is quoted from. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren"; it is His brethren, as I understand it, on the footing of holiness.

Ques What do you mean by that?

CAC He is the great Sanctifier; the sin-offering was necessitated by the holiness of God. He says, "And thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel"; it is God in holiness that is the subject of praise. Therefore it is in that connection that the assembly must of necessity be a sanctified company, sanctification having to do with holiness rather than righteousness. God's thought is to be praised in His holiness. I think that is the great point of praises. The offering of Christ results in there being a sanctified company. The sin-offering is Godward, but there is not only a result Godward; God is glorified in the Son of man, there is a result manward; that is, a certain company of persons, as sanctified by that work, are set in holiness before God.

Rem You said that here in Hebrews it is rather more positional.

CAC Yes, I think this is a scripture that the Hebrews did not enter into much, but you have to go to John to get the completeness of it. It is a great matter, it seems to me, that the sanctification of the saints is entirely the result of what Christ has effected — it is nothing whatever to do with any work done in us, it is entirely the work of the Sanctifier. Christ has this great honour from God that He is the Sanctifier, and the way the sanctified company is set before God is entirely the result of what Christ does as the Sanctifier. It is a work done entirely outside of them.

Rem "By one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified" (Hebrews 10: 14).

CAC The understanding of this is most important. The general idea of sanctification held is that it is a sort of process going on in souls and being added to continually, and it never reaches a point of completion. Those who hold that as the position in which they are with God are never at liberty, but in bondage. They are in no sense suitable to be in the place where Christ sings to God, because they are not clear as to the footing Christ has put them on with God. Galatians and Romans show how we can be with God in righteousness, but Hebrews shows how we can be with God in holiness.

Ques In 1 Corinthians 1: 2 it says, "To those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints". Is that in spite of their condition? He could address them further on as "carnal".

CAC Yes, it is by the calling of God and as in Christ Jesus. But this scripture supposes a work of God in men, because the saints are in view in their character as the children of Abraham, the subjects of divine calling and divine work. The Spirit of God brings out that they are not sanctified by divine calling nor by a work of God in them, but entirely by what the Sanctifier does for them.

Rem "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all".

CAC God is most concerned that we should honour Christ and the work of Christ. The sanctifying work of Christ is so complete that there is not a flaw in it. The saints as a sanctified company are placed before God in Christ in holiness. If we do not know that, we are not in the position of Christ's brethren. Sanctification is the way we are set in the presence of the holiness of God. We are set there on a perfectly holy footing; so that there is no disparity between Christ as the Sanctifier and those who are sanctified, they are "all of one".

Ques The importance of this matter hangs on the understanding of being "all of one", would you say?

CAC Yes, and it is how Christ regards us, not how we regard ourselves. So it says, "For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren". It is how He regards us; He regards the sanctified company as being as clear of sins and sin as He is Himself. Is that not a wonderful thing? God has provided in sanctification a holy way through the work of Christ for the saints to be before Him as being suitable in holiness. He is not ashamed to call us His brethren,

otherwise He would be ashamed of His own work; they are the fruit of His own work.

Rem They are called "holy brethren" (Hebrews 3: 1).

CAC That is how we regard one another. The writer addresses them as "holy brethren", they are not viewed in any other way. If we were writing to any company of saints, we should have them in mind in that way; it sets us in happy relations.

It seems to me it is this that sets us perfectly free to listen to the Lord declaring the Father's name to us.

Rem Here the brethren are a necessity to Christ in the service, if one might so say.

CAC Yes. He must have a company to whom He can declare the name of God, and the company must be sanctified apart from the question of sin and unsuitability. He effects that by His death so that all can be at liberty to listen to His declaring God's name, the Father's name particularly. There is nothing to hinder His speaking to them of God as He knows Him. God's name is Himself as having come into revelation — all that God is as known to Christ. Think of the assembly as a company at perfect liberty to take it on! J.B.S. used to speak of the assembly as the most august company in the world. I think all this is to prepare the way for the Lord's singing.

Rem This would seem to be an amplified quotation, for singing is added here.

CAC Yes, that is very interesting, and this matter of singing is one of which we have no example in Scripture, except as suggested in the hymn they sang after supper. If we want to understand it, we must enter into it ourselves.

I think, perhaps, the most important matter in the service of God is to understand how He sings. He says, "Will I sing"; the great point to understand is how He sings, because that will affect us profoundly. It will put us off the ground of what we are, and on the ground of what He is and what He does.

The declaration of God's name, or the Father's name, which is included in it, is usward, but His singing is Godward. The understanding of this new position that He takes up "in the midst of the assembly" is most important.

Ques "By one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified" (Hebrews 10: 14). What character of sanctification is taken up there?

CAC I think it goes beyond the thought of that scripture. The service manward is brought out in the first three gospels in connection with Christ risen and His service during the forty days; the result is the going out of the glad tidings —

the presentation to man. But in John it is the other side; He sends this message, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". It is the movement Godward. That is what we are occupied with this afternoon, we want to understand how He moves that way.

Ques As "minister of the holy places" (Hebrews 8: 2), is it more that thought?

CAC No doubt it comes in at the same time in the service Godward. "Minister of the holy places" undoubtedly suggests the thought of singing. There was no singing in the tabernacle service.

Rem In Chronicles we read of Asaph giving direction as to the singing in the service of God. Does Christ not give direction as Head as to what is voiced in the assembly? In Romans 15: 9, we get, "I will confess to thee among the nations, and will sing to thy name".

CAC I think He gives us apprehension as to how He sings. There is a quality and excellence about His singing "in the midst of the assembly" because He is there as Head, He is the pre-eminent One. He is not on a level with His brethren. He is amongst them as the Firstborn. He has a unique place. And this thought of singing is going to be extended. The nations in the world to come will praise after the pattern of His praise. Singing in that scripture means singing to a musical instrument. It suggests that the notes are yet to be attuned to the praises of Christ. At the present time He sings in the midst of the assembly in a unique way. He is all-glorious, there is none in the company on a level with Him, but yet it is a company that can give expression to His singing; they are a sanctified company. I think we should all be affected profoundly if we got a sense of it. It belongs to the realm of mystery — the Lord coming into the midst. In John He comes to serve us by ministering what is in His own heart and mind, set forth in a pattern in chapters 13 - 17, but now He also comes to sing, He comes also to serve God. The Lord's praising in the midst would give us a sense of how He sings to God His Father. He would keep His Person distinct. I am anxious we should not lose any conception we have of His greatness. He does not say, 'I ascend to our Father and to our God', but "to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". He distinguishes Himself, He carefully preserves His own exclusive glory, so He is alone in His glory. I think the whole thing depends on Christ having His distinctive place. We do not understand the place of "many brethren" if we do not understand the Firstborn.

Rem "I sanctify myself for them, that they also may be sanctified by truth" (John 17: 19).

CAC The "myself" is distinct from the "they". All this is much for the pleasure of God, that we should realise that there is this divine Person who has come into manhood, that He might take this place before God, and no one can sing as He does. With the Lord you have the full measure of the thing, the completeness of the thing. "My Father", it is what His Father was to Him, it is immeasurable in His case. "My God"! We see the completeness in Him, One who could compass what His Father was to Him, and what His God was to Him. That gives a complete value to His singing, you have the full measure of things in Christ; and His body, the assembly, has to be equal to expressing it. We come into it now according to the measure of our spiritual stature; it is according to our measure, and that with most of us is small.

What we are speaking of now is what He is as the glorious ascended Man; that is, the One who now sings to God. He is in that position, the glorified Man, the heavenly Man. He moves Godward in ascension and He links us up in that way. "My God and your God". All that His God is to Him at this moment is the fulness of what God will be to the saints eternally. The epistle to the Hebrews labours to bring us to a sense of His personal distinctiveness, and that gives character to the singing in the assembly.

Rem In Exodus 15 it says, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song".

CAC And I have no doubt Moses sang it in a much more excellent way than they did. We find on the side of response they did not go very far. "Jehovah, ... he is highly exalted", but they did not reach the sanctuary. I dare say Moses was more interested in that than in anything.

Ques The unique place of Christ enters into sonship too, does it not? He is the unique One.

CAC Yes, and that being understood, He should take the central place in the assembly, so that the assembly may gather in some sense how He sings to His God and Father. That will put our singing right. He can put what the blessed God is as known to Him in a hymn of praise. The thought is that the praises of the assembly might really take character from His praises. We cannot get any further than that; it is pretty well the climax of our subject, and that is what the Supper leads to. It is the highest privilege of the assembly, a company in the midst of whom Christ sings praises to His God and Father.

CHRIST AS PRIEST IN RELATION TO THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Hebrews 6: 17 - 20; Hebrews 8: 1, 2; Hebrews 10: 19 - 22

It is before me to suggest the consideration of Christ as Priest in relation to the purpose of God. Many of us are, perhaps, more accustomed to think of the Priest as sympathising with us in sorrow and trial, and supporting us in holding fast the confession in spite of difficulties here. That we should know Him thus is necessitated by our present condition in flesh and blood. But as subjects of heavenly calling we are privileged to know Christ as Priest in relation to God's unchangeable purpose of love. Hebrews 6 speaks of a "hope set before us, which we have as anchor of the soul, both secure and firm, and entering into that within the veil, where Jesus is entered as forerunner for us, become for ever a high priest according to the order of Melchisedec". The purpose of God in all its blessedness is "within the veil", and Jesus has entered into it in advance of us, that we may know Him as a High Priest representing us where all is unchangeably perfect. When God spoke to Moses in the mountain He said several times of Aaron, "That he may serve me as priest"; and in that connection, holy garments were made for him "for glory and for ornament", suggesting the thought of what is delightful to God. The Priest is representative, for He bears the names of the saints on His shoulders and in His breastplate; but He is representative of them in a glorious way, according to what is in God's heart for them. There is no thought of imperfection or weakness in Exodus 28, for Aaron as spoken of in the mountain was a type of Christ as Priest in heaven on behalf of a people who are God's elect, and partakers of the heavenly calling. By God's calling we have part in heavenly things, and heavenly things are perfect, for they are purified by no less a sacrifice than that of Christ Himself. We do not think of imperfection in the heavens, but of what answers perfectly to the pleasure of God. If we were actually in heaven there would be no need of a Priest to serve God by representing us there. But before we are there actually, we are there representatively in One who appears before the face of God for us as Priest. He serves the pleasure of God by representing us there according to the purpose of divine love.

We must remember that it is "a Son perfected for ever" who is the Priest, so that His priesthood cannot be separated from His sonship, and all that God has in His mind for us is secured representatively in the Priest who appears before His face for us. Our apprehension of Christ in this blessed character is thus a

wondrous link for us with the purpose of God. We stand in Him representatively, as we often sing:

'He's gone within the veil,
For us that place has won;
In Him we stand, a heavenly band,
Where He Himself is gone'. (12:2)

When the many brethren are conformed to the image of God's Son in heavenly glory they will actually be in the condition which God's love has purposed for them, and the Son of God will be the Firstborn among them, but He will not then need to represent them in a priestly way. The representative thought will drop. But at the present time the purpose of God is patterned in His glorious Son, and as Priest He is representative of the whole 'heavenly band' according to the purpose and calling of God. Heaven is our place, and we are represented there by Christ as Priest. At the present time our access to God is by the Priest, and if we approach by Him we approach according to what we are by God's calling. The names engraved in the precious stones represent that; they were "engraved as a seal", speaking of what the saints are permanently and unchangeably "according to purpose".

The immutable faithfulness of God to His own purpose is set forth in the One who has entered within the veil as Forerunner for us. Everything stands fast in Christ, and God has taken extraordinary pains to assure us of the stability of it. "Wherein God, willing to shew more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his purpose, intervened by an oath, that by two unchangeable things, in which it was impossible that God should lie, we might have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us" (chapter 6: 17, 18). It is an important matter that we should be found in the character of refugees. We do not always think that the present world and present circumstances are things to flee from, but if we realised the true state of things we should be glad to flee to what stands connected with the purpose of God. It is the most blessed thing in the universe, for it is what He has purposed for the satisfaction of His love eternally. It is a matter of hope yet, so far as we are concerned, because we are not actually in it, but we can draw nigh to God now by having it in hope. Hope takes us forward into a world of bliss without alloy which is the saints' eternal home, but Christ has already entered into it as our priestly Representative.

I have no doubt the divine thought was that the people should love the priest as the one who represented them, and bore their names as a memorial before

Jehovah. God's called ones, the heirs of promise, appropriate the Priest. The anchor of the soul enters into that — within the veil where Jesus is entered as Priest. It suggests a very firm link. If we love God we shall love the Priest, for He represents us and intercedes for us as God's elect. God would create ardent affection for Him by telling us that He makes intercession for us, and that nothing can separate us from His love. His intercessions are all fragrant incense, for they do not refer to failure, but to what is in God's mind concerning His saints. There is no reference to failure on the part of saints in the Lord's prayer in John 17, nor in any of Paul's prayers.

Priestly prayer brings before God the thoughts of His own heart, and not the failures of His people. The intercession of Christ is the intercession of One who is representative of the saints as "called according to purpose". This is brought out very clearly in Hebrews 7: 26, "For such a high priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens". We have a Priest who becomes us from the point of view of what we are by divine calling. He has perfect, holy affections Godward, and He is 'guileless'; there is no admixture in Him of any thought lower than what is in the mind of God.

"The introduction of a better hope by which we draw nigh to God" (chapter 7: 19) is definitely connected with the Priest, as we may see by reading the context. We are privileged to draw nigh to God as in the light of the place that Christ has with Him as Priest. It is a matter of hope so far as we are concerned, for we are not yet in the place or condition of that glorious Priest, but we may draw near in the consciousness that everything weak and unprofitable has been set aside, and that Man in the Person of Christ is most blessedly near to God. He is near according to the nearness that God purposed for man, and which is now an actuality in the glorious Priest! It is as knowing and loving Him as the Priest that we approach God by Him. Approach to God now is according to the place which Christ has with God. There is no inferior way, no second class of approach. It is very pleasurable to God that His saints here on earth should approach Him by Christ in the consciousness of the blessed place which is held for them by their glorious Priest. We are attracted to approach as we entertain the thought of having such a Priest in the immediate presence of God. His nearness to God is the measure of what is available for us.

Some might feel inclined to say, 'How can we ever come up to that?' If left to ourselves it is certain that none of us would ever come up to it. But we read, "Whence also he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God,

always living to intercede for them" (chapter 7: 25). Christ as Priest exercises effective power on behalf of those who approach God in a priestly way by Him. In every spiritual movement towards God there must be an affectionate appreciation of Christ as Priest, as feeling that He is indispensable. He alone has ability to save us completely, so that we may approach as those who are freed from distracting influences. The oath of God bears on this also. The ability of Christ to save in this priestly way is the expression of divine faithfulness, and it is also the outcome of the love in which He holds a priestly place on our behalf in intercession Godward. The object of His intercession is that we may be free to approach God according to what is set forth in Himself. We need His priestly salvation if approach to God is to be unhindered and in spiritual reality.

Then we read, "For the law constitutes men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the swearing of the oath which is after the law, a Son perfected for ever" (chapter 7: 28). No thought of infirmity or change can be introduced in connection with what is constituted by an oath of God. It is, indeed, extraordinary that God has been pleased to swear about certain things. They are in every case matters which can by no possibility be set aside or altered. There is absolute fixedness and unchangeableness about them; God has purposed them in such a definite way that He has sworn about them. The priesthood of Christ is one of those things; it is a great outstanding verity which subsists by the oath of God, and by means of which His saints, while still here in creature weakness, are linked on with a system of divine service which is maintained according to the stability of divine purpose. The stability of the whole system in connection with which God is served or worshipped at the present time depends on One who has been constituted Priest by "the word of the swearing of the oath". How glorious He is! How worthy to be pre-eminent in all our hearts! He is "a Son perfected for ever"; only such a One could be Priest according to divine purpose. "*Thou* art my son" precedes and is essential to "*Thou* art a priest", and as to our priestly service, it is only sons who can be priests. Priesthood, as we know it in Christ, is the priesthood of a Son — the great and glorious Person spoken of in the first chapter of this epistle. It is, therefore, impossible for it to be improved upon, or have any feature added to make it more excellent. Man cannot be in the place of official service Godward in any higher or better way. The fact that God has sworn about it puts the impress of perfection and finality upon it.

The Spirit of God would have us to sum up all this precious truth, so that we have it before our hearts in a definite and concise form. "Now a summary of the things of which we are speaking is, We have such a one high priest who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens;

minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man" (chapter 8: 1, 2). As objects of the call and work of God we are capable of appropriating Christ, so that we can say, "We have such a one high priest". It is a great spiritual reality to have Him as Priest. Until we are possessed of Him thus, we cannot have any part in the service of "the true tabernacle". The appropriation of the Priest, as we have been considering Him, leads to a right apprehension of "the true tabernacle", as a spiritual structure suitable for His ministry. The true divine service can only be where this great and glorious Priest is Minister. All that is offered to God in the way of spiritual sacrifices must be suitable to be put into His hand so that He may present it. His personal greatness appears in His having set Himself down "on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens". None could take that place but One who was 'of full Deity possessed'. But He has also taken a place of service Godward as Minister of the holy places.

The work of God at the present time is largely to secure that there shall be a "true tabernacle" of which Christ is Minister. This is a universal thought, but it is only practically realised as it takes form in localities where God's people are found. Every bit of true sanctuary service must correspond with the Minister.

In learning the wondrous office which Christ fills as Minister of the holy places we get understanding of the true tabernacle, and the service that goes on in it. It is certain that what Christ presents to God will be very acceptable to Him because it all came from Him: all offering must be on the principle of 1 Chronicles 29: 14, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer willingly after this manner? for all is of thee, and of that which is from thy hand have we given thee". We bring nothing to the Minister that we did not derive from the Mediator. This gives a character of divine perfection to the whole service. Our spiritual intelligence of it, and our capacity to contribute to it, may be very small, but this is the true character of tabernacle service today.

We will now consider, briefly, how Christ as High Priest "by his own blood, has entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9: 12). The tabernacle figure is in the mind of the Spirit all through this part of the epistle, though it is "the better and more perfect tabernacle not made with hand, (that is, not of this creation)" (verse 11). Christ has entered the holiest "once for all"; there is no thought of His coming out again until He appears the second time without sin for salvation. This shows that His sacrificial work is completed for ever. He is in the holiest in the permanent value of it, and there will never be any other ground on which consciences can be purified or the eternal inheritance received. The thought of

the holiest is taken up from the figure of the tabernacle, but later in the chapter He is said to have entered "into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (verse 24). The holy of holies suggests a place of approach to God marked by holiness in an intensified degree. The types of the tabernacle accustom us to distinguish between what is "holy" and what is "most holy". The most profound conception of holiness is conveyed to our minds in "the holy of holies"; it conveys to us, as taught of God, an apprehension of the exceeding holiness of the place which Christ has entered as Priest. No other place in the moral universe can be more holy than that place is. But Christ has entered there by His own blood, and as having found an eternal redemption. He has gone there in the value of that which is efficacious to purify and liberate those who have been unclean and guilty, so that the living God may be worshipped by His called ones in a way that is in accord with the holiness of the place which Christ has entered as Priest. Nothing could show the purifying and sanctifying efficacy of the blood of Christ in a more impressive way. The worshippers are purified according to the holiness of the place which He has entered. This goes far beyond any thought that was presented in the Old Testament, but it is the simple and blessed truth which God would have to be known by all His called ones today.

"The holy of holies" is a description founded on the figurative representation of things in the tabernacle. But the actual place into which Christ has entered is "heaven itself", and He now appears there before the face of God for us. We are represented in heaven before we are actually there ourselves; Christ as our Priest in heaven is the blessed Witness that that is our place. In the apprehension of Christ being there for us we understand that heaven is our place now according to the thought of God. It is not only that we are going to be there in the future, but Christ is holding that place in a priestly way for us that we may apprehend it in Him.

By the will of God "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all", and "by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified" (chapter 10: 10, 14), but both the sanctification and the perfecting have in view the place into which Christ has entered.

The efficacy of His offering suffices to fit us for the very place where He now represents us. Would to God that believers generally understood this! How it would free them from earthly religion, and set them up in spiritual competency to worship the living God as appreciating His great and wondrous thoughts of love!

There is one more aspect of Christ's priesthood which stands in relation to that view of it which we have had before us. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness

for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and having a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience, and washed as to our body with pure water" (chapter 10: 19 - 22). Boldness for entering into the holy of holies is in the value of the blood of Jesus. The reference is, no doubt, to the blood of the sin-offering which was sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat on the day of atonement. That blood, typically, cleansed the sanctuary "from the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and from their transgressions in all their sins" (Leviticus 16: 16). The cleansing was effected in all the value of the blood; it was a testimony on God's part that blood would be shed of such value that those called by Him might even enter the holy of holies without stain and without fear. Those who enter do so in the value of the blood of Jesus which has effected cleansing according to the holiness and glory of the blessed God. The nearer we come to God, the more are the value and cleansing of the blood of Jesus known. They are better known in the holiest than anywhere else. Divine glory has had to do with uncleanness and sin in such a way as to secure absolute cleansing according to the holiness of God's sanctuary. Saints have boldness to enter where all is most holy as knowing that they come there in the value of the blood of Jesus. Nothing could possibly add to that value in the estimation of God; it has vindicated and glorified Him in the highest degree. And we glorify Him when we approach as fully assured that we can be in the holiest in the value of the blood of Jesus as it is known to God Himself.

But there is the further thought of a new and living way being dedicated for us. Jesus has done this also. He has gone in to God on the ground that His blood has been poured out to effect divine cleansing and to glorify God, but He has gone in by an entirely new and living way. The blood of Jesus is the witness of His having been in death, but there could be no "living way" save as out of death. He has gone through death, and come out of death in resurrection life, to dedicate a way, unknown before, by which His saints can enter the holiest "through the veil, that is, his flesh". He has gone through death, having taken up a condition in which He could die on account of all that attached to that condition in us. We were in the condition of flesh, and in that condition had come under sin and death, and in wondrous love He took up the condition that it might be ended in His death, when He bore the judgment of all that attached to flesh in us. In "his flesh" the sinless One has been made sin for us, and has died on account of what was due to us. But He has gone through death, and is in the presence of God in a wholly new condition as risen. It is thus He has gone through the veil to dedicate a new and living way

for us. That way has actually been traversed by the glorious Man, the Son of God, whom we now have as a great Priest over the house of God. The way is dedicated for us. Are we prepared to enter the holiest by that dedicated way? It means going the way that He went, as having died with Him to be in the holiest as risen and quickened together with Him.

Hebrews 10 does not say that we enter the holiest, but it tells us how Jesus has dedicated the way by which alone we can do so, and it exhorts us to make use of the privilege. Not only has Jesus dedicated a way for us but we have Him as a great Priest over the house of God. He sheds over the whole house the influence of what subsists in Himself. As the Ark of the covenant, He has secured by and in Himself the whole will of God, but as the great Priest, He causes the thoughts of God to pervade the whole house, and He is in priestly activity to exclude in holiness all other thoughts. How could there be any thoughts in the holiest other than the thoughts of God? The great Priest will allow no others. Do we think of the house of God as a place where Christ serves God by allowing nothing to obtain there but what is of God's will? All this is to encourage us to approach. By the new and living way we can enter the holiest to know most blessed nearness to God, and to know how Christ maintains by His priestly service every divine thought for the pleasure of God in His house.

Holy and spiritual conditions are needed for approach. "A true heart" is the first. I understand this to be a heart that genuinely appreciates what God has spoken in His Son, and what He has set up in Christ as Priest. Without this there will not be any desire to approach. Then, "full assurance of faith" is that the heart has no hesitation as to being welcome; it is confident that the house of God is a place where the worshippers have full liberty of access, and that they have more advantage in the holiest than anywhere else. It is not now the court, or the altar, or even the holy place, but the worshippers can enter the holiest as a consecrated company.

This requires that we must be "sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience". A wicked conscience is a conscience that would keep us away from God, like Adam when he found out that he was naked. The heart must be purified from such a conscience as that by coming under the sprinkling of the water of purification as seen in Numbers 19. If there has been anything on the conscience as a defilement there must be purification before there can be approach. Then, finally, "washed as to our body with pure water". There must be moral cleaning of the whole life connected with the body. The body that was once held as the vessel of pride, vanity, or self-pleasing is now to be washed with pure water. It calls our attention to the very high standard of

purity, as to matters connected with the body, which is requisite in those who approach God. The ways, the habits, the associations, the daily contact with men and things, the way we dress, the whole manner of our outward life, is to be evidence that our bodies are washed with pure water. This is not an optional matter: it is essential to approach; and it is an exercise we shall take up in liberty and joy when we understand what a blessed thing it is to approach God according to His calling and purpose.

THE ASSEMBLY'S DISTINCTIVE KNOWLEDGE

Hebrews 10: 16; 1 Corinthians 11: 25, 26; 2 Corinthians 3: 1 - 18

CAC Any thought of God that may have been introduced in connection with Israel acquires a peculiar excellence and glory if seen connected with the assembly. This would be true of the new covenant, which is dependent on the revelation of God. God has revealed Himself in the glorious Man at His own right hand. That imparts a heavenly lustre even to Old Testament thoughts. The Old Testament hardly develops the heavenly side. We do get plain intimations there that Christ would be set in heaven — "Sit at my right hand" (Psalm 110: 1) for instance, and the fact of His ascension in Psalm 68 — but the blessed effect of Man having a place in heaven and the full revelation of the glory of God in that Man hardly appear in the Old Testament.

Revelation is a necessity on the part of divine love. One has a feeble sense of the intense yearnings of the heart of God to be known by man in all the blessedness of what He is. It was a cherished delight of the heart of God, and we ought to be moved by that thought. None of us will move effectually in our spiritual course till God becomes God to us according to the blessedness of revelation. God as God is set upon obtaining a character of appreciation and response at this present moment greater than He had or ever will have from any other family. The universe of bliss will be God known and responded to, and what will characterise it is what is in the assembly now.

Ques The writer in Hebrews introduces the covenant and later goes on to say, "Let us approach" (Hebrews 10: 22). Does that indicate response?

CAC Yes, it indicates a character of things now which will not be known by Israel even in the world to come. It is not developed in the epistle to the Hebrews, but you have a people capable of approaching. The true privilege and blessedness of the present moment are that there is a capability for approach, for appreciation and for response to God which will never be found in any other family. There is no distinction between the families on the side of revelation but there is on the side of capability of approach and response; and the church as a family has the highest character of capability for appreciation and approach. It seems to me that the privilege of this present moment in relation to the knowledge of God, and approach to Him, of intelligence of His mind and entrance into His love, is so great that it might well move our hearts with intense desire. God has Himself removed, in regard to imputation, everything that might have been a restraint; He has dealt with questions which would have restrained the affections of His people. Liberty is connected with the new covenant very blessedly. Man was with God in the Person of that

blessed One, and before God in all the holy light of what God was as known in love.

Rem There was the fullest knowledge of God with the Lord. That does not surprise us, but it is marvellous that God by His Spirit should be seeking to produce in our hearts what is after the pattern of what came out in the Lord Jesus Christ as Man.

Ques Would you say that revelation is fully made good to us in soul history, but capability has to be formed? Does it lie behind the thought of John 4?

CAC God would have revelation to be known, not merely by the preaching or by accepted statements in Scripture, but by the witness of the Spirit, so that we have in our hearts the spring which flows from the love of God. Such is the love of God that He must have believers in the light of revelation.

Rem A soul is not ready to respond to the light of revelation until it has been established in redemption.

CAC Yes, we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In expiation the conscience is perfectly relieved — "Thy sin expiated" (Isaiah 6: 7). Redemption gives the thought of what is for God.

Rem On the great day of atonement the blood was put on the mercy-seat.

CAC It seems to me that the blood on the mercy-seat is the highest conceivable presentation of the value of the death of Christ — the blood on the gold, meeting the divine glory infinitely and eternally. It is so immense that it lies behind everything. You could not have the blood on the ground as the basis of all the ways of God with men apart from the blood on the gold glorifying God in the highest as to the whole question of sin. The whole system of heavenly things stands with God in the value of God glorified.

Ques Do you distinguish between the presentation of the covenant in Hebrews and in 2 Corinthians?

CAC Yes, but we have often been told there is great correspondence between the two scriptures. It is important to recognise that the calling does not differentiate between different souls: it is "*we* all" in 2 Corinthians 3: 18. The calling makes no difference between one believer and another: the question is how far we have entered into it. Would not entrance into the holiest give us a very great capacity?

Ques Do you connect entering into the holiest with beholding the glory of the Lord?

CAC The glory of the Lord is that He is Mediator of the new covenant. He is the One who brings it to us unimpaired in all its faultless blessedness. There is One who is equal to the bringing out of the love of God and all the thoughts of the love of God, so the One who brings it to us is equal to it; He endears Himself to our hearts as His glory shines upon us. In entering the holiest it is not exactly the Mediator that we see but the Ark of the covenant. We see Christ there as the One in whom everything is realised and substantiated. He is the revelation and the perfect answer to God in Man, and secures the divine pleasure eternally. It is a very effective contemplation and does not leave persons as it finds them.

Rem I suffered a good deal in my young days from being told to be occupied with Christ without being told something of Christ to be occupied with.

CAC Yes; the fact is the Christ we are to be occupied with is a glorious and infinite Person. Every aspect of moral worth and beauty is concentrated in that Person. I do not want the mere word, I want the reality of the moral worth in that Person presented in detail to me. Every perfection in manhood and the fulness of the Godhead are there; they are too big for me to contemplate as a whole; therefore the beauties of Christ are detailed from Genesis to Revelation, so that our feeble hearts can fix on one and another and another. There is an endless field of unspeakable delight. These beauties of Christ are essential to the glory. Every moral excellence in Him qualifies Him to bring the knowledge of God to us in its fulness and perfection.

Ques Are the personal and official glories seen in the holiest as well as the moral glories?

CAC The ark of the covenant involves all that Christ was in manhood; so I think it involves His moral, personal and official glories. In the ark the shittim wood represents all that is incorruptible; every part of the glory of Christ has that character, and it all qualifies Him as Man to be covered with the gold; the full display of the glory of the blessed God is in that Man.

Rem When Solomon built his house he overlaid it with gold and bespangled it with precious stones.

CAC Yes, the jewels indicate the perfections of Christ; the gold of Parvaim is His proper divine glory as One adequate for the display of God to man.

Rem Ministry is to lead us to gaze on the Lord, but it does not take us to the holiest.

CAC Do you mean that we only go to the holiest as a consequence of priesthood? It is never supposed that ministry will do unspiritual people any

good. We only get the benefit of it in the light of self-judgment, and a self-judged person is no longer unspiritual.

Ques Is that why you suggested that scripture 1 Corinthians 11?

CAC It was on my mind that we should apprehend the distinctive character of the new covenant as known in the assembly. The revelation, having come out in Christ and by the death of Christ, can never be less than what it is. You can never throw a shadow over that revelation, but there will not be the same capability in Israel or in the world to come as might be in the assembly today. Israel will never have the same capacity, and they will never go into the holiest. There would be extraordinary spiritual development if persons went into the holiest. The youngest and feeblest believer is encouraged to go in in all the infinite value of what is presented to us by the Lord. There is a system divinely instituted; we have to do with a faultless system of blessing which is divinely established. We are invited to come to it, but it calls for personal approach — "Let us approach".

Ques Would entering the holiest affect us in view of the assembly?

CAC I do not think we can properly assemble apart from having been in the holiest. There is a great difference between coming together and assembling together. In 1 Corinthians 11 the saints only came together, and they may come together for the worse; but if the saints assemble as in the blessedness of what they have contemplated in the holiest, what a character of things would be there! It is possible to pass through the veil, leave behind all of the flesh, and come to the region of what is spiritual. It is a movement of soul through the veil, and God invites us to make that movement. If I pass through the veil, I come into a region where there is nothing but what is spiritual, and where the soul is free to contemplate all the will of God and the love of God realised and substantiated in Christ. Passing through the veil is the way in. In John 6 we eat the flesh and drink the blood as the way out, but in Hebrews 10 we pass through the veil; it is the way in.

Ques What do you mean by the way out?

CAC The way out of all that is natural and connected with me in my material existence in flesh. The Lord presents to us in the Supper His body given for us, and His blood as the blood of the new covenant; that is in keeping with all we have been considering. The new and living way was the revelation of God in love as brought to us in the death of Christ, but then we have to put our foot down on it. It is a question of moving over that new and living way, the way He has dedicated. Have we utilised it, have we travelled on it? It is a way paved with love. Have we known what it is to put down clean feet on that

unsullied way? Christ has come by Calvary's cross to one like me that I might move over that new and living way into the presence of God.

GOD'S GREAT PRIEST

Hebrews 10: 21

One aspect in which Christ is presented in the epistle to the Hebrews is as the great Priest over God's house. He is that in connection with our privilege of drawing near. God delights to have His saints near to Himself, enjoying the liberty of His house. He has not only manifested His love in the gift of His beloved Son, but he has given the Holy Spirit as the powerful Witness of His love in our hearts. We are assured by a divine Witness of the efficacy of Christ's work, and of the unspeakable love of God as the source of all our blessing. There is not a cloud on the love of God, or a spot on our consciences to keep us from enjoying it. There is nothing to keep us at a distance from the blessed God, but everything to attract us into nearness to Himself.

Everything connected with our old state and history was dealt with and removed in the death of Christ, but that is not all. The declaration of God has come out in the death of His Son, who came into death, not only to banish every cloud and remove every spot, but in order that there might be a way paved with divine love over which our souls might travel adoringly into nearness to God. It is "the new and living way"; it lives in all the blessedness of divine love, and Christ is the One who has opened it up. He had to remove in holy judgment all that we were, but in the very place where He did so, He disclosed the depths of the heart of God that we might live in the love of God.

The One who has done all this is the "great priest over the house of God". He is the great Centre and power of attraction by whom those who love Him are withdrawn from every rival influence and led into the blessed privilege of approach to God. He attracts those whom He has sanctified — His brethren — because they are kindred to Himself, and in being drawn away from everything else to Him they give spiritual evidence of being, in truth, His assembly.

It is as we "approach" that we realise the blessedness of Christ, the Son, as the "minister of the holy places" (chapter 8: 2). He leads our hearts into the holy love of God, and into the vast and glorious purposes of that love, which find their centre in Himself and their circumference in a universe of bliss filled by Him with the knowledge and praise of God.

He thus secures a company intelligent as to the mind of God, and knowing the love of God, and therefore capable for the service of God in praise and worship. The house of God is thus furnished with those who are morally suited to its greatness. Nothing less than Christ's assembly would be suited to the greatness and blessedness of God's house. God's house is filled, in the sense

that there is a company there capable of entering into His mind and the thoughts of His love, able to trace adoringly the perfection of His ways in Christ, and thus able to give Him now the praise and glory that is due to Him. Those who thus fill God's house are the sanctified company referred to by Christ as "my assembly" in Matthew 16.

THE WAY OF HOLINESS

Hebrews 12: 1 - 14

Two things characterise the way of holiness. One is the attractiveness of Christ in glory and of the purpose of God as set forth in Him, which puts us in the race and maintains us there, and the other is the chastening of the Lord, by which we are disciplined and freed from things which are not according to God's holiness.

Difficulties are apt to discourage us if we do not see the true character of the race we are exhorted to run, and if we do not know the gracious use which God makes of the attendant exercises. The first thing we need is to be assured that we are in the right path, and then it is a great cheer to know that whatever opposition comes in the way is discipline for us, and is "for profit, in order to the partaking of his holiness" (verse 10).

A man does not run very fast when he is not quite sure that he is in the right road. He is apt to be looking aside or behind, and every unexpected obstacle raises a doubt in his mind. The Hebrew believers had taken what was to them an entirely new road in becoming Christians; they were breaking away from religious associations of long standing and divine origin, and the only outward result was that they were plunged into difficulties and persecutions. In such circumstances it became needful for God to encourage them by reminding them that the path of faith was no new thing. The eleventh chapter proved this. It is the history of men and women who trod a path in which were difficulties and dangers of every kind, and who in different ways *gave up the earth*. They accepted strangership, reproach, sufferings and death in this world, because they looked for a better country, "that is, a heavenly" (Hebrews 11: 16). All this is brought out as encouragement; it is as much as to say, 'You see you are in the right road; now, *go on*'. When you are sure you are in the right road, the more difficulties there are in it the more anxious you are to shorten the journey, so you *run*. The Spirit of God calls upon us to "run with endurance the race that lies before us" (verse 1).

It has often been said that the first question with a soul is, 'Heaven or hell?' We can all understand John Bunyan's pilgrim running to the wicket gate with his fingers in his ears lest any voice should persuade him to turn back. It was heaven or hell with him; his eternal weal or woe was at stake. I dare say some us of ran rather fast at that stage of our experience. But farther on in his journey, when the pilgrim came to the hill Difficulty and found the arbour, he settled down and went to sleep. The second question with the soul is, 'Heaven

or earth?' Many are glad enough to escape hell who are not at all anxious to get away from earth. They settle down and go to sleep instead of running.

Of course no one would *run* to a place he did not want to reach, but if we are partakers of the heavenly calling, and know the heavenly Priest, our hearts are attracted to heaven; we have links with heaven, and heaven is an attractive place to us. I do not believe anyone is in the race here spoken of who does not like heaven better than earth. The Son of God has come down from heaven that He might throw the golden chain of divine love round our hearts and link us with Himself for ever. And He is now in heaven to attract our affections thitherward. Heaven is a most attractive place to everyone whose affections are set upon Christ, and such are all eager to run the race which has heaven for its goal. This race is not, as some suppose, the race of life; it is a moral journey — a race from earth to heaven — and those who are in it have turned their faces to heaven, and they want to get morally away from the earth and nearer to heaven.

The first indication that one has entered upon this race is the discovery that certain things are a hindrance to us; we begin to feel the "weights". Some believers do not seem to have any "weights"; you never see them laying anything aside. The fact is, they have never made a start in the race. A man who was sitting still might have a heavy weight in his pocket without being conscious of it, but if he began to run he would soon feel it and want to lay it aside. The longer and faster you run the more sensitive you become to "weights".

There is a close affinity between "weights" and "sin", but still there are things which we could hardly speak of as "sin" which may be serious "weights". For example, I could not say that to be on friendly terms with a half-hearted or worldly believer was exactly a *sin*, but it might become a heavy *weight* to anyone who really wanted to get on. So far as I have seen, companionship with undecided and half-hearted Christians is as spiritually injurious as friendship with unconverted people. "Go from the presence of a foolish man, in whom thou perceivest not the lips of knowledge" (Proverbs 14: 7). I have known many Christians who have discovered that a tobacco-pipe was a "weight", and I have not yet met a believer who felt that he had been helped heavenward by reading the newspaper. Worldly literature is a heavy "weight" to many. There is nothing in it to attract the heart to Christ in glory; it drags the mind and heart down to the earth. And, what was, perhaps, specially in the mind of the Spirit, an earthly system of religion is a great "weight". Judaism had all the sanction of a divine origin and the splendour of an imposing ritual; it was invested with a halo of traditional glory which acted

powerfully on human feelings of veneration for antiquity. Yet, for the Christian, all this was a "weight" to be laid aside, a useless encumbrance, a positive hindrance. And we have the same hindrance to lay aside today, for christianity has been perverted into a modified kind of judaism, in which people are occupied with religious things on earth, and thus hindered from running the race to heaven. It would be a great gain if all Christians were exercised to keep their hearts free from the influence of religious things on earth.

At this point I may say that some believers make a mistake in fancying they are much hindered by things which are really a help to them. They complain of the opposition they meet with at home, and of the many trials they have in connection with their daily work, and so on, and they fancy they could get on much better if their circumstances were altered. But these things are not "weights" to be laid aside; they are part of God's helpful discipline, and it would be a spiritual loss to be without them. I have known Christians fret and chafe under their circumstances, and seek to change them, until God has given them their request, and the result has been leanness in their souls.

Then *sin* is to be laid aside. It is represented as a garment ever ready to entangle the feet. *Sin* is that which is contrary to the will of God, and if we allow it, our feet are entangled and we cannot run. This is a very solemn and practical thing. There must be decision of heart to part company with that which is not according to the will of God. It is sometimes said that things will 'drop off', and this is made the excuse of a good deal of self-indulgence. They have to be *laid aside*. Let me exhort my younger brethren to be uncompromising in this matter. You cannot afford to hesitate or parley when sin is in question.

Jacob's preparation for Bethel is a fine illustration of all this (Genesis 35: 1 - 4). There were "earrings" and "garments" which might have been all right in Mesopotamia, but they would not do for Bethel. These things answer to the "weights". There were also found with them "strange gods" — things positively contrary to God — answering to "sin". And both earrings and idols had to be hidden "under the terebinth which is by Shechem", before Jacob and his family were ready for the house of God.

Believers may go on a long time cherishing many fragments of worldliness, and often having in the background that which is known to be contrary to God. But there comes a moment in the history of the soul when the attractiveness of God's calling lays hold upon it, and it shakes itself free from its entanglements, and clears itself of its unholy links with the world, in order to enjoy its divine privileges. Shechem is the place of uncompromising decision. It is where Joshua said to the people, "Choose you this day whom ye

will serve; ... as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Joshua 24: 15). "Now therefore put away the strange gods that are among you, and incline your heart unto Jehovah the God of Israel" (verse 23). It is at Shechem, morally speaking, that the soul sets itself and strips itself for the race. And the tree mentioned in Genesis 35: 4 and again in Joshua 24: 26 is very suggestive of the cross. The man who has been at Shechem, and has laid aside every weight and sin, can say, "Far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6: 14). Beloved friends, have we reached this point? To what extent are we really set for Christ and heaven?

The motive power for all this lies in "looking stedfastly on Jesus". If a Christian surrenders or lays aside anything without an adequate divine motive, he will either secretly hanker after it, and probably ere long return to it, or he will take credit to himself for having given it up, and will thus become self-righteous and spiritually proud. A certain school of religious teachers at the present day make much of 'surrender' as the way to attain blessing, but it ends in *self-sufficiency*, because the only motive that is presented for it is the acquisition of a better spiritual state, or power for service, or something of that kind. A *divine motive and attraction* is needed if souls are to be drawn into the race and prepared to surrender things in a truly spiritual way, and this divine motive and attraction is an Object outside ourselves altogether. It is *Christ in glory*.

The blessed One who is here presented to us as "the leader and completer of faith" could say, "I have set Jehovah continually before me" (Psalm 16: 8). He ever found His object and motive in God. He was here altogether *for God* — moving in absolute divine perfection over the whole course of faith, so that there is not a step in faith's pathway which His feet have not trodden — and this at all cost to Himself. For not only did He endure "so great contradiction from sinners against himself" all through His course, but He actually "resisted unto blood, wrestling against sin". Nothing could move Him from that path which,

> '... uncheered by earthly smiles,
> Led only to the cross'. (230:3)

He would give up His life, He would give up the earth, but He would not give up the will of God. His heart was glad and His glory rejoiced, even in prospect of being cut off and having nothing here. For "the path of life" lay through death, and "fulness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore" were set before Him in resurrection. He gave up the earth where Jehovah had nothing, and His

heart was set on that bright and blessed scene where everything reflected the glory of God. In view of this He endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now "set down at the right hand of the throne of God".

The "path of life" involves death here — it involves being *nothing* here. It is a very great thing to be so under the attraction of Christ and of the place where He is, that we are prepared to accept death here — prepared to become *nothing* here. Christ endured the cross and despised the shame because the vision of His soul was filled with the glories and joys of a brighter world, and it is as that world and Himself, its blessed Centre, are before our hearts that we can accept the cross here. We can accept the "chastening of the Lord" (verse 5) which reduces and makes nothing of us, but which in doing so makes us partakers of God's holiness.

You may depend upon it that this is not an easy path for the flesh. Indeed, the word here translated "race" is generally rendered 'conflict' or 'fight'. It is a path in which all kinds of opposition will be met. And let me say, for the sake of young believers, that it is always *the next step* which seems most difficult. The enemy concentrates all his power at the point where the Spirit of God is seeking to lead you on. Satan's great object is to discourage us so that we may turn aside and be hindered in our spiritual progress. He will put darkness and difficulty around the next step, whatever it is, but if you press on, you will find that three-quarters of the difficulties will melt away as you advance, and the remaining quarter will be turned by the grace of God into helpful discipline for you.

> 'Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> In blessings on your head'. (230:3)

And after all, the hindrances are nothing if compared with the blessed attraction of Christ in glory. Paul could say, "I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, ... and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3: 8). This is the language of one who was pressing on in the race, commanded by the object which he had in view, and rejoicing to have laid aside the weights that once hindered him.

Endurance is needed in this race, and this can only be imparted as the goal is kept in view. We may have often known what it was to be roused up by a stirring word, but incentives of this kind do not give power for *endurance*. They are like the crack of the whip, which makes the old horse mend his pace

for a few yards, but he is soon back at his old jog-trot. What is needed for *endurance* is to have Christ commanding the heart. Turn the tired horse's head towards home, and see how he will go! We want more of the attraction of *home* — more of the attraction of that blessed Person who is the Centre of all the thoughts of God, and of the place where He is. This will give *endurance* in the race, and nothing else will.

The joys and the exaltation which are of God — faith's pleasures and heritage — are connected with another scene. Here is the place of faith's conflicts and endurance. Hence there are difficulties, pressures, afflictions, persecutions and innumerable trials which are peculiar to the path of faith. The man of faith will not anticipate an easy time in this world; he knows that he is going against the stream; he counts upon having to meet opposition and to suffer reproach; he freely accepts that the path on which he has entered involves the surrender of status here, and of the honours and pleasures which attach to life in this world. In short, he is treading a path which leads morally from earth to heaven. He esteems it a great honour from God that he is called in some measure to suffer in the path of faith, and he is greatly strengthened to face the difficulties and opposition by the consideration of the blessed fact that all faith's difficulties and conflicts are discipline for his profit.

In the path of faith we come into conflict with sin, and the pressure may be and often is very severe — men and circumstances may seem to be arrayed against us by satanic power; but we may be assured that God is above all and behind all that is happening, and faith would receive it all as "the chastening of the Lord" — a chastening needed "for profit, in order to the partaking of his holiness" (verse 10). Every difficulty in the path of faith is discipline for us. It is not a weight to impede us; it is a belt to gird us so that we may run better.

It is evident that we can escape this kind of chastening if we choose to do so. It is only found in *the path of faith*, and unless we are in that path we shall not have it. It is written, "If they had called to mind that from whence they went out, they had had opportunity to have returned" (Hebrews 11: 15). A worldly believer escapes the reproach of the Christ; a carnal professor knows nothing of the difficulty of going against the stream; such cannot be said to be in conflict with sin, nor are they running the race of faith. I purpose to speak later on about other kinds of chastening which we may have, but for the present I speak of it as we find it presented in Hebrews 12, where the chastening is evidently in the form of difficulties encountered in the path of faith.

But it may be helpful at this point to consider for a few moments the great end which God has in view in every form of chastening. It is "for profit, in order to

the partaking of his holiness"; although "no chastening at the time seems to be matter of joy, but of grief, but afterwards yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it" (Hebrews 12:10, 11).

I should like to point out what it is to be a partaker of God's holiness. I can only suggest the thought of it, and you may work it out for yourselves. It has often been said that Scripture gives the history of two men: Adam and Christ. And the whole history leads to the conclusion that *Adam* will not do for God, but *Christ will*. The summing up of the whole truth of christianity is that there is only one Man before God for His pleasure, and that Man is *Christ*. The holiness of God necessitates the absolute setting aside of man in the flesh, but finds its eternal rest and satisfaction in Christ. We see the condemnation of sin in the flesh at the cross, and God is bent upon His children being made partakers of His holiness. There is a necessity for the practical displacement in us of that which was judged and removed from before God at the cross. Chastisement is always "for destruction of the flesh" (1 Corinthians 5: 5). It always has the effect of reducing and bringing to nothing the activity and energy of man's will and natural powers. How His chastening exercises us to this end we may learn in three typical cases which present illustrations of the three kinds of chastening to which the children of God are subjected. The three cases I refer to are those of Paul, Job and David.

In 2 Corinthians 11: 23 - 28 we have a long list of sufferings which came upon Paul because of his being in the path of faith. And in the following chapter he speaks of being given "a thorn for the flesh, a messenger of Satan that he might buffet me, that I might not be exalted", because "the exceeding greatness of the revelations" might otherwise have lifted him up in spiritual pride (chapter 12: 7). Paul's sufferings were the consequence of his devotedness and energy in the path of faith, or they were rendered necessary because of the exceptional favour which vouchsafed to him peculiar and blessed revelations. And I think we do not fail to see the result of the chastening in the spiritual history of the beloved apostle.

Paul must have been a man of great natural energy, and yet he was brought to glory in his weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over him. He had to learn that if "a man in Christ" (verse 2) could be caught up to the third heaven it was a man "in Christ" who could go there. As a man in the flesh, he had to find himself still subject to the terrible buffetings of "a messenger of Satan". And the practical effect of the buffeting was that, as to himself, he was conscious of nothing but weakness. All the energy that belonged to him naturally was reduced. Do you think that any of us like this process? I am sure we do not. Nothing but the present "supply of the Spirit of

Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1: 19) — the present ministry to our hearts of the grace of Christ — will enable us to bear it. "My grace suffices thee" (2 Corinthians 12: 9) said the Lord to His tried and devoted servant. The grace of the Lord is sufficient to make us willing to be weak and small. And when, by His grace, we are willing to be weak, we learn the blessed secret that "my power is perfected in weakness".

Discipline breaks down what is of the flesh, but when we are willing, through the grace of Christ, that it should be broken down, we find that instead of being spiritually weakened we have gained immensely. The knowledge of this enabled Paul to say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of the Christ may dwell upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in straits, for Christ: for when I am weak, then I am powerful" (verses 9, 10). Thus, conscious of nothing but weakness in himself, he found all-sufficient grace and strength in Christ. Often when a caravan is crossing the desert some member of the company will fall sick, and will at last become so feeble that they are obliged to leave him behind to die. And in such cases they will often stretch a little tent over the dying man, to shield him from the fierce rays of the sun until he breathes his last.

Some such figure was present to the apostle's mind when he said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of the Christ may dwell upon me". He says in effect, 'I am just a mass of weakness, without a single pulsation of power in myself, but I accept this weakness with joy because it becomes the occasion for the power of Christ to dwell upon me'. It is perfectly lovely. The strength and energy of Paul as a man in the flesh were displaced by the grace and strength of Christ. He thus became a partaker of God's holiness — the broken and reduced, but happy vessel of divine grace and power.

And we cannot read the epistle to the Philippians without seeing the gracious effect of a life of discipline in the school of God. The complete setting aside of his own will; the absorbing expectation and hope that Christ might be magnified in his body, whether by life or death; the lovely spiritual affections which shine out in so many ways; indeed, the whole epistle, so far as it presents the spirit and character of the writer, is one beautiful cluster of "the peaceful fruit of righteousness".

A second form of chastening comes to us in the way of things common to men, of which we get a full illustration in the history of Job. I think Job had to endure every kind of suffering that is common to men. He had to taste the sorrow of bereavement, of the loss of property, and of terrible personal

affliction. But God's end in it all was that Job might profit and become a partaker of His holiness. Job had a good deal of what we might call his own holiness before, but not until the end of the book do we find him really in the line of God's holiness. Like many others, he had connected the fruit of God's grace with himself, and in a certain way had taken credit to himself for that which divine grace had wrought in him. There had been much in him that was the fruit of grace, but it had turned into a kind of spiritual self-satisfaction.

In connection with Job's history we learn a principle of the greatest importance. That is, he never got the good of the chastening until he found himself in the presence of the Lord. It was when Paul turned to the Lord that he got the profit and benefit of his chastening, and I believe it is ever thus. It is in the presence of the Lord that we get the good of chastening. One has seen people go through great sorrow and suffering without getting much good from it, and I think in such cases there is no real turning to the Lord about it — no true recognition of His hand in it. Hence the Holy Spirit says, "Despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives" (Hebrews 12: 5, 6). It is of great importance that we should recognise the hand and heart of God in any chastening that comes upon us. This puts us, as it were, in His presence, to learn there the profitable lessons He would teach us.

Job, in the presence of God, says, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42: 6). Now he has learned his lesson; he has discovered that man after the flesh is an object to be abhorred; he is now a partaker of God's holiness. And the peaceful fruit of righteousness comes out, in that he prays for his friends. He conducts himself toward them according to divine grace, in spite of all their hard speeches. He thus becomes to them the practical exponent of grace — a subject with which they were very little acquainted.

There is a third kind of chastening, which comes upon us in the form of correction for sin. For an illustration of this, and of its effect, I should like you to consider the history of David. You have, no doubt, noticed that the Spirit of God has brought together, in 2 Samuel 22 and 23, two of David's songs. One belongs to his early days, for he "spoke to Jehovah the words of this song in the day that Jehovah had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul". The other contains "the last words of David". What a contrast there is between the two! In the first it is all triumph, he is exulting in what God has done for him; but in the last, as he thinks of the character of the One who is to rule over men in the fear of God, he has to say sorrowfully, "Although my house be not so before God" (2 Samuel 23: 5). Forty years of discipline come between these two songs. How suggestive is this contrast!

Many of us have probably known what it was to rejoice in the grace of God without having apprehended very much of the true character of the flesh. It has often been noticed that where there is the greatest exuberance of joy in young converts, there is often a levity which fails to take into account that the flesh is unchanged. In such cases the grace of God is taken up in a self-confident way; there is very little self-distrust, or sense of weakness and dependence. And the inevitable consequence is a fall, or a succession of falls, that gradually bring home to the consciences of believers their utter weakness and incapacity as in the flesh.

We not only learn thus by our falls and backslidings, but oftentimes these become the occasion of direct chastening on God's part, and we may have to suffer under God's government for years, or for a lifetime, the consequences of our sin and folly. David fell into a sin, the consequences of which he had to suffer all his life. He repented, and his sin was put away, but he had to suffer its governmental consequences all his life. "The sword shall never depart from thy house" (2 Samuel 12: 10). But all this chastening — solemn as it was in itself, and sad as was the conduct which necessitated it — turned to David's profit, and in the lowly and chastened spirit of his "last words" we can see him a partaker of God's holiness. For if he has to say, "My house be not so before God", he has another Person in view, of whom he can say, "He shall be as the light of the morning, like the rising of the sun, A morning without clouds; When from the sunshine, after rain, The green grass springeth from the earth". He had learned to distrust everything connected with his own house; but he had also learned the preciousness and beauty of Christ, and the stability of God's purpose in Him. "Although my house be not so before God, Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in every way and sure; For this is all my salvation, and every desire" (2 Samuel 23: 4, 5). God's purposes secured in Christ were now not only all his salvation, but all his *desire*. Thus he became a partaker of God's holiness.

Then, again, when he numbered the people (2 Samuel 24), he was not thinking of God, but of David. It was to make much of David that he would have his people numbered, even though their moral condition was such that they were not willing to pay the half shekel of redemption money, which was requisite to avert a plague (Exodus 30: 12). God would only have His people numbered on the ground of redemption, and it would appear from the result that the people were not in a moral condition to take this ground when David numbered them. As a consequence of the numbering of the people, a pestilence broke out amongst them, and seventy thousand people died. This was the terrible governmental consequence of David's sin and foolishness. It is true that the whole moral state of Israel was brought to light, and God's

judgment came upon it, but the pride of David's heart was the thing that gave occasion to this solemn visitation.

Nor was the chastening lost upon him, for when he saw the angel that smote the people, he said, "Behold, it is I that have sinned, and it is I that have committed iniquity; but these sheep, what have they done? let thy hand, I pray thee, be on me, and on my father's house!" (2 Samuel 24: 17). When in vain-glorious pride he had said, "Go, number Israel ... that I may know the number of the people" (verses 1, 2), he was far from being a partaker of God's holiness. He was in a spirit of self-importance — in a state of sin. But when he said, "It is I that have sinned, and it is I that have committed iniquity; ... let thy hand, I pray thee, be on me", he recognised *himself* as nothing but a fit subject for divine judgment. He was then a partaker of God's holiness — morally delivered, as the effect of divine chastening, from the sinful self-importance which had led him astray. The psalmist had to confess, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy word" (Psalm 119: 67). And he could also add, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119: 71).

But it is perfectly lovely to see how all the chastening which came upon David had its blessed "afterwards". So that, though he had long years of affliction and sorrow, in which the governmental consequences of his sins came upon him in a terrible succession of calamities, yet, after all, his sun had a glorious setting. Instructed and humbled by all the chastening, he is found at the end of his days laying himself out for the building of the house of God (1 Chronicles 22: 5, 14; 1 Chronicles 29:2-5; 1 Chronicles 29:13-18).

There is something exquisitely beautiful in all this, if we look at it as the result of God's chastening. How entirely the sin that occasioned the chastening, and the sorrow that accompanied it, are eclipsed by the magnitude and preciousness of "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" which it yielded in due season! There is no more lovely picture in the word of God than that of David in his last days — laying himself out for the house of God — rejoicing to give back to God everything that God had bestowed upon him; in short,

expending himself and all his treasures for a work which was altogether for the glory of God, and of which another was to have the credit.

I trust we may be helped by what has been before us at this time to see the character and object and result of "the chastening of the Lord". It is a great thing for us to understand God's ways with us. I am sure there is great encouragement in the thought of divine chastening if we apprehend it aright. Hands often hang down, and knees are feeble, because we do not know the secret of God's ways with us. We get discouraged and depressed by things

which are really most needful and profitable for us. If our hearts are set to run in the way of holiness, all the difficulties we encounter in the path of faith are the needed discipline to remove that which hinders our spiritual prosperity. And if we are passed through trials and sufferings such as are common to men, we must not suppose that they come to us by chance; too often such things are taken as a matter of course, the Lord's hand is not distinctly owned in them, and this is really despising the chastening of the Lord. Chastening does not profit us until we hear the voice of the Lord in it. Then, again, if we suffer, as many of us do in one way or another — chastening for sin and folly — let us not be discouraged and depressed by it, but rather let us rejoice that the love of God is set upon our "partaking of his holiness". After all, nothing is destroyed or weakened by chastening but the flesh. Regarding ourselves as subjects of the work of God, we are in no wise hindered or impeded by God's chastening; on the contrary, we are immensely and divinely helped by it. We cannot derive profit, and God cannot derive pleasure, from what is of the flesh; and God's holy discipline reduces that which is altogether unprofitable, so that we may not be hindered from true "profit".

No greater end could be proposed to us, and none more attractive to a spiritual mind, than that we should be "partaking of his holiness". And every divine chastening has its "afterwards", its blessed answer and recompense even here. I believe a moment comes in the history of every saint when he comes in view of "the end of the Lord" (James 5: 11), and in the estimation of his heart the end reached is well worth the painful course which has had to be travelled over to reach it. We may have to wander "in the wilderness in a desert way" (Psalm 107: 4), we may by the way, like those of old, be "hungry and thirsty", and our souls may faint in us, but when we reach the end which God has in view — the "city of habitation" — we see that the way by which He has led us is "the right way". It may be a "way" rendered necessary by our sin and folly, but it is, after all, a "right way", and we learn eternal lessons in it, the profit and blessing of which I believe God makes our hearts conscious of even here. In result we become partakers of God's holiness.

I knew a young servant of the Lord whose career of use fulness was suddenly cut short, as men would say, by an attack of chronic rheumatism which affected every joint in his body, and reduced him to perfect helplessness. After he had lain in bed quite unable even to feed himself, for about ten years, I asked him one day what he thought of the Lord's dealings with him. A heavenly smile shone upon his face as he replied, 'I can do nothing but praise Him for it all'. I think he had come in view of "the end of the Lord". He had got the recompense even here. This is a blessed result of chastening which nothing else could impart, an after-yielding of the peaceful fruit of

righteousness, which is more than a recompense for the suffering which precedes it. The whole secret comes out when the beloved apostle says, “We who live are always delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4: 11).

FAITH, ENDURANCE AND WISDOM

James 1:1-5

It is encouraging to see that God has taken us up in view of developing certain features in us, and those features are developed on the line of endurance.

There is nothing accidental or haphazard in any testing that comes; we have exactly the test which is needed to bring out the nature of our knowledge of God and the amount of faith we have, and to furnish that faith with power of endurance, so that there is real increase.

If I shirk a test, I lose the gain of it. The gain of a test lies in facing it and going through it with God. Our whole life is a series of tests, but all together they are planned so as to work out in result the accomplishment of what is in the mind of God in regard to each saint.

It is beautiful to think of it working out to completeness, so that there is not an element wanting. We can count it joy in view of the issue. If I am tested as to whether I will compromise a divine principle, and I evade the test, I lose the gain that would have accrued from facing it. But if faith comes into exercise there will not be a single test that will not be productive of good to us.

We have to submit to the government of God, as suffering under it the consequences of our own failures, and the general failure of His people. But there is a deepening, under the government of God, of all these experiences. Most of us are shallow and superficial at the beginning, but testings bring about a deepening, a truer self-knowledge; we discover what weakness and want of wisdom are in ourselves. Such discoveries turn us to God for wisdom.

The great gain of faith is that we reach God about things, and what is merely natural is displaced. "That ye may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" contemplates that God has a certain end to reach with every one of us, and He means to add every element that is needed to make up the complete thought that He has in His mind for us.

Endurance is a quality which is of primary importance. Moses persevered as seeing Him who is invisible. There is a danger of going on to a certain point, and then stopping short. If endurance has its perfect work we shall be "perfect and complete". Every needed element will be added in the faithfulness of God.

The Lord Jesus was never deflected; He went straight on; He was marked by endurance; He "endured the cross". It was a great and precious feature in

Him, that He endured. He went through everything, even to the endurance of the cross.

This scripture would teach us that we are under the hand of God in every testing, and if we go faithfully through the test with Him we shall reach the perfection and completeness of what He has in His mind for us in it. Endurance and wisdom are two primary necessities for us in a day like the present. It is a difficult time, and for such a time both endurance and wisdom are needed, and they are the two things to which James calls our attention first.

However unforeseen by us a difficulty may be, it cannot baffle divine wisdom. Wisdom is a most comprehensive thing. There are, I believe, ten different words in Hebrew for wisdom, which suggests its varied and comprehensive character; it takes different forms according to the need of the moment. Scripture speaks of the "all-various wisdom of God" as being made known through the assembly (Ephesians 3: 10). Wisdom is infinitely varied, and it will meet everything. There is not always chapter and verse for every detail; if there were it would leave little room for wisdom.

Wisdom is essential, and it can be got by asking of God. He is not unwilling to bestow it; He gives to all freely, nor does He reproach us for the lack of it. "And it shall be given to him". There is no uncertainty as to the result to those who "ask in faith, nothing doubting". A doubter is double minded and unstable; he does not really know God; he is carried by the influences of the moment, and there is no wisdom in this.

I have no doubt that James, in his references to wisdom, has in mind the "wise" of Daniel 11: 35 — the Maschilim — who have benefited by the instruction of the thirteen Maschil psalms, so as to have understanding in the mind of God in the last days.

How necessary to ask of God for this wisdom in a day when conditions are abnormal! Nothing but wisdom from above will ever carry us through. But is it impossible that the "wise" should be baffled, however great the difficulties may be. Wisdom comes out in knowing how to act in presence of difficulties. The deacons in Acts 6 were men full of the Spirit and wisdom, and it was said of Stephen that "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke" (Acts 6: 10). His address in Acts 7 is a wonderful example of a man speaking in wisdom; no answer to it was possible. Wisdom is needed that we may use knowledge aright. If knowledge is not used in wisdom and love, we may stumble the very persons we want to help.

ENDURANCE

James 5: 11

I have read this verse, dear brethren, having in mind the pressure and strain that is upon the people of God universally. Indeed, there has always been more or less pressure upon the people of God, but it is certainly so in a special way at the present time; therefore it is most important for us to understand what is the purpose of God in allowing such a state of things.

I believe the secret comes out in the verse I have read, and in other verses that I may read, my thought being mainly to bring several scriptures before us, rather than to say much about them. We find here that blessedness is attached to the thought of endurance, "Behold, we call them blessed who have endured". We may be sure that is not the judgment of nature, but it is nevertheless a true judgment. It is true, in the first place, because those who have endured have exhibited a certain very precious feature of Christ. Nothing could be more attractive to us as born of God than that we should have opportunity to display features of Christ. Indeed, it is the only thing worth living for, or, if need be, worth dying for. One great feature which God is seeking to develop at the present moment is this feature of endurance.

Let us turn to 2 Thessalonians 3: 5: "But the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ". It is very striking that these two things should be put together, as the two things the Lord is especially engaged in directing our hearts into. Being directed into the love of God sets us in the most happy relations with Him. There is really nothing greater; there is nothing greater or better in eternity. But the same One who directs us into the love of God directs us also into the patience or endurance of the Christ, and that furnishes us with divine capability to stand in the presence of everything that is adverse, and divine power comes out in that way. It is the peculiar feature that divine power takes on at the present time; it gives capacity in the saints for endurance.

Let us read Colossians 1: 11: "Strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy". We are apt to think of power as displayed in some wonderful exploit; but it works to bring out this beautiful feature that was seen so perfectly in Christ Himself.

Another verse says "Looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith: who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against

himself, that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds" (Hebrews 12: 2, 3). We are to consider well that blessed One, who was marked all through His pathway here, and particularly at the end of it, by endurance. It was especially so at the cross, which was the extreme limit of it. There was ability to endure, and if it had not been so, it would have been woe for us! There was the copper there of which the altar was made; there was capacity to endure the utmost testing. In answer to it Christ has taken up His place at the right hand of the throne of God, and He now has the assembly as the first-fruits of His endurance of suffering.

It is very suitable that His saints should take on this feature too. If we cannot, we are of little value. It has been evidenced all down the ages. James refers to Job who was one of the earliest saints. He does not mention his sayings, but he speaks of his endurance. It was a feature of Christ coming out in that ancient saint and it justified the ways of God with him. All our pressure will eventually be seen to have qualified us for the end which the Lord had in view for each one of us.

We often speak of reigning with Christ, but do we think of it as a great reality? Think of the great dignity attached to it! I believe we should behave ourselves wonderfully if we thought we were going to reign with Christ. If we understood it we should want to qualify for it. The condition is, "If we endure, we shall also reign together" (2 Timothy 2: 12). This is the end of the Lord.

Meanwhile there is tender compassion and pitifulness in the Lord. He feels for His saints when they are under pressure; He enters into all that it means for them, but He greatly values their endurance in it. This feature is very attractive to the Lord; one wonders whether we take in the attractiveness of the assembly to Christ as having it. Of Philadelphia, which is the brightest spot in the assemblies under the Lord's eye, He says, "Thou hast kept the word of my patience" (Revelation 3: 10). That is, the assembly cherishes the testimony of Christ's endurance, and carries it on. This does not lie in what we say, but in the expression of the thing itself in answer to it.

The Lord says, "I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial". We are qualified to be kept out of the coming time of trial by keeping the word of His patience. So if reproach comes, the saints endure it; if actual suffering comes, they endure it. I believe this feature is being developed in secret at the present time; it does not appear publicly, but the Lord values it.

He will value it also in the saints that follow up in a later day. "Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints" (Revelation 13: 10). How He values this feature of Himself in His saints. His bride will be developed by it. Pressure works to bring this about (see Romans 5: 3). If we know little of it, we cannot

look to be great in the reigning time. But those who pass through severe pressure in true exercise of heart with God, and so are developed in endurance, will shine there.

Endurance came out in Christ here in presence of the contradiction of sinners, and we are to ponder it. "Consider well him", or 'weigh so as to judge its value', as the marginal note gives it. Now, have we given ourselves to consider seriously and affectionately the endurance of Christ? There is opportunity to do so in this present time of pressure just preceding our translation. Nothing more rejoices the heart of Christ than that this feature should come out in the members of His body. May God encourage our hearts to take it up!

HEALING THE SICK

James 5: 16

My dear Brother,

In answer to your letter I am glad to send you a few remarks on the subject of divine healing, though it be simply to call attention to what Scripture sets before us.

The healing of the sick, accompanying the preaching of the glad tidings of the kingdom, was one of the great characteristics of the presence and service of the Son of God in this world. Every form and fruit of the power of evil had to give way before Him; every result of sin — disease, and even death itself — had to bear witness to the greatness of divine power which was active here in compassionate goodness to men. It could not be otherwise in the presence of God manifest in flesh. The power was present which could and did relieve men of every pressure, so that it was manifest that He was here who will in a coming day "swallow up death in victory" (Isaiah 25: 8) and bring about such a state of things that the inhabitants shall not say, "I am sick" (Isaiah 33: 24).

And not only was every act of healing a testimony of what was in God's heart in loving-kindness to His ruined creature, but it was a figure of an even greater deliverance by which men should be set free from every moral disease so as to be for God's pleasure, serving Him "without fear in piety and righteousness before him all our days" (Luke 1: 75). The works of power of the age to come were illustrative of the moral healing by which alone man could answer to God's will as set forth in the teaching of the Lord, And it is very touching to see that every act of healing was at the cost of suffering to the blessed Healer, for, as the prophet had said, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Matthew 8: 17). He did not remove any infirmity by His power without bearing the burden and sorrow of it in His spirit, and this was true of "every disease and every bodily weakness" (Matthew 9: 35). He thus understands perfectly, and can sympathise with every form of bodily suffering, and this is a sweet comfort to all His "brethren" who are sick. For that such might be sick is clearly intimated in His own words, "I was ill, and ye visited me", explained by "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me" (Matthew 25: 36, 40).

We see Him giving the twelve, and then the seventy, power to heal diseases. They had not need to talk about the power, or to write books about it, or to try to make people believe they had it. They *had* it, and they exercised it in the simplest possible way. When we pass from the gospels to the Acts we find

the same divine power accompanying the service of Peter and Paul, in testimony to the name of Him who was no longer here but glorified in heaven, though it may be noted that neither in the Acts nor in the epistles do we find any instance of a Christian being restored from bodily sickness by a miracle. Then we learn from 1 Corinthians that "gifts of healings" were set, amongst other gifts, "in the assembly". And James says, "Is any sick among you? let him call to him the elders of the assembly, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall heal the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be one who has committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. Confess therefore your offences to one another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed" (James 5: 14 - 16).

We are also told that "the body is ... for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6: 13), and again, "He is Saviour of the body" (Ephesians 5: 23). All this is to be weighed and valued as a blessed witness of what divine power and goodness can effect in the way of preservation or healing of the body. It has encouraged the faith of God's people to count upon Him in innumerable instances, so that I suppose there are very few of His children who have not known personally of cases in which prayer has been most distinctly answered in regard to the body. It is simply a question of faith counting upon God and getting its answer. In each case it is a matter of individual exercise and faith on the part of the sick one, or of those concerned about him. One would wish to encourage in oneself, and in one's brethren, more simple piety and confidence in God as to the body and its health.

Remarkable sign gifts, such as "tongues", "gifts of healing", "miraculous powers", existed in the assembly at the beginning; God bore witness with His servants to His great salvation "both by signs and wonders, and various acts of power, and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his will" (Hebrews 2: 4). There was one blessed company presenting a united testimony on God's part in the midst of a hostile world, and He was pleased to accredit that testimony in a public and unmistakable way. But where might we expect such credentials to be found today, compelling the attention of men by manifesting His power miraculously, even to sight? It is a day of departure and ruin, and it could hardly be expected that God should accredit in a public way a condition of things which is contrary to His mind. If, on the other hand, sign gifts were bestowed on such saints as were individually approved of God, it would put such saints publicly in an extraordinary position, as being distinguished from the church generally — from all other saints — by the possession of miraculous powers.

I think a heart that felt aright the true condition of the church would shrink from the idea of such a position. The assembly has departed from first love and is in a fallen state; Christ and the Spirit have lost Their place; and man's will and order (which is really confusion) are seen on every hand. We are in 2 Timothy days, and the Spirit shows us there the path of righteousness and faith for those who are found calling on the Lord out of a pure heart at such a time. There is no word of sign gifts being recovered or miraculous powers being conferred on the faithful. There is a call to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, to be prepared for suffering, to strive diligently to present oneself approved to God, to shun profane vain babblings, to withdraw from iniquity, to separate from vessels to dishonour, to flee youthful lusts, and to pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. All is put on moral and vital ground, and though the servant addressed had frequent illnesses, and another valued brother is mentioned in the epistle as being left behind sick, Paul drops no hint as to their being healed by faith.

We are in a day of ruin, with utter and final apostasy close at hand. There cannot be the smallest question as to God's power: He can heal the bodies of His saints today, as at any time, if it pleases Him to do so. But the condition of the assembly — the vessel of testimony — is such that faithful individuals would be concerned rather as to spiritual healing — that the saints should be found walking together according to truth, and in holy separation from the world, and from everything that is not according to the will of the Lord; that full place should be given to the Holy Spirit and His ministry of the glory of Christ; that the relations of Christ to the assembly and of the assembly to Christ should be known and entered into; that the members of the body of Christ should recognise their corporate bond with one another, and be found acting happily and healthfully in their mutual relations as such; that the joints of supply should be in such living contact with the Head as to minister of His fulness continually so that the body may be united together and increase with the increase of God; that saints may hold the truth in love, and "grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ: from whom the whole body, fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love" (Ephesians 4: 15, 16).

These are very great subjects for exercise and desire, and it is to be earnestly wished that saints were more concerned about them. There is a danger of missing the distinctive character of christian blessings — of being diverted from the spiritual and the heavenly — and we have to see to it that we do not lose our crown.

Any pretension to miraculous powers in such a day as this would need to be tested in every way by the Holy Scriptures: the spirit of those claiming to exercise such powers would need to be discerned to be as being of God, and their teaching judged by the truth.

We are drawing near to the moment of apostasy, and we read of one to come "whose coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2: 9, 10). Alleged cases of healing have been found in connection with grave error as to the truth, and this renders it necessary that the children of God should exercise spiritual judgment, and apply the test of truth to those who assume to exercise healing powers. The desire for signs was one marked feature of Jewish unbelief (Matthew 16: 1 - 4, etc.; 1 Corinthians 1: 22). Man naturally loves the marvellous, without desiring in conscience or heart to be brought near to God; and in the last days the enemy will gain power over men by gratifying this desire (Matthew 24: 24).

In considering the scripture in James 5 we have to remember that when he wrote the assembly was a distinct and united company, and the elders were known individually who could be sent for as being officially in a position to act administratively for the Lord. The assembly cannot be found today; it is fallen, scattered and submerged in the world. Elders, as of divine appointment officially, there are none. Does this tremendous change of conditions make no difference? The very first exercise of a sick saint brings home to him that on the administrative side all is changed through man's failure. But he can still pray, and if anything is on his conscience he can confess his offences to his brethren, and saints can pray for one another that they may be healed. We can go fully on the ground of James 5: 16, though probably few spiritual persons would care to take the ground of acting officially as elders according to verse 14. It is all a question of exercise, spiritual uprightness, and faith, and I suppose we have all known instances in which the Lord has come in to heal and raise up the sick in answer to prayer. But it is a great thing not to suffer our thoughts of things to get out of proportion. If we are more concerned about physical health than we are about spiritual health we need adjustment.

It is clear from 1 Corinthians 11: 30 that bodily weakness and even death may be the discipline of the Lord upon that which is displeasing to Him. John also refers to this when he 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. There is a sin to death: I do not say of that that he should make a request" (1 John 5: 16, 17). It would evidently be an exercise from the Lord as

to whether sickness were of this nature or otherwise, and if a believer felt in his conscience that it was so, and was brought to repentance, it would be good for him to confess his wrongdoing. Such conviction and confession would lead to prayer for the sick one and his sins would be forgiven, and, generally speaking, he would be healed and raised up. There might indeed be the solemn case of sin unto death — which would be spiritually discerned — when there might be no faith to make request for recovery, but such a case would probably be exceptional.

But there is much sickness that is not discipline for unfaithfulness. Epaphroditus was sick close to death "for the sake of the work", and his sickness was the cause of much exercise to Paul and also to the Philippian saints. If healing had been the normal thing in Christianity we should surely have found an example of it in this instance, but there is no suggestion that he was thus healed. Paul records with much thankfulness, just as we should of any sick brother who had been raised up, that "God had mercy on him, and not indeed on him alone, but also on me, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow" (Philippians 2: 27). There is something peculiarly touching in his case: the reason for his sickness, the exercise of Paul (and no doubt others also) about it, the concern of the Philippians when they heard of it, and his own distress because they had heard of it. I venture to believe that all these exercises, and the activities of sympathy and love in the saints called forth by his sickness, were a sweeter expression of the love and "bowels and compassions" of the Christ than any act of miraculous power by which he might have been instantly healed.

How many thousands of saints have been happy to assert that they would not have missed for anything the exercises of prolonged sickness and suffering! They have so learned the grace and sympathy and succour of Christ as the living Priest, and they have been the subjects of so much precious and tender interest and consideration flowing from the spiritual affections of His saints, that they have become conscious of infinite gain and enrichment. And surely the development and exercise of such affections as these, eternal in their nature, though called into activity by circumstances connected with conditions of weakness and time, are a greater triumph of divine love and power than restoring the sick ones to health. I cannot but feel it is a real loss for the attention of saints to be turned from the spiritual dealings of the Lord with His saints, and from all that is the moral result of those dealings, to be concentrated upon the thought of bodily healing.

The experience of weakness and suffering may not only be of the greatest advantage to the spiritual welfare of the sufferer, but it may be absolutely

essential to his preservation in service. We see a striking example of this in Paul himself, who suffered intensely from some form of physical infirmity. He was deeply exercised as to being relieved of this pressure, and besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. However, it was not the Lord's will to remove the infirmity, whatever it was, but to make His grace sufficient for His servant, and to perfect His power in His servant's conscious weakness. Is it not apparent that the removal of the infirmity by divine healing would have meant a real loss to Paul's soul and service, and not a gain? To suppose that relief from physical weakness and suffering is the greatest good is a profound mistake. To prove the grace of the Lord and the power of Christ in the suffering is very often greater gain than to be relieved of it.

We are called to walk in the truth. If God is pleased to give physical healing in answer to prayer, as He has done in thousands of cases, we thankfully acknowledge His mercy and goodness. If it came to our knowledge that He has been pleased to confer a distinct gift of healing, manifest as such to sober and spiritual persons, we should thank Him for this also. But apart from the difficulty which we might have in verifying the truth of any claim to such gift, we ought not to allow even divine gift to divert us from the truth, or from a path which we have learned to be according to the truth.

Many true and divine gifts — evangelists, pastors, teachers — are found labouring in connection with things which we have seen to be contrary to the will of the Lord. We own them as gifts, but we do not walk with them, and we discern that even as gifts they suffer loss, and the church fails to receive the full measure of edifying through them because of their association with systems which are of men's ordering. To have gifts for ministry or miraculous powers for healing is not the crowning glory of faithful saints in a day of ruin. It is rather to be addressed by Him who is the Holy One and True in these words: "Behold, I have set before thee an opened door, which no one can shut, because thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name ... . I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (Revelation 3: 8 - 11).

RESTORATION

James 5: 20

The thought of the Lord's coming would produce a desire for restoration in the brethren; we should want every one to be put right. I have no doubt that the intercession of Christ is often answered by the discipline of God for the restoration of those who have erred. The Lord would encourage us all to cultivate the desire for restoration — to do our utmost to save souls from death and to cover sins.

How could we bear to think of any sins of God's people being unconfessed and unrepented of, when the Lord comes? The restoration of every erring one is to be sought in view of the coming of the Lord. Turning aside from the truth, and from what is suitable to God, is the way to death; it is not the way of life.

Nothing promotes brotherly confidence more than the confession of faults. If one confesses his offences it does not make us think less of him, but more, because we know he has judged himself about those things in which he has been at fault. He is now upright and we are greatly encouraged to pray for him. But it is to be noted that the confession is mutual, "Confess therefore your offences to one another" (verse 16). It is not a priest listening to the confessions of other people, and not confessing his sins to them. We are all put on the same platform of mutual transparency and confidence. James reminds us that "we all often offend".

It will be generally found if one brother has to make acknowledgment to another of a fault, that something is also due on the other side. I know two brothers who were not happy together, and they met one day, and one of them said, 'I am very sorry that this feeling has come in between us, and I feel that it has been all my fault'. The other replied, 'No, indeed, it has been my fault!' That is the way to get breaches healed.

LIVING STONES (1)

1 Peter 1: 1 - 25

It is deeply important that we should apprehend the thought of God to have His saints built up as "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood". It is not God's mind to have His saints as scattered units in this world, nor is it ever contemplated in Scripture that they should be found in sects of their own choosing. God has visited the Gentiles "to take out of the nations a people for his name" (Acts 15: 14), and it should be the exercise of every believer to know the will and pleasure of God concerning His saints. Epaphras laboured fervently in prayer that the saints might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God", and such a prayer is not less needful for us than for those at Colosse.

The privileges and testimony of God's earthly people, Israel, all centred in a material house — that is, in the temple — but now there is no material house. A spiritual house built up of living stones has taken its place. I desire to point out how God forms the living stones, and how they are brought together so as to be built up a spiritual house.

In the first place it was needful that our sins should be put away, and Christ "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2: 24). But the putting away of our sins was not the end which He had in view, though it was necessary in order that the divine end might be reached. We read in another scripture that He "gave himself for our sins, so that he should deliver us out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1: 4). Then in 1 Peter 3: 18 we read that "Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God". Christ has put away our sins "that he should deliver us out of the present evil world", and "that he might bring us to God". I have no doubt that this latter expression would convey to the Jewish believers, to whom Peter was writing, the idea of being made priests. The Jews' idea of a priest would be that he was a man who went to God. Christ has suffered for sins, not only to clear our guilty consciences and to secure us for heaven by and by, but that He might bring us now to God as priests. The end in view was that as living stones we might be "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ".

There is no carnal priesthood now that is owned of God, nor is there any material house. There is a spiritual priesthood, and a spiritual house composed of living stones.

I can understand some believer saying, 'This is a very deep subject; it is beyond me'. But the apostle did not seem to think that it was an unsuited subject to bring before those whom he exhorted as "newborn babes" to "desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word". The fact is that many things which were simple at the first are difficult now because christianity has become a great religion in the world, and it takes us a long time to learn that the christianity we see around us is not at all the christianity of the New Testament.

This chapter (1 Peter 1) shows how "living stones" are formed; that is, it brings before us the different elements of God's gracious work by which His saints are prepared to occupy a place in His spiritual house. Of these different elements, none is more important than that of which verse 3 speaks: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead".

It is impossible for anyone to apprehend rightly the blessings of christianity, or to understand the ways of God in connection with this present period of Christ's rejection, if he does not see that everything has begun anew for God in Christ risen. If men look for God's actings in this world, and for the intervention of His power in the present course of things, they will be disappointed. Their hopes will surely die sooner or later. Alas! many believers are zealously but ignorantly toiling in hope of seeing better and brighter things in this present world. They think that by education, good moral training, temperance, beneficent legislation, and the influences of religion, some great and divine change may be brought about in this present world. But all such hopes are doomed to disappointment. Christendom, with all its advantages and privileges, is on the verge of apostasy, and there will be no intervention of God in the course of things here until the Lord Jesus is revealed "from heaven, with the angels of his power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and those who do not obey the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1: 7, 8).

When the Lord Jesus was here, His disciples followed Him in expectation of soon seeing some signal intervention of God's power by which His kingdom should "immediately appear". They looked for some mighty act of God's power on behalf of Christ that should reverse everything, and turn His reproach and rejection into honour and glory. But God did not intervene, and instead of following Christ to the throne of His father David, they had to follow Him through deepening shades of sorrow and rejection to the cross. They had given up everything for Him in prospect of His having the kingdom, but as to

this world He was cut off and had nothing. It may be said that their hopes were founded on Scripture, and this was perfectly true, but they had to learn that it was not God's purpose to establish anything in connection with man in the flesh. Even Christ after the flesh must be cut off and have nothing. God allowed every hope which attached to Christ after the flesh to come under the blight of death.

Then came the amazing intervention of God's power in "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead". God did not interfere with the order of things which existed in this world; He left everything here just as it was; but He wrought a mighty act outside the sphere of flesh and blood altogether, and apart from the history of this world. Resurrection is entirely outside the whole course of things here, and the fact that God's power has thus wrought shows that He has another scene in view. Death is the end of every hope connected with the flesh, but resurrection opens up another order of things, and is the true starting-point of all our hope.

God has "begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in the heavens ...". It is an immense deliverance to have our hearts turned from a world which is filled with sin's confusion, so that we no longer entertain any hopes or prospects in connection with what is here, but in "living hope" we recognise that everything that is incorruptible and undefiled and unfading must be of a heavenly order, and that such is the nature of our inheritance.

Nothing that lies within the range of sin or death could be incorruptible, undefiled, or unfading. But in Jesus Christ risen from among the dead, things subsist which are beyond the reach of every corrupting and defiling influence. The inheritance in the mind of a Jew would include the fulfilment of all God's promises, and therefore all grace and glory of the kingdom. Everything that God had promised — all His unnumbered thoughts of blessing towards men (Psalm 40: 5) — has been made good in Christ risen on the ground of redemption. And now, as guarded by the power of God through faith, we await the revelation of it all from heaven. God's thoughts are not established here, but they are established in heaven; nothing has failed of His purpose of blessing, and it has all been secured where it cannot be corrupted or defiled.

In this world we see everything corrupted and defiled by sin, and even that which is comely and beautiful in nature — natural affections and the like — fades under the blight of death. But in a risen and heavenly Christ we see God's thought of infinite favour and blessing for man in One who is for ever beyond the reach of sin and death. Our "living hope" attaches to Him, and to

all that is established in unfading excellence and glory in Him, ere long to be manifested at His appearing, but already known as a blessed reality in our hearts.

Thus though the believer may be put to grief by various trials, and have his faith proved by fire, this only causes him to exult the more in the mighty deliverance and grace which will be brought out of heaven when the One who is there shall be revealed. Outwardly the saint does not experience deliverance — he may be poor, afflicted and persecuted — but inwardly he has passed out of darkness into God's marvellous light. He is in the light of Christ risen and glorified, and is kept guarded by the power of God through faith for a salvation which is ready to be revealed.

We may see a striking illustration of this when Paul and Silas were in prison at Philippi. They were put to grief by manifold trials but the test only served to prove that they were really in the light of God's purpose established in Christ. They were so in God's marvellous light, that they could pray and sing praises to Him. God's unseen things were greater realities to them than what they saw and felt here, and they were in joy and praise before there was any outward deliverance.

This may serve to show the meaning of what is spoken of in verse 9, "Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls". That is, before the time comes for outward deliverance from all that is evil here, the Christian receives as the end of his faith an inward deliverance in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as risen and glorified. "Whom, having not seen, ye love; on whom though not now looking, but believing, ye exult with joy unspeakable and filled with the glory". This is soul salvation. If our hearts are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, we shall not be much held or influenced by things and circumstances here. An unseen Person in heavenly glory has become the Object, not only of our faith, but of our love. We have believed on Him, not only to do certain things for us, but as the Object of our hearts. It is the great work of the Spirit of God to form a link of affection between our hearts and that risen, unseen Person in heaven. We know how strong are the links of human love. But a link of love in the power of the Holy Spirit is a stronger link than any bond in natural affection. And this is the nature of our link with Christ. The great mission of the Holy Spirit is to make the love and glory of Christ known in our hearts, so that we rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Stephen was in the power of this when, "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" (Acts 7: 55). There was no outward deliverance in his case;

God did not stay the violence of the persecutors, or turn aside the stones they cast at His faithful martyr. Men were allowed to do their worst unchecked, but at the very same moment Stephen's heart was filled with the blessed vision of the glory of God and Jesus — he had joy unspeakable and was glorified. His inward deliverance was complete.

Paul likewise was in the power of soul salvation when he said, "I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3: 8). The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ had shone in his heart, and filled him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And the effect was that he was inwardly delivered from the power and influence of things here.

If the love of Christ is in our hearts, and His glory shines there by the Spirit, we love Him whom we have not seen, and we rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. If this were so, do you think we should be attracted by the world, or held in bondage by the lusts and pride of the flesh? No! we should have complete inward deliverance from man in the flesh and his world; we should receive soul salvation. This is the end of our faith; it is the present triumph of faith. The heart is taken out of things here and linked up with a risen and heavenly Christ.

I have dwelt upon this as showing how the saints are formed as living stones for God's spiritual house, and with the same object in view I now pass on to verse 18, "Knowing that ye have been redeemed, not by corruptible things, as silver or gold, from your vain conversation handed down from your fathers, but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ".

It is of great moment to see clearly the aspect of redemption which is here presented. It is not from sins, or Satan's power exactly, but from "your vain conversation handed down from your fathers". That is, it is redemption from the claims, burdens, and vanities of a religion suited to man in the flesh. The law had "a shadow of the coming good things" but it had only a shadow; the substance was reserved for a later day. So it is written of that system of things that "the law perfected nothing" (Hebrews 7: 19), and also, "Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not ... . Thou tookest no pleasure in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin" (Hebrews 10: 5, 6). If this were so even as to those things which had been divinely instituted, how much more as to the many things which had been invented by men and incorporated in their traditions? What was the value of a system which left at a distance from God the hearts of those who participated in its forms and ceremonies? It was an empty shell, a

vain conversation. And to an upright soul it was a burdensome and oppressive system. A fleshly religion may suit an unconverted man, but a round of forms, observances and ceremonies becomes very barren and burdensome to one who, through grace, thirsts for the knowledge of God. It does not meet the need of the exercised conscience, nor does it satisfy the awakened heart.

Now we are redeemed from all such "vain conversation" by the precious blood of Christ. The death of Christ is our title to be free, because it is the proof that everything according to the flesh has come to an end before God, while at the same time everything that was dimly shadowed forth by the ordinances of the law has been fulfilled in divine perfection. Everything in judaism served to remind men that sins were not put away, that they could not approach God, and that death was upon them. But by the precious blood of Christ, propitiation has been made for sins, the death that was upon man has come upon One who was personally exempt from it, and thus a way of approach to God has been opened.

Of what avail are the ceremonies and ordinances of an earthly religion? Believers do not need them either in connection with the putting away of their sins or with their approach to God. They are simply appropriated by man in the flesh, who loves to be engaged in some kind of religious service, and whose conscience is so dead that he does not realise how empty and vain are all such services and ceremonies. Does God take pleasure in religious buildings, music, sacred vestments, incense, sacraments, and regular attendance upon what are called religious duties? No! God is the living God, and He finds no pleasure in "dead works" performed by sinners who are in His sight under death.

There is no more sad and solemn verse in Scripture than John 19: 31: "The Jews therefore, that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for it was the preparation, (for the day of that sabbath was a great day,) demanded of Pilate that their legs might be broken and they taken away". The Christ of God was dead upon the cross, and now His betrayers and murderers would go on with the punctilious observance of the sabbath! They were concerned that nothing should interfere with the sanctity of the day! Such is man! But what pleasure did their sabbath-keeping or their "great day" afford to God? It was indeed a "vain conversation".

In the death of Christ the end of all flesh has come before God. We are under death and judgment, and Christ has come there in love on our behalf. If we recognise this, how can we bring to God that which is of the flesh? How can we go on with things that belong to religious flesh? Will God be pleased with devout attitudes, melodious voices, anything of that kind? No! the death of

Christ has brought the man to whom these things belong to an end before God, and when we see this we do not want a bit of fleshly religion. We are set free from it in heart and spirit and conscience, for we recognise it to be a "vain conversation".

In christendom generally the true import of the death of Christ is unknown. Hence what we see around us is very much like judaism with certain modifications, and with christian terms imported into it. It has become as much a "vain conversation" as judaism was — a religion for man in the flesh, and adapted to him as such. In presence of all this we need to cherish very much the thought of the death of Christ, and its divine import. This will keep us clear of religious flesh and its "vain conversation".

The Lord's supper is the rallying point for Christians, and we do therein show the Lord's death till He come. In deep and blessed love He has died, and in presence of His love we realise "that one died for all, then all have died" (2 Corinthians 5: 14). His death is the end of all that we were, but it is at the same time the revelation to our hearts of divine love, and in that love we are blessed. We bring nothing of the flesh to God; we praise and bless God that all we were as in the flesh was ended in Christ's death. And now we live in the love which has reached us through death, and in the blessings which that love has freely given. The apprehension of this takes our hearts quite away from religious flesh; it takes the shine out of everything connected with man in the flesh. Then by Him we "believe on God who has raised him from among the dead and given him glory, that your faith and hope should be in God" (verse 21). It is by a risen Christ that we believe in God, and we know Him as One whose mighty acts are wrought in the power and sphere of resurrection. Our faith and hope are in God as the One who raised up Christ from the dead and gave Him glory.

Thus knowing God we have part in the divine nature, and we love one another. "Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth to unfeigned brotherly love, love one another out of a pure heart fervently" (verse 22). Also note verses 15 and 16, "But as he who has called you is holy, be ye also holy in all your conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy". By the Holy Spirit we are formed in the divine nature — that is, in holiness and love — so as to be morally suited to God. This necessitates the entire setting aside of the flesh and its glory; it is wholly worthless for God. So we read at the end of the chapter, "All flesh is as grass, and all its glory as the flower of grass. The grass has withered and its flower has fallen". Hence we are exhorted to lay aside "all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speakings" (chapter 2: 1). All that is the activity of the flesh must be

set aside, for it is entirely contrary to the divine nature. This is in view of growing up to salvation. We cannot grow unless we lay aside the moral deformities that attach to the flesh. Such things as malice, guile, etc. grieve the Spirit and put a stop to all divine growth.

"As newborn babes desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word, that by it ye may grow up to salvation" (chapter 2: 2). We grow up to salvation as the pure mental milk of the word nourishes our souls with what is of God, for this practically alienates our hearts from man and his world. Thus we are delivered in spirit from all that system of things in which the power of evil works. We do not arrive at this all at once; we have to grow up to it. We apprehend that Christ is rejected here, but that every divine thought is made good in Him as the risen and heavenly One. In the apprehension of these things we are spiritually formed as "living stones" for God's spiritual house. We are thus prepared to come to Christ as the Living Stone that we may be built up "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood". We are prepared to take our place here in the fellowship of His rejection and death.

This is the true place and privilege of all saints. There is nothing pretentious or ecclesiastical about it; it is simply God's mind for His saints that they should be found in the fellowship of Christ's rejection and death here, and that they should come to Him as the Living Stone so as to be built up a spiritual house. What it means to come to Him as the Living Stone we may consider, if God will, on a future occasion.

I trust each one of us may realise the importance and blessedness of that which has come before us at this time. I have sought to present four things: (1) that the saints are begotten unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; (2) it is our privilege to be so rejoicing in Him as the risen and heavenly One that we have complete inward deliverance — soul salvation; (3) we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ from every kind of "vain conversation" in the way of fleshly and earthly religion; (4) we have purified our souls by obedience to the truth, that we may be now practically apart from what is of the flesh, and formed in the divine nature. May we know in our souls the true power and grace of these things by the Holy Spirit!

1 PETER 1 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 Peter 1: 10 - 16

Rem We were saying last time that "the salvation of your souls" does not refer to the body.

Rem This salvation is something we receive now, "the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls". We have got one end now, we will get the other end by and by.

CAC It seems clear that if persons are exulting "with joy unspeakable and filled with the glory", they have received the salvation of their souls. It is inward in contrast to the salvation referred to in verse 5.

Ques Does that refer to full salvation or deliverance when the Lord comes?

CAC It appears so. That is the complete deliverance.

Rem As in Hebrews — it is "salvation ready to be revealed".

CAC That is the salvation of which the prophets spoke.

Ques You make verse 10 go back to verse 5?

CAC Do you not think that?

Rem Yes.

CAC The prophets did not speak much about the salvation which would be brought to saints at the coming of the Lord when they would be completely delivered from every circumstance of sorrow and trial.

Rem It was the gospel according to the prophets.

CAC Yes, the prophets spoke of the first coming of Christ, and also of His second coming.

Rem The force of the passage is connected with the word "receiving".

CAC Yes; that is, the believer received complete inward deliverance, being brought to love Jesus Christ and to believe on Him and to exult with joy unspeakable and filled with glory. What could be added to that in the way of inward deliverance?

Rem It is present — "receiving" — not past or future.

Ques Is soul salvation the subject of the gospel?

CAC Well, I suppose it is.

Rem We do not need to be saved from God, though we sometimes preach like that. He is against sin and evil, but God is for us. We need to be saved from ourselves, the power of evil within. If we knew more of this soul salvation, we should be free from this world and all it can offer; as you were saying of verse 8.

Ques What do you understand by "the end of your faith"?

CAC Is it not the present end, rather than the future end?

Ques Is it result — not exactly completion or finish? Is it a goal rather?

CAC I think it is that the faith brings us to inward deliverance, and we rejoice in that. It is really a Person known in the heart though unseen — He who is filling the heart through faith — so that one is inwardly free from every kind of pressure there might be around us. Faith might be proved by fire as we read in verse 7. That is a time perhaps of being put to grief by various trials, but then no trial can take away from the faithful saint the joy of knowing a glorified Saviour.

Rem Coming into contact with the Lord would bring that about, as with the woman at the end of Luke 7. It was a matter of sinnership with her.

CAC She went away with that Person in her heart clearly, and she had something greater in her heart than anything outward or changed circumstances possibly could be. It is too often the case with believers in conditions of trial, that they would like their circumstances to be changed, but it is much greater for me to be changed, so that I am supremely happy in the circumstances of trial, without having them changed at all. It is a much greater thing than having the circumstances changed.

Ques Is there a difference between salvation and deliverance? Is deliverance more from, and salvation what you are brought to?

CAC Yes, that is, there is something a little more positive in the thought of salvation. "My strength and song is Jah, and he is become my salvation" (Exodus 15: 2). It is what God is found to be to His people who know Him.

Rem Deliverance is usually from the world, etc., while salvation brings into the conscious enjoyment of God and Christ.

CAC Yes.

Ques Would Habakkuk illustrate soul salvation? He sees the enemy invading, and no herd in the stalls, etc., but in the last two verses says, "Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation", etc.

CAC I think that is very good.

Ques Would you explain the difference between "The Spirit of Christ which was in them" (verse 11), and "Holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1: 21)?

CAC It is very interesting to see that the Spirit of Christ was in the Old Testament prophets, and I suppose in Old Testament saints. I think it suggests that they could enter feelingly into what they spoke of, though they did not understand how it was to be worked out.

Ques Is the difficulty to recognise the fact that the One in whom every thought of God is secured and established has been put out of the world by way of death and rejection? We see the Spirit of Christ in Moses; he esteemed "the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Hebrews 11: 26).

CAC Yes, there was to be a long time of suffering when what was of God would suffer. Outwardly that continues now, the sufferings of Christ. If there is a little bit of Christ in me it will involve a little bit of suffering; if more it will involve more suffering. There is the time of "the sufferings which belonged to Christ", but then there are "the glories after these", and the prophets could not quite understand; it was not possible until Christ actually came Himself, and He had to suffer in an extraordinary way.

There are wonderful things to be known by the testimony of Christ's Spirit, but they are things to give inward joy. Presently, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, there will be complete outward deliverance from all trial and pressure; all will be removed by His mighty power. Wonderful grace is to come to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Ques Do the things the angels desire to look into refer to salvation and what is suggested here?

CAC Yes, that was the testimony of the Spirit of Christ in the prophets, and still a greater testimony rendered by those who declared the glad tidings by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is a very exalted position now, and angels are moved to very great concern in these things; they would like to understand them.

Rem They look on us now.

Rem In the assembly they see the all-various wisdom of God. The saints are their lesson book.

CAC I have no doubt at all that the angels are very interested in the word ministered amongst the saints. They are very interested in our reading this

afternoon. They would like to know what we know of the Lord, and to gather up this knowledge from what we are occupied with.

Rem The angels learn now by seeing things take shape in the assembly.

CAC The angels are looking on to see how God works out His great designs. They know that Christ is glorified, but they have not seen the saints glorified yet. They are waiting to see the saints glorified, and they are observing how things are working out in the suffering time. The angels do not understand that.

Rem They see a kind of foretaste in verse 8. It makes the prophetic scriptures very wonderful.

CAC God was pleased to reveal to the prophets that what they ministered was for others and saints found on the earth long after they had left this scene. All this is intended to make us sober. It is intended to promote holiness.

Rem The Holy Spirit is sent from heaven. That is not quite true of the Lord; He *came*. It is important to observe the distinction.

CAC The Holy Spirit does not become incarnate, but He is sent from heaven upon a personal mission — that certain persons might be enabled to preach the glad tidings in divine power. I suppose it refers to the apostles.

Ques Would it refer to the whole of the Spirit's mission here? The glad tidings are not effectual but by the power of the Spirit.

CAC But there were men who actually did it. We could not say that every gospel preaching is by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. That is the proper character of the testimony, is it not?

1 PETER 1 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 Peter 1: 13 - 21

Ques Grace in this verse is the subject of hope, is it not? We are apt to think of glory in that connection rather than grace.

CAC Yes, clearly so. As we have been told sometimes, grace is commensurate with glory; that is, we do not really get the full measurement of grace without bringing in the thought of glory too. The scripture says, "Jehovah will give grace and glory" (Psalm 84: 11).

Ques How do you gird up the loins of your mind?

CAC Does it imply a tendency with us to let our thoughts run loosely in all directions, and it is well they should be bound up and concentrated upon the wonderful things that will be ours at the appearing of Jesus Christ? It supposes that we have our minds under control, does it not?

Rem Yes, a definite control and narrowing up of that on which our minds are set.

CAC Yes, and yet really occupied with a vast range of things.

Rem It refers to the lower affections; that the mind might not wander is guarded against. Sometimes it is difficult to concentrate on divine thoughts and things in our minds, and if we pray at any length. Peter is very practical.

CAC Very practical.

Rem It supposes that it has been done.

Rem Yes, I think it is a basis from which these other considerations can be looked at.

Ques The thought of obedience comes in — "children of obedience". In what way does that work out?

CAC It would suggest the saints take character from that principle. They are, as it were, begotten of that principle; that is, the element of obedience has come in marking off the saints from all other people.

Ques Is it connected with verse 2, the same principle of obedience as Christ's?

CAC Well, I think so. I think the great principle of obedience has been fully manifested in Him. It is really the necessary principle of all God's ways with His creature. He said in the first covenant, "If ye will hearken to my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then shall ye be my own possession out of all

the peoples" (Exodus 19: 5). It is those marked by obedience who alone can be of any value to God.

Ques This is set out in Christ in perfection, but are these things for formation in the saints?

CAC I thought that the first chapter is descriptive in detail of how saints become living stones in the second chapter. All these things have to be put together to constitute what is a living stone. Then all the stones are built together to form the house. Certain elements are needed for us to fit together. If nothing else were in evidence in you and me, how beautifully we should fit together.

This new principle of obedience is introduced, and nothing is more delightful than this principle when accepted. The principle of obedience is heaven. "Thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth" (Matthew 6: 10). It is just as well if a little of heaven comes to us, and when it begins to operate it is the principle of heaven in the soul. It is what will come into evidence at the revelation of Jesus Christ; there will not be anything else.

Every believer is taken up for this. There is material for it potentially in every believer. That is why we value the brethren, because they are potential material for this wonderful working out of divine thoughts. Satan has brought in the principle of disobedience. God is meeting all that in bringing in the principle of obedience. What was it constituted me a lost being? Just the principle of disobedience; naturally I much prefer my own will. When God begins to work, He gives an entirely new thought, that God's will is very much better than mine.

Moses and Elias are taken up as patterns, but they appeared in glory, two men in company with Jesus glorified, and perfectly suited to be there. That is, the very principle of obedience that was glorified in Jesus was also glorified in them. It is the great mark of the work of God in the soul. There are certain things I cannot be happy to go on with; there is a definite breaking off from the line of what pleases me to the line of what pleases God. That is conversion!

Rem Some of us could do with more of that.

CAC Well, there is the chance of another conversion! Angels must be astonished to see creatures of God doing their own will, must they not? So really "as children of obedience, not conformed to your former lusts in your ignorance", they were no longer to bear the mark of these things. What we desired naturally was really a matter of ignorance — we did not know God.

Rem They are Christ's generation. They belong to and are traced out here as such.

CAC No doubt it is so. These great principles come out here: obedience, holiness, faith, hope and love. They are features very suitable to a redeemed people on earth. Peter is writing to a redeemed people.

Rem It could not be possible apart from redemption.

CAC What they were talking about on the holy mount was not what good people they had been. It is a great matter to be firmly grounded on the fact that we are redeemed, that our place with God is according to all the value of the precious blood of Christ, and it is on that ground alone that we can take up the exercises of faith and hope. And however much we take them up it does not add one tittle to the value of redemption.

Ques Does redemption imply God's claim placed on the matter of purchase?

CAC Yes, "Redeemed ... from your vain conversation handed down from your fathers". Does it not imply that it referred to the system of religion in which they had been brought up?

Rem In that way everything is made to contrast with Christ, and give great prominence to Him.

CAC Yes, indeed. Any kind of conversation that left Him out would be "vain conversation". Judaism was really an empty thing because it was not Christ. It presents certain things in a typical way, but it was vain; it had no true divine value. But now we have come to that which has infinite divine value. "Conversation" is the whole course of a person's life.

Rem Redemption is for God. It is the value He sets on *us*.

Ques. A ransom?

CAC That is purchase — "Bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 7: 23) is like a slave bought in the market as the absolute possession of the one who bought him. It must be a question of redemption in that way. We do not want to escape from that sort of slavery, do we?

Ques Is there some reference in verse 19 to the paschal lamb? That was to be its feature.

CAC The Spirit of God emphasises the incorruptible value of the blood of Christ — all it means to God. That is the purchase price — the cost. It shows the value of the saints to God if they were purchased at that price. It brings in all that Christ is as "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world". Before Adam was created, God had Christ before Him, as the One who would

effect redemption, so that God might have a people composed of men, human beings, entirely free from everything that is vain and worthless, that they might be to the pleasure of God. It is all in the value of the precious blood; and the One who is so made known is the One by whom we believe in God; that is, He becomes the medium by means of whom we believe on God.

Rem You have not expressed your thought as to the paschal lamb.

CAC I was thinking that would be in Peter's mind. "A lamb without blemish and without spot" is almost a direct reference to the passover lamb, and in a certain sense it was greater than all the other sacrifices, because it formed the basis on which all the other sacrifices were offered.

Ques Do we get any other type of redemption besides the passover lamb in the Old Testament?

CAC Have you anything in your mind?

Rem I thought it was the only basis of relationship.

CAC Yes.

Ques Redemption is connected with the shedding of blood, is it not, and connected very much with the blood of the paschal lamb?

CAC Well, it is perhaps doubtful whether there is another type, because the blood on the mercy-seat is not quite the thought of redemption, but meeting the glory of God in respect of sin.

In Romans it is "redemption which is in Christ Jesus"; that is, redemption in its full value and results. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood" (Romans 3: 24, 25).

Ques Is it the same application in Hebrews? "By his own blood, has entered in once for all into the holy of holies" (chapter 9: 12).

CAC That seems to refer to the high priest going into the holiest with the blood. I suppose the two greatest types of the death of Christ are the paschal lamb, and the sin-offering on the day of atonement. One is, so to speak, at the beginning, God taking His people out of Egypt for Himself, whereas the blood on the mercy-seat is the abiding ground on which He speaks to His people. He ever speaks to them from that standpoint. "There will I meet with thee, and will speak with thee" (Exodus 25: 22).

1 PETER 1 AND 2 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 Peter 1: 22 - 25; 1 Peter 2: 1 - 4

Ques Would obedience to the truth of christianity come in in contradistinction to the Jewish order of things?

CAC Yes, I should think so.

Rem Verse 21 is a wonderful word of the gospel, bringing in a glorified Man.

CAC I think the whole spirit of the believing soul is affected by it. So that the new principle of obedience (that is, new to man as a fallen being) comes in and brings about conditions that are favourable to the activities of love. People often complain of the want of love. Well, the only way to remedy that is to have more holiness, and more of the spirit of obedience, brought about under the powerful influence of the gospel; that is, it is not a burdensome thing if I gain everything possible for time and eternity by it.

Peter assumes that he is writing to persons who are really Christ's lambs and sheep; they have all taken on this character of obedience. Those who have not do not gain from Peter's command from Christ to feed and shepherd the lambs and sheep. The Lord says, "My sheep hear my voice" (John 10: 27); that is, the spirit of obedience marks off the lambs and sheep of Christ's flock.

Ques Is there some difference in what Peter speaks of as new birth, from the way John speaks of it — born anew?

CAC Do you not think that the Lord in referring to being "born anew" refers to an action of God altogether sovereign? You cannot trace it. You cannot exactly see what the wind is about, you cannot tell "whence it comes and where it goes". It is a sovereign movement. But Peter seems to take account of something that acts morally on the soul; that is, the word of God comes in and becomes an incorruptible seed — something of God brought in by the word. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,

by the living and abiding word of God". So there is something there that can be definitely traced to God. A new element comes in to work in the soul by its divine testimony. We hear something and its effect cannot be shaken off, it lays hold of the inmost soul.

Ques Do you connect "the truth" and "the living and abiding word of God" as akin, or separate things?

CAC Well, "the living and abiding word of God", "the word of the Lord" (verse 25), the "glad tidings" "preached" (verse 25) and "the truth" (verse 22) would

all go together, do you not think? There is a new attitude of soul brought about — of obedience. The person who never thought of subjecting himself to God suddenly comes to the conviction that it is the only possible thing to do. So the man who hears the gospel really for the first time goes home to go down on his knees. Where that is genuine, the conviction of God has entered into a man's soul. He could not explain it, but there it is. And the word of God becomes the greatest reality. What has been communicated of God becomes the greatest reality to the soul, and nothing can set it aside. It is an everlasting thing, it abides for eternity. The word of God operating in the soul of man abides for eternity. And then we can easily see that that kind of spirit is very favourable to the activity of love. God has provided us with a number of objects for our love. That is the way to know it. It is not expecting love — that is not it at all. But there are a number of persons in the world that the believer can love because they are born of incorruptible seed, and he does love them. There is a kind of basis established in the soul on which a wonderful purifying work can go on, as we see in the next chapter. "Laying aside therefore all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speakings"; that is, putting aside all that belongs to the old order of things.

Rem It has to be practical, worked out in us.

CAC And of course we begin "as newborn babes", we do not get power to deal with all the hostile elements at once. It is a question of growing up to salvation, and we grow up as we desire "the pure mental milk of the word".

Ques Is incorruptible used as applying to the work of God in the saints here?

CAC Yes, and that has entered into the soul purely of God, there is no human admixture in it.

Rem "Them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption" (Ephesians 6: 24), there is no possibility of being corrupted.

CAC Yes, God Himself is spoken of as "the incorruptible God" (Romans 1: 23). All this has in view the building of the spiritual house and the material. This first chapter shows how the living stones come into being.

Ques How would it compare with the types in the Old Testament?

CAC I think Peter has the general thought in mind of the temple, but now it is a spiritual house.

Rem By our all coming into the family by the same means, there is likeness in that way. Natural society does not hold; this will hold, and it increases.

CAC And the longer we go on together, the more definitely we are bound together, everything of the perishable order having gone; for it is remarkable how he says, "The grass has withered and its flower has fallen". It is really what has taken place at the cross, but now has become a reality in the soul, so that what is of the flesh ceases to have value, and what is of God becomes unspeakably precious.

It is striking that it does not say that it ought to, but it has! In the death of Christ all that order of being has withered up.

Rem It is a side of the truth we do not always keep in mind. According to Peter it is one of the first things in our souls in connection with the truth that takes root.

CAC Yes.

Ques In the movement of soul to pass out of the flesh condition to Christ where He is, is the word that which will help us?

CAC And to get by the glad tidings the real apprehension of the goodness of God: "If indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good". It is referring to God, is it not? So it is worth while to break loose from everything that tends to displace God in the soul. If there is desire for more of God the pure mental milk would nourish us in all God is in goodness for men.

Rem It is salvation to see that Christ is the real Centre of a world for God's glory.

CAC Yes, I have learned His goodness in what He has done for me as a poor sinner; we have tasted it, and then we find there is One who is indispensable to us. He is of no account at all in the estimation of men.

Ques Is this coming (verse 4) normally the coming of a saint subsequent to conversion — not the initial thing but the apprehension of Him as a Living Stone?

CAC Surely; it is the living stones coming, those who have an appreciation of His wondrous worth.

Ques Would Peter's experience in coming out of the boat refer to this, "Lord, if it be thou, command me to come to thee upon the waters" (Matthew 14: 28)? And he left the ship to go to Jesus. I wondered if it had any reference to his personal experience in order to reach the Person?

CAC We should learn what Christ is as "chosen, precious" with God. If we learn what He is with God, yet we find He is "cast away indeed as worthless by men". It is something like a shock to a young convert that people do not

want Christ. Christ has become so precious that he cannot think that anybody can hear of Him and not want Him. If we were true to the first impression made on our souls by God, we should very soon find Christ is "cast away indeed as worthless by men"; but He is chosen of God, and precious. Well, that defines our position; we cannot go on with those who cast Him away as worthless, but we look out for the other living stones who see Christ is chosen and precious; we want contact with them. It is a great comfort to think there are many others with the same thoughts. Well, I want to establish contact with them. The young convert would through divine unction look out for such. If the exercise were followed up it would really link all the living stones together. The stones come and the building up goes on. It does not say who does it exactly. The stones come — it is their action — and so prove they have vitality by leaving the world that cast Christ out as worthless. And if we find ourselves among these we show we are living stones and are fit to be put in connection with the Living Stone; so there is a structure where God can be served for His pleasure, for everyone to whom Christ is precious can serve God for His pleasure. And in the principle of it, it underlies all service. We cannot allow that any living stone would fail to come.

Ques What about isolated believers?

CAC If they really followed up their exercises they would get out of their solitude. Every saint is a stone potentially, and then these features have to be shown, so that the thing comes into evidence — the structure comes into being of persons who recognise that Christ is precious and cast out. That is my link with the brethren, and when I see He is more precious to them than to me, I am ever so pleased! There is no thought in the religious world of a spiritual house for the service of God, having a universal character; for a spiritual house is not local. Every saint is essential to it. I want to see more clearly than ever the place Christ has in the mind of the man after the flesh, and then how precious He is to God; and then we want to walk with those who have the appreciation of Christ.

LIVING STONES (2)

1 Peter 2: 1 - 5

It is of the deepest importance that we should know what it is to come to Christ as the Living Stone. It is clear that this is something beyond the soul's first apprehension of Christ as the Source of blessing in grace, for those who come to Him as the Living Stone have already "tasted that the Lord is good".

In the case of the poor man who was befriended by the good Samaritan we see an illustration of what it is to taste that the Lord is good. The goodness of the Samaritan could not be measured by the need and distress which he relieved; it could only be measured by the fact that he expended all his own resources upon the subject of his grace. We can only measure divine goodness and grace by the greatness and resources of the Person who brings it to us; that is to say, it is infinite.

The Son of God came here to bring the infinite grace of God to man, at all cost to Himself. We learn the immensity of grace, not by thinking of our need, but by thinking of the One who has brought it from heaven in all His own greatness and wealth. It is a fine start for us if we have tasted that the Lord is good. There is One that we can count upon, even in our deep need, and destitute, as we are, of any claim upon His goodness. The Lord is good; He is great — yea, supreme — in grace. He exercises His mighty power and expends His infinite resources in the perfection of grace towards men.

Having tasted that the Lord is good creates an appetite for "the pure mental milk of the word". Immediately following the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10 we are told of Mary, who, "having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word". She desired "the pure mental milk of the word". We first taste that the Lord is good, and that His inexhaustible resources have become the supply of our deep need. Everything to meet our necessities is in Him.

But, having tasted this, we next desire to be nourished by that which will feed our souls in the knowledge of God, and make us acquainted with all that is in God's will. We desire the pure mental milk of the word, that by it we may grow up to salvation. It is by having our souls nourished in the knowledge of God that we grow up to deliverance from all that is evil and of man. We grow up to the apprehension of our place according to God's will, as those who are called to be in association with Christ. There could be no greater deliverance than to pass from the flesh, and the world, and all that is evil here, into a circle where our souls are nourished in the knowledge of God, and we become conscious of

association with Christ in that new and divine world of which He is the Head and Centre.

It is very blessed to see that, in making Himself known to us in grace, the Lord establishes a personal link between Himself and our hearts. He puts the link there first from His side in the perfection of His grace. And then our hearts are tested as to how far we are affected by that infinite grace. The Lord looks for response to Himself; He looks for the awakening of "desire" in our hearts. The normal effect of having tasted that He is good is that we "desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word". This "desire" comes out beautifully in Mary (Luke 10). The Lord could say of her, "Mary has chosen the good part, the which shall not be taken from her". Response was awakened in her heart, and this was very grateful to the Lord. She chose that good part, and He charged Himself with the maintenance for her heart of what she desired. He said it should not be taken away from her.

There is immense encouragement in this for every heart in which the same holy desire and choice have been wrought, even though it be in feeble measure, by the grace of the Lord. The principle on which He acts is plainly stated in Psalm 37: 4, "Delight thyself in Jehovah, and he will give thee the desires of thy heart". If responsive desire and delight in Himself have been awakened in our hearts — if the knowledge of God has become the choice of our souls — we may be assured that the Lord will secure to us what we choose, in spite of all adversaries. He will give us the desires of our hearts. But, beloved brethren, let us not forget that we are continually tested as to whether we really desire and choose that which is of God and His beloved Son. We are tested as to whether we are prepared to come to Christ as the Living Stone — as to whether we love Him enough to come to Him who is cast away indeed as worthless by men, but who is with God chosen and precious. This coming to Christ is not so much a matter of faith, but of love. It turns really upon our affection for Himself.

To illustrate what it is to come to Christ as the Living Stone, I will refer to several familiar scriptures. First, let us read Mark 6: 47 - 51 and Matthew 14: 27 - 31.

I cannot enlarge much on the setting of this wonderful incident, but I may remark that the murder of John was at the moment the true index of coming events, little as the disciples — full of the proclamation and powers of the kingdom — thought so. The cities of Israel must be left for the present; the desert place, outside everything recognised by man, is the place where faith can rest, and grace can work. But even there, when grace works, man misinterprets all its designs and will make the Worker king. When He perceives

this He departs into a mountain "himself alone" (John 6: 15), having sent His disciples to "the other side". This indicates that nothing of God's will was going to be established in connection with men as in the flesh, or even with Christ after the flesh. There must be the crossing over to "the other side" — a figure of resurrection. As risen from among the dead, Christ is outside the whole order of things connected with man in the flesh. We have a figure of this in His walking upon the water. He was introducing Himself to His own in a new condition — a figure of His risen state.

Mark that word, "He comes to them walking on the sea, and would have passed them by". He presented Himself to the little company in the boat. In His precious grace He approached them that He might establish a link between Himself and them. But in doing so He put them to the test, as to how far there was response to Him and desire after Himself in their hearts. He did not force Himself upon them, but He presented Himself in a new and wondrous way to them that the state of their hearts might be tested. He "would have passed them by".

It is ever thus. The Lord is always the One to move first. Any desire or movement after Him which is awakened in our hearts is but the response to the love in which He graciously presents Himself to our souls. There are two lines of a well-known hymn which express the thought of His drawing and our response:

> 'Lord, Thou hast drawn us after Thee,
> So let us run and never tire'. (361:1)

Sometimes we think we are seeking Him, and that He is slow to manifest Himself to us. We are like the bride in the Song, when she said, "I sought him, but I found him not; I called him, but he gave me no answer" (Song of Songs 5: 6). But why was this? It was because He had knocked and sought admission without securing a suited response from her. She had said, "I have put off my tunic, how should I put it on? I have washed my feet, how should I pollute them?" When He drew near to her in love she was too indolent, too studious of her own ease and comfort, too satisfied with her own state and circumstances, to respond to Him. Then, when at last she did open to Him, it was only to find that He had withdrawn Himself and was gone. It was not that He was indifferent, but she had to learn the bitter consequences of her own indifference. She had to learn to judge the indifference with which she had slumbered and been at ease without His company. If we have been indifferent, it may be for years, to every approach of the Lord's love, we cannot expect that the moment we begin to have a little desire after Himself, we shall be at

once in the full blessedness of His company. He loves us too well to spare us the exercise and the humbling of heart in repentance that we need. That which has caused the cloud and the distance has to be judged. Often there is a kind of sentimental desire after the Lord, fostered by religious poetry and the like, where there is but very shallow exercise as to the true state of the soul, or as to worldly links and associations. Souls would like to have spiritual joys without self-judgment, or separation, or holy exercise, but it is never the Lord's way to vouchsafe this.

We may be assured that the Lord is never indifferent, and if there is the smallest germ of true desire after Himself in our hearts, it was He who originated it. Any exercise we may have to pass through is in the way of necessary self-judgment, or to detach us from things or associations that would hinder our spiritual prosperity.

The Lord presented Himself to the little company in the boat, as I have said, to test their hearts. It is as though He would say to them, 'What place have I in your affections? Is there a heart amongst you that will choose to be with Me, even though it has to leave everything suited to nature and the flesh in order to reach Me?' And, beloved brethren, this is the great question at the present moment for our hearts. The Lord is outside everything here. On man's side, He has been utterly rejected — cast away as worthless; and on God's side He has been raised from among the dead and is God's chosen and precious One in resurrection. Now, have we affection enough for Him to come to Him in His out-of-the-world place — to come to Him as the Living Stone?

There was but one in the boat who responded to the Lord in full and fervent affection, but in Peter we see an example of the affection which rightly pertains to those who are called to be "companions of the Christ" (Hebrews 3: 14). He said,

"Lord, if it be *thou*, command me to come to thee upon the waters". He was prepared to leave the boat — that is, to quit every natural support and every association according to the flesh — that he might be with the Lord. And at the Lord's word, "Come", he went down out of the ship, and "walked upon the waters to go to Jesus". Affection for Christ in Peter caused him thus to respond to the grace in which the Lord had presented Himself. It was Christ who attracted him; his one thought was, "If it be *thou*, command me to come to thee".

But Peter had to learn that his affection was not enough to sustain him in a path that lay altogether outside the sphere of man according to nature. We may start out with a measure of true affection for the Lord, and in the very consciousness of our affection for Him we may lose sight of the necessity for

profound self-judgment. We may suppose that that which grace has wrought in us will sustain us, but we have to learn that nothing but the personal succour and grace of Christ can maintain our souls in conscious association with Himself. Our strength and resource in coming to Him as the Living Stone lie in Himself, and in the priestly grace wherewith He succours our weakness and need.

It says of Peter, "Seeing the wind strong he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught hold of him, and says to him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" Peter had not within himself grace or power for the path on the water, though he had affection for it. He had to learn the need for the outstretched hand of Christ to succour and sustain him. This is an important and blessed lesson, because it casts us continually upon the living grace of Christ. However fervent and devoted we may be, we have to learn that it is only by the succour and grace of Christ that we are maintained in true response to Him. And just as He charged Himself with the maintenance for Mary's heart of what she desired, so He charges Himself with the succour and support of the disciple who chose the good part of being with Him on the water. In each case He is the first to put the link there, if we may so say, and it is He who maintains and succours the heart that makes choice of Him. Precious priestly grace! How it assures and encourages the heart!

Peter walking on the water in the fervency of his affection for Christ is a blessed sight, but he was not allowed to return to the ship without having been made deeply conscious that the grace and power that sustained him on the water did not reside in himself but in Christ. The consciousness that we are thus dependent upon His priestly grace and succour keeps our souls in lowliness, and at the same time it binds up our hearts with Him in peculiar affection. He not only becomes attractive as the goal to which we press on, but we realise that His love is the strength of our hearts in the way to that goal, and the support of our souls when we have reached it. We cannot do without His priestly grace.

Now let us pass to another scene where we may discern what it is to come to Christ as the Living Stone. Read Luke 24: 28 - 36. The two disciples who were going to Emmaus had tasted that the Lord was good. They had known His mighty deeds and words; they "had hoped that *he* was the one who is about to redeem Israel"; they had so tasted His grace that they were sad to have lost Him. Hence He could count upon "desire" in their souls for "the pure mental milk of the word". "And having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning

himself". He nourished them by interpreting the whole mind of God concerning Himself as made known in the Scriptures. They had looked for an intervention of God's power on His behalf in this order of things. But it was clear in the Scriptures that the Messiah must suffer and die, and that every purposed blessing of God must be made good in resurrection. In unfolding all this to them He was leading them along a moral road which ended in the revelation of Himself to them in resurrection.

God had taken His own way in infinite power and grace, though it was a way which not even the disciples appear to have anticipated, in spite of the plain words of the Lord on more than one occasion. Redemption had been accomplished, and now God was acting in His almighty power entirely outside the whole course of things in this world. God had begun the history of an entirely new world, by raising up Jesus from among the dead. He had thus laid the foundation for a vast structure of grace and glory that should subsist in the power of new creation entirely outside this world, and beyond the range of sin and death.

The Lord fed the souls of the two disciples with "the pure mental milk of the word" as He brought before them from the Scriptures the necessity for His sufferings and entrance into His glory. He was leading them away from the earthly hopes which they had cherished, and from the whole system of things connected with man in the flesh, to God's resurrection world of which He was Himself the Centre and Sun. He was preparing their hearts for the revelation of Himself to them as the risen One. He was leading them on to the knowledge of Himself as the Living Stone.

He thus presented Himself to His two disciples though in a veiled way, and then after making their hearts burn He applied a test to them as He did when He would have passed by those who were in the ship. "*He* made as though he would go farther". He put their hearts to the test; He would not be an unbidden Guest; if they did not choose to have Him He would pass on. How perfect and blessed are these actings of divine love! And let us remember that it is even so with ourselves. The Lord approaches us, and presents Himself to us; He puts the link there, as we have said, from His own side. But then He looks for response; He looks for the answering choice of our hearts; He looks that we should constrain Him to abide with us.

The two disciples answered to the test. They did not know Him as yet, but He had nourished their souls with what was of God, and they were prepared for more. "They constrained him, saying, Stay with us ... . And he entered in to stay with them". He had nourished their affections that they might respond to Himself, and then in His breaking of the bread "their eyes were opened, and

they recognised him. And he disappeared from them". This was not the Lord's supper, but it was a significant figure of His death. It was in the appropriation of that which was a figure of His death that their eyes were opened to know Him in resurrection. It is by His death that He has opened a way for us to come into association with Him as the risen One. We have to appropriate His death as the end of ourselves, and as the end of every hope connected with the flesh, in order to come to Him in resurrection as the Living Stone.

Thus far the Lord had been dealing in priestly grace with His two disciples as individuals. But the moment they apprehended Him as risen from among the dead, they instinctively realised that they belonged to the assembly of His saints. They felt it impossible to isolate themselves from the company of His saints. The lateness of the hour, the length of the journey, all the natural difficulties of the moment ceased to weigh with them. They had found Him and known Him outside everything here, and they must be with those who were His own. "And rising up the same hour, they returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven, and those with them, gathered together, saying, The Lord is indeed risen".

The disciples had been scattered by His death, according to the scripture, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad" (Matthew 26: 31, from Zechariah 13: 7). But they were gathered by His resurrection; it was the knowledge of Himself in resurrection that brought them together. We can see here in pattern the building of the spiritual house. They came to Christ as the Living Stone, and in coming to Him they found themselves outside everything connected with the social, political or religious life of the world. It was a small company, and composed of individuals of very little account in the estimation of men, but it was a company in the secret of God's pleasure — a company of those who found their joy and the bond of their fellowship in the knowledge of Christ as risen from the dead.

To such a company He could manifest Himself. "As they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst, and says to them, Peace be unto you". Let me put it to every heart that loves Him: Would you not rather be in the company of Christ and have the manifestation of Himself to your heart than belong to the most august assembly in the world? What is all the religious pomp and vain-glory of christendom compared with the blessedness of coming to Christ as the Living Stone?

Let me repeat again, it is Himself who puts the link there, from His own side, between Himself and our hearts. Then, if our hearts respond, His grace ensures to us the enjoyment of the good part which we choose. It was with hands uplifted in blessing that He was parted from His disciples and carried up

into heaven. And in heaven itself His priestly grace is still active on our behalf to keep the link vital, so that we may not fail to enter into the privilege of our calling if in desire and affection our hearts respond to Him.

Now let us read Revelation 3: 20. "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me". This scripture is deeply important because it shows the attitude in which the Lord Jesus stands in relation to the vain-glorious and self-sufficient profession of christianity. We find ourselves in the presence of a christianity which has become imposing and influential in the world. From the outward appearance of things we might suppose that Christ was in great honour here. The finest buildings in our towns and cities are professedly dedicated to His service, and everything that appeals to the natural man — eloquence,

music, ceremony, intellect, wealth — has a place and influence in the christian profession. Christianity is loudly extolled as the religion which has done most to emancipate and elevate man. Boastfulness and self-sufficiency reign. But where is Christ in all this? Has He any place in this man-exalting system of things?

In Revelation 2 and 3, we see the Lord's judgment of everything that transpires in the assemblies viewed as in responsibility upon earth, from the departure from first love which characterised Ephesus to the self-sufficiency and utter indifference to Christ which marks Laodicea. There can be no doubt in any spiritual mind that Laodicea is very fully developed at the present time. There is much religious activity and pretension, and it turns to man's vain-glory and self-complacency. But Christ is outside all this; He has no place where man in the flesh has a place. Yet the moment has not arrived for Him to spue the whole corrupted profession out of His mouth, and He presents Himself still in grace, if so be that amidst all the pretension some heart may be willing to hear His voice and to respond to Him. He stands at the door and knocks. He does not press Himself upon any, but He gives opportunity to any heart that will respond. As in the time when He "would have passed them by", and as when He "made as though he would go farther", so now He stands at the door and knocks. He puts hearts to the test as to whether there is any response to Himself. He seeks to put the link there between Himself and the hearts of His own. And if hearts respond to Him they find deliverance from the pride of man, and from the religious pretensions of the flesh. He presents the good part, and if any heart chooses it, He will secure it to that heart by His priestly grace.

Beloved friends, have we responded to Christ in hearing His voice and opening the door to Him? Are we conscious of a link with Him who is outside everything of this world and of man in the flesh? Have we come to Him as the Living Stone — the One who is cast aside as worthless by men, but is chosen of God and precious? If so, He will sup with us, and we with Him. In priestly grace He will enter into our weakness and need that He may succour and sustain us, so that we may not fail of entrance into that which is of Himself. He sustains us above our infirmity and weakness, that we may sup with Him — that we may enter into those things which are established in Him as the risen One.

In thus coming to Him, we leave behind what is of man, and are built up "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ".

That is, as we enter into what God has brought to pass in Christ risen, we become competent to offer up spiritual sacrifices: to praise God, in the intelligence of what He is, and how He has wrought to give effect to His own thoughts of grace and blessing. We come into a region where God's moral perfections are displayed, and where the wisdom of His ways can be seen. We find ourselves in spirit outside what is of man.

This is God's way of bringing about His own thoughts as to His saints. In coming thus to Christ as the One who is "with God chosen, precious", the saints manifest themselves as "living stones", and they are built up a spiritual house.

They are bound together in the appreciation of Him who is the "corner stone, elect, precious". His "preciousness" is before their hearts. "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness". And Christ being thus in their affections, they do not lack material for spiritual sacrifices. They are rich in the knowledge of God, and delight to approach Him by Jesus Christ with the sacrifice of praise.

And not only are the saints made "a holy priesthood" for praise Godward, but they are constituted "a kingly priesthood" in testimony towards men. It becomes their privilege and high dignity to set forth the excellencies of Him who has called them out of darkness to His wonderful light. If our souls are in the light of God, the effect is that we be come characterised by what is worthy of God. We give expression to God's moral excellencies in the midst of a world where He is unknown. We thus become marked morally as "the people of God"; we carry His impress upon us, and show forth His praise. That word becomes true of us, "This people have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise" (Isaiah 43: 21).

May God’s beloved children know what it is to come to Christ as the Living Stone, so as to be built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood!

LETTER BY C.A.C.

1 Peter 2:1-25

My dear E-,

I am rejoiced to have your letter and I thank God for any exercise that has been awakened among the dear saints as to the assembly.

I think it is a great mistake to look upon the truth of 1 Peter 2 as being objective. In fact a very superficial examination of the scripture is sufficient to convince one that this view of it is untenable. It is not a question of what believers are *according to divine purpose*, but of a spiritual structure which is being built up here and which takes the place of Israel and a material sanctuary. It is that in which God finds what He can appreciate — "spiritual sacrifices" — and it is that also which is here in testimony for God, that in which His character and excellencies are shown forth. This latter is in connection with the kingly priesthood.

Ninety per cent of the difficulties in connection with 1 Peter 2 would be removed if souls were experimentally in the good of chapter 1. Very few believers have apprehended the two great truths of chapter 1: *soul salvation* and *redemption*.

Soul salvation is complete inward deliverance from all that is of man and connected with the earth by the knowledge of *Christ in glory*. If the glory is shining in my heart, and filling me with joy unspeakable in *Him* who is outside the whole sphere of sight, I am completely delivered, as to my affections, from the world and what is of man. This is what the Holy Spirit calls the salvation of the soul. That is, it is *inward* in contrast to *outward* deliverance.

Then *redemption* is not, in Peter, from sins, etc., but from "your vain conversation ...". That is, the death of Christ has completely set us free from earthly religion. The whole history of man in the flesh has closed in the death of Christ,

and if this be the case it is very evident a system of religion which recognises man in the flesh is absolutely worthless. It is a religion for a man entirely rejected by God. When this is apprehended it gives complete deliverance from fleshly religion, and prepares the soul to understand that we can only be *for God* according to *His work in us*. All flesh is withered grass. Flesh cannot be built up a spiritual house! There must be an entirely new start — "being born again", etc. But new birth is only the start — the basis, so to speak, of the subsequent work. It is *morally* the entire displacement of flesh, and therefore in connection with it there comes obligation to lay aside all that is of the flesh

(1 Peter 2: 1). These things, if retained, must prove an effectual hindrance to growth. Then notice, the growth is "up to salvation". That is, we have to grow up to the completeness of the divine deliverance, the measure of which is association with Christ, and this *consciously known in the soul*. It is thus that we are formed as "living stones" for the spiritual house, and prepared to come to the Living Stone — the One cast away as worthless by men. In conscious association with Him who is outside man's world as the rejected One, we are built up a spiritual house. It is a pernicious self-deception for one to take it for granted that all this is true of him when he has not grown up to it, and in character and constitution he is not really a living stone. That it is true *for* every believer is blessedly certain, but we must grow up to it.

As to failure, it is important to remember that, solemn as failure is, it does not undo the work of God in the soul. One might lose all the joy of association with Christ, but when the backslider was restored he would be restored to what he was before. That is, he would be restored to that which he truly is according to God's work in him.

As to your third question, I am sure that it is quite impossible that union with Christ could be known before deliverance.

I believe you are right as to worship. We are much hindered by the thought that *we* must bring something. We should like to be ministers of the sanctuary, but it is *the Son* as Priest who is this. If it is what we bring, our capacity must be the measure of what is there, but if it is a question of what *He* brings He becomes the measure of what there is and this is inconceivably great.

May God bless you in every way and help His beloved children to apprehend the great thoughts of His love in a deeper and fuller way.

1 PETER 2 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 Peter 2:4-10

Ques What is the characteristic as to "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God"? In what do they consist? They would contrast with sacrifices of the old order.

CAC Yes, those of this dispensation are a contrast to the thought of the material house and the sacrifices of animals. I suppose the object of the Spirit of God was to show that these things of God introduced in the Old Testament have not been given up, but have taken on a new character of greater value. The thought of the common centre of worship was not new, was it? There was a centre which God chose and where He put His name, and all sacrifices were to be offered there, and it would have been an offence otherwise, showing God would bring His people into unity in their approach to Him. So the offering up of spiritual sacrifices is a collective thought, is it not? All the clean animals were types of Christ in different ways. I suppose every animal offered in sacrifice presented some thought of Christ.

The thought in offering was that God would be pleased with what was offered. So it says here, "Acceptable to God". It is a bringing of that to God which is pleasing to Him. In the Old Testament the offerer brought his offering because the sin question was not settled. It is not acceptable that *we* come to God under the burden of sins, because that question has been settled permanently, but we come as having a purged conscience, and we are on the footing of Christ before Him. We are never on any other footing. So now we can bring sacrifices of a spiritual order; we can speak to Him of Christ. What follows here confirms that. The cornerstone is elect, precious. "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness". God has given us the knowledge of One who is infinitely precious to Him. We were singing this morning of knowing 'His preciousness to Thee'. Whatever we can say truthfully of Christ to God is acceptable.

Ques Offering "the sacrifice of praise continually to God" (Hebrews 13: 15), is that a spiritual sacrifice?

CAC Yes; clearly. "Confessing his name", it says. Peter does not go into great depths in connection with this matter; he limits his teaching to what the Jews of the dispersion would be able to understand.

Rem The Lord speaks of "in my name". There is wonderful access to God, but never apart from Christ (cf. Ephesians 2: 18).

CAC That is most important, and we approach through Him: "Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". All we know of God has come to us through Christ, He

has brought it to us in a mediatorial way. And on the other hand, He is the Medium by whom we approach God; so everything is made of Christ. Everything we bring is enhanced and goes to God by Him.

Ques The thoughts of the house and priesthood seem very closely linked together, and then he quotes a scripture referring back to the house again. Do the two thoughts run concurrently?

CAC Yes, I think they do. The difference now is that they blend; it is the same persons here that compose both. The persons have that which is precious; they cannot say, 'Nothing in my hand I bring'. God does not want that sort of worshipper, though it is all right for sinners to say it. "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness"; the preciousness of Christ comes to those who believe. It becomes theirs, so they are not empty-handed, they are consecrated, every one that has believed the gospel. "Consecrated" means he has his hands full of what is most acceptable to God — Christ.

Rem This fits in with the revelation to Peter in Matthew 16.

CAC But he reasons from their own Scriptures. He does not write exactly as an apostle but as a teacher, showing that things in the Old Testament now take on a different character of reality. The offerers did not understand in the Old Testament. They really had not the Person of Christ before them in a definite way, or His work or preciousness.

We can all sit down together as a company of worshippers and feel we are much more capable of understanding than Moses or Abraham or any of the Old Testament worthies, even the feeblest of us. It would be good if we thought more of that. None of the Old Testament saints knew a glorified Man in heaven. They laid hold by faith of God's promises but probably did not have any idea how He would work them out. I suppose God loves to hear from us how He has worked things out in Christ, and we are sure He is pleased with every true word that we can say to Him about Christ.

Ques What would be the meaning of "elect" in relation to Christ?

CAC Is He not the One whom God has chosen out of all other men? He says, "I have ... exalted one chosen out of the people" (Psalm 89: 19), as though God has cast His eye over all the people, and has chosen Christ. He answers perfectly to everything that delights the heart of God. He is God's chosen One. It was the great lesson learnt on the mount. In the mind of the disciples, Moses and Elias were quite worthy to be put along with Christ, and I suppose it is easy for us to get excellent men in mind, so that the excellent glory of Christ is not seen. But then every other man disappears when God comes in, the cloud overshadowed and then they saw no man.

We do not contribute to what we believe; it comes to us from outside us in all its worthlessness or value. But in believing on Christ and what God says of Him, we have the real substance of everything that is precious, and the longer we live the more convinced we are of that. I am more convinced than ever that there is nothing of value but what has come to me from God, and that is precious. We have to learn it. Sometimes there is a reserve, there is something I take credit for that is not Christ. It is really a millstone round my neck — a hindrance to myself and the service. J.N.D. said he had a sense of his utter vileness from the beginning, and had been thankful for it.

Rem Romans 7 helps on that line.

CAC And that is the foundation of solid peace. From the very outset Christ was in God's mind, before ever He made Adam; and it is the wonder of creation that there should be a creature form that He intended Christ to take. When Adam fell, there was nothing that could fulfil God's mind.

So in the woman's seed and in all the patterns, God was unfolding that everything depended on Christ. Now faith believes that, and it is happy.

Rem The corner-stone is in Zion.

CAC It stands over against Sinai, because it was the testing of the fallen man. So God gave men fifteen hundred years (until Christ) and a very simple rule; it could all be stated in ten words. He had been talking to Moses on the mount before ever the law came down. The law only condemned; it leaves no standing, but cuts it entirely from under my feet. We must be blessed in and through Another, so in grace God has laid this Corner-stone. It is just a question of believing. "He that believes on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 9: 33). If I believe on myself or any other man I shall be put to shame, but believing on Christ, no man will ever be put to shame. So that all this is wonderfully establishing in grace and sets our souls free. To be able to tell God I have not anything but what has come from Himself, and I do not want anything else, that is really liberty, and sets me free to serve in the holy priesthood. It is contrasted with the refuge of lies in Isaiah 28, which is of man. But what is resting on the Corner-stone abides. God is not looking for anything from me as a natural man, He is seeking to confer something upon me in a Person, so that He risen and glorified might be everything to me. It is like Israel's having to learn they were disowned by God, so that He pronounced upon them no mercy, and all was over for them. "Who once were not a people" and "not enjoying mercy" — that was Israel; but He says that they would be a people, because when Christ comes in, that changes everything. God has peculiar pleasure in having a people on this footing; that is, it is a peculiar satisfaction to have a people who think nothing of

themselves and everything of God. They become a pleasure to God; as He says in the prophets, "This people have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise" (Isaiah 43: 21). That is very much this scripture.

Ques We get the kingly priesthood here. Would it be right to say that the holy priesthood is Godward and the royal priesthood is manward?

CAC I should think it is something like the morning meeting and the gospel preaching. When together in assembly, in principle we offer Godward; then we set forth in the gospel what God is for man — His excellencies — that is the gospel. The preacher was once in the dark and has been illuminated. We were once dark, and now light in the Lord, and have been called into the light in pure grace and mercy.

THE PLACE CHRIST HOLDS IN RELATION TO GOD AND THE SERVICE OF GOD

1 Peter 2: 5; Hebrews 7: 25, 26; Hebrews 2: 11, 12; Romans 8: 34; John 14: 6

CAC What I had in mind, dear brethren, was that God would not have us to come to Him in any service or privilege without keeping it very definitely before us that Christ has taken up that service and that privilege. Our true apprehension of the service Godward depends on our seeing that Christ has taken it up, and it is not to be separated in mind for a moment from that fact. Any service or privilege that gets detached in mind or spirit from Christ has no value at all in the service of God. That is why we are so frequently reminded that things are "by him" and "through him". I suppose we all understand that every feature of divine grace and blessing which has come to us from God has come to us mediatorially through the Lord Jesus Christ; but I was not thinking of that side, but of the side of things which is Godward.

Ques Would it be helpful to say a few words as to what the thought of the service of God includes today?

CAC I think it can all be condensed into one sentence: what is pleasurable to God on the part of His people. Whatever ministers to the pleasure of God constitutes His service. Many of us have derived great strength in our souls from seeing that it has all been taken up by Christ, and that whatever we take up, we take up with jealous care that it shall not be in the slightest degree detached from Christ in the estimation of our hearts. The words "through him", "by him" and "by me" show how important it is that He should have His place before us in relation to those different things. Sacrifice is the first element in the service of God. When one entered the court of the tabernacle, the first thing one came to was the altar. The altar says, 'Something for God'. That is the voice of the altar; it is not something for man; what is on the altar is for God, and what is for God is for God's pleasure. If it is for His pleasure, it is part of His service. So Peter speaks of our "being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". It is the fact that they are "by Jesus Christ" that makes them acceptable. Anything that moves in our souls apart from Jesus Christ is unacceptable to God; we may as well accept that to begin with.

Ques. Is He the Altar?

CAC The thing is set out in perfection in Christ. From our side the epistle to the Romans brings us to the altar (chapter 12); we are besought to present

our bodies a living sacrifice, which is our intelligent service. There is to be something for God, and if there is a sacrifice there must be an altar; and though the altar is not particularly mentioned in Romans, it is undoubtedly Christ, because the sacrificial thought has been fully set out in Him. He has sustained as the Altar every variety of the sacrificial thought, all that is pleasurable to God on sacrificial lines. We take up the thought of the mutual service of God, which is carried on amongst the brethren according to Romans 12, in the spirit of sacrifice. If the pleasure of God, that is, "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God", is to be worked out, it is as a sacrificial service, at cost to oneself.

Ques You are beginning, then, in your thoughts of the service of God at Romans 12. Are you suggesting that it only applies to those who have travelled thus far, those who have received the glad tidings, and been delivered, and so on?

CAC That is where the service of God properly begins. God's service to us in grace is a previous chapter of spiritual history, but what we are considering tonight is the thought of the service of God.

Rem I asked that question because I had thought of the altar as first of all speaking of our need.

CAC I do not think the altar has anything to do with that, unless you think of the sin-offering, which amongst the people of God forms no part of the normal service of God; it means that something abnormal has occurred. What is for the pleasure of God is what is worked out according to His will; and therefore Romans 12 is where we begin.

We begin in our service amongst the brethren. God has given to every brother and sister faith to do something in His service among the brethren. People may say, 'I do not know that I have faith to do anything'; but it says, "God has dealt to each a measure of faith". If God says He has done so, you must not question it. We take up in faith our service among the brethren. We are members one of another; we are all set together as one body in Christ. There is a wonderful community and interworking of service in the different members. We are not exactly members of Christ according to this scripture, but members one of another; we are a necessity one to another. The service has all to be worked out in the spirit of sacrifice, in that spirit that was most fully manifested in Christ Himself. It is as taking it up in connection with Christ's sacrifice that it has value, because it is the altar which sanctifies the gift (Matthew 23: 19).

Ques Is every offering on the brazen altar typically by Jesus Christ?

CAC That is the idea, and it is not to be disconnected from the completeness of the thought of sacrifice as worked out by Christ Himself. Everything is, in our thought of it, to stand related to Christ, and thus the pleasure of God is secured.

Ques Is that why Peter says, "By Jesus Christ"?

CAC I think it is the thought of the altar.

Rem The offerings went up as a sweet savour to God.

CAC Yes, that is it; and the smallest offering was identified with the altar. It is remarkable, to speak again of the sin-offering, that in Leviticus 5 a man is regarded as being so poor that he cannot even bring two turtle doves; he can only bring a tenth part of an ephah of flour; but a handful of it is put on the altar and burnt there along with the offerings of Jehovah made by fire. This little handful of flour is identified with all the sacrificial offerings by fire on the altar. When we bring our offering by Jesus Christ, it becomes identified with all the preciousness of Christ in the sacrificial service which is taken up Godward; because His sacrifice was Godward: He "offered himself spotless to God" (Hebrews 9: 14). His sacrifice is part of His service Godward; it is not only on God's side towards us, but on our side towards God, and every sacrifice that we bring is to be identified in the thought of the offerer with all the blessedness of that. Peter had that in mind when he wrote, "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness" (1 Peter 2: 7). With all the wealth of the sacrificial idea in its completeness in Christ, and our offerings identified with that Godward, how acceptable to God that makes them!

Ques Would this be the answer to the mediatorial system?

CAC Yes, this is the answer. Generally speaking, Christians know less about this side of things than they do about the mediatorial side.

Ques What are these spiritual sacrifices which are referred to?

CAC All the sacrifices with which the Jews were familiar have their spiritual counterpart in christianity now. Now it is a question of spiritual sacrifices. God delights in our appreciation of Christ in sacrificial character. Whether we think of Him as the burnt-offering, or as the oblation, or as the peace-offering, or as the sin-offering, every apprehension of Christ is precious to God; but then it is to be brought to Him in connection with the altar. It is to be brought to Him in immediate connection with the fact that Christ has sustained in the holy purity of His own Person everything that is sacrificial in character, so that the principle of sacrifice has come before God in perfection in Christ.

Spiritual sacrifices are never to be separated in our minds from the full perfection of the thing in Christ, and if we come with that sense in our souls, there will be a great spring of liberty.

Rem We should not be unduly occupied with the feebleness of our measure of response.

CAC No, because we are thinking of the greatness of the altar by which we offer, and the altar sanctifies the gift. My gift may be a very small one, but the altar sanctifies it, and gives it the immense value of Christ.

Ques Is there any connection between what you are saying and the Lord saying, "Abide in me"?

CAC In John 15 it is a question of our spiritual joy. The Lord speaks of Himself there as the Vine, and the disciples are the branches. The use of the vine as a figure is significant, because its fruit is typical of joy. The Lord is presented in John's gospel particularly as the Joy-bringer: His first miracle is to turn the water into wine, and in John 15 the fruit in which the Father delights is that spiritual joy of which Christ is the living Spring. That is by Him, and it is a delightful thing for the Father to witness our spiritual joy derived from Christ, so that we are not dried up; we are a joyful people. I believe the Father finds peculiar delight and satisfaction in the joy of the saints.

Rem We are being built up for the service you are speaking of.

CAC Yes, it is the very purpose for which the spiritual building is going on; it is all that we may become efficient in ministering to the pleasure of God. If we thought more of the pleasure of God and less about our own blessing, we should get on a great deal better.

I would like to suggest next that the intercessory element enters largely into the service of God, so the prayer meeting comes in there. The brazen altar is the place of sacrifice, but when we come to the thought of intercessory service we are inside at the golden altar. It is priestly service, and it derives its character from the intercessory service of Christ. Nothing is acceptable to God in our prayers that does not take character from the intercession of Christ. That surely must be the standard of divine pleasure.

Ques Is that why the Lord would give His disciples a pattern?

CAC The Lord's own prayer is the most wonderful example of prayer that went up to the Father as incense. How acceptable! How full of holy fragrance that prayer was! But what comes more within our range is the prayers of the apostle. We should do well to ponder the prayers of the apostle as an indication of the true character of assembly prayer.

Ques Are you referring to any prayers in particular?

CAC I was thinking of all his prayers.

Rem I suppose there is something of that character in most of his epistles.

CAC There are no prayers in 1 Corinthians and Galatians. When things are wrong it is not prayer that is needed, but ministry of the word. There is no illusion to anything wrong in any of Paul's prayers. It is most striking that he makes no allusion to any defect or infirmity or failure in the brethren; his prayers all have incense character. Every desire that Paul expressed in his many prayers would be positively delightful to God, because it was bringing before Him of His own great thoughts of love.

Rem It is in relation to divine purpose.

CAC Yes; you will remember that the prayers of Paul are all on the positive line, and that is incense. It refers to prayer that is outside the region of human necessity, but in the region of divine beneficence. True assembly prayer stands in relation to the wealth of divine giving rather than human need, and how delightful that is to God! The prayers of Jesus must have all had that character. They were the prayers of One who was in perfect knowledge of, and sympathy with, all that was in the mind of God. The prayers of Paul had that character, and I venture to say that Paul is not only our apostle, but he is our priest, and he indicates to us the kind of intercession that is pleasing to God in the assembly. We have not any prayer book in Scripture, but we get these spiritual hints. If I see how such a man as Paul speaks to God and to the Father, what an indication it is as to the true character of assembly prayer!

Rem It would very much limit our prayers.

CAC I thought it was just the other way about! You do not feel limited in Ephesians 3 in connection with the breadth and length and depth and height, do you?

Rem No, I am sure that is right.

CAC Assembly prayer should reach up to the character of the intercessory service of Christ, because not only has the sacrificial service been fully expressed in Him as the Altar, but the intercessory service has been fully expressed in Him as the intercessory Priest. It is noticeable that the golden altar is higher than the other vessels in the tabernacle.

The scriptures read from Hebrews 7 and Romans 8 show the height to which the intercessory service reaches in Christ; and it is all on our side, not from

God to us, but from us to God; the intercessory service reaches right up to the right hand of God.

Ques Would you distinguish as to the suitability of addressing God as Father and Christ as Lord?

CAC In what we are speaking of we do not address Christ at all. The whole point of the service of God is that Christ has taken up a place Godward. It is quite right to speak to the Lord as to His interests and service, and as to the things that come under His hand, and in speaking to the Lord we are speaking to a divine Person, to God; but that does not enter into what we are talking about tonight. Christ has gone in priestly intercession to the right hand of God, and He is become higher than the heavens. It would help us if we thought more of prayer as part of the service of God; it is too much with us the expression of conscious need, but that is not incense. Incense is the bringing to God in holy, priestly service His own precious and elevated thoughts. That is what God can delight in. Such was the character of the prayers of Paul. When we get to that side, we do not address the Lord; we do not address the Golden Altar, but by the Altar we approach God. That is the true character of assembly prayer.

Ques What is the thought of praying in the Spirit?

CAC It must be all in the Spirit, because there is nothing right which is not in the Spirit. If we are not in the Spirit we shall not get hold of the thought of the intercessory service as carried on by Christ, and our service as held in relation to it. This would particularly apply to what may be called assembly prayer; it is by Him we take it up.

Ques Are you referring to His priestly intercessory service?

CAC Yes, and any intercessory service which is truly the service of God now must correspond with His, because it is by Him we approach God. There is no other way, whether it be for prayer or for praise. We take account of Him as the key to the position, and the measure of the position and the service. What an elevated idea it gives!

All these thoughts are taken up in fulness and perfection in Christ, but they contemplate the saints being identified with them. The thought is that the saints are to come into the service, whether the sacrificial service or the intercessory, but it is all to be identified with the perfection of the thing as verified in Christ.

Ques Is it in that way we are to be one with Him?

CAC That is the idea; we are one with Him in this blessed service Godward. We need to think more of His place of service on our side Godward.

We were speaking of the apostle Paul being like the Lord in the character of his prayers. To take account of his prayers brings it near to us, because he is not a divine Person, but a man of like passions with ourselves, and we see his whole soul imbued with this intercessory spirit. He speaks in some of his epistles as if he did not do anything else but pray; one wonders when he slept or ate!

Ques Do you think our lack of ability to take up this service may be due to lack of priestly character?

CAC Yes, I do think so. Priestly character would be developed by the consideration of Christ. The epistle to the Hebrews would help us much in this; we are to "consider well him", and to consider Him in His relation to the service of God.

Rem Any Israelite might bring a sacrifice to the brazen altar, but only a priest could go in to the golden altar.

CAC I think that this is very important. I suppose the vast majority of the people of God today never get to the golden altar.

Rem I suppose the priest at the golden altar is not marked by a sense of need.

CAC No, indeed, the great point in priestly service is, "that he may serve me as priest" (Exodus 28: 1). The sin-offering of the day of atonement was no part of normal priestly service. The priest had to disrobe himself before he took it up; he was to put off all his priestly garments and put on white linen. He went in to make atonement in the moral beauty of holiness.

Ques Does the question of weakness and failure touch the advocacy of Christ rather more than His priesthood?

CAC Yes; and the sympathetic priesthood in the early part of the epistle to the Hebrews is not exactly the service of God. The sympathetic and compassionate priesthood is for us in our creature weakness and infirmity, and we do get Christ's blessed service on that line, but in that He is serving us. He serves us in order that we may be made superior to our weakness and put on our priestly robes and take part in the service of God. There is a wonderful service of grace on the part of the Priest towards us, but the great thought of the Priest is the service Godward, "That he may serve me as priest".

Rem Normally, the side of weakness does not enter into it.

CAC I am not wishing to shut out that side of things in the prayer meeting at all; but I would like a little more of the other side brought in. I have been in prayer meetings where the service of God was hardly touched from beginning to end. I do not think that God has pleasure in that.

Ques Does what we have at the end of Ephesians 3, "Glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus", enter into it?

CAC I think so.

Now we may pass on to the thought of praise. Praise is a most important feature in the service of God, and the assembly at the present time is the vessel of that service. God is not served in Israel; He is certainly not served in the world; but He is served in the assembly. But the service of praise takes character from the way that Christ sings, from His praise. He takes a place on our side, and I think there is wisdom in the Spirit of God concentrating our attention on the fact that Christ sings. He does not say anything in Hebrews 2: 12 about the assembly singing. The point is that the singing of Christ is to distinguish the assembly. If He sings in the midst of the assembly, everything that is right in the way of praise must correspond with that; but the Spirit of God does not say here that the assembly sings, because He does not want to divert us from the great and blessed place that Christ has. I am not critical about expressions that are used. It is right that His singing should give character to the praises of the assembly, but it is noticeable that Scripture says, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises", or, 'hymn thee'. It is what Christ does. Anything that is out of tune with that is unsuitable to the service of praise; that is the point.

Rem It must be characteristically Christ.

CAC That is the character of the praise in the assembly. If Christ praises there, everything that is right and suitable in the character of service must correspond with His praise. Anything that does not correspond with the singing of Christ has no proper place in the service of praise. He is the pre-eminent One, and the whole character of the service is to correspond with what He does. There is immense leverage in the contemplation of Christ as the great Singer in the midst of the assembly, for it connects our thoughts of praise with Him.

Ques How do I distinguish His singing in the assembly?

CAC I think the singing of Christ can be easily distinguished by the spiritual ear, because it is a singing that magnifies God. Whatever speaks well of God is in keeping with the singing of Christ.

Rem It is marvellous how it is put: "Sing thy praises".

CAC Yes, that is it; the great thing is that God is praised.

God is great; and it is God known according to the precious value of the sin-offering, because the words are quoted from Psalm 22. The One who has been the sin-offering comes out from the place of the sin-offering to sing God's praises.

He had said in the hour of His sorrow that God dwelt amid the praises of Israel. He became the sin-offering in order to establish the praises of God in the hearts of His people; and He comes up in resurrection and praises God. God as in relation to creatures who have sinned is more fully known in the sin-offering than in anything else.

Rem So it is, "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Psalm 22: 22).

CAC It is a great thing to see that God is praised in the holy light of redemption. He is going to be praised eternally in the light of the fact that He has been glorified in holiness by the sin-bearing work of the Lord Jesus; and the One who glorified Him in holiness is the One who can praise Him in holiness.

Ques Is singing confined to when the saints are together?

CAC It says, "In the midst of the assembly"; it supposes a convened company. In Old Testament times God loved to gather the assembly together. The thought of the assembly is not limited to the present time. God had an assembly in the Old Testament, and He will have an assembly after the church is gone; but the church at the present time has that wonderful place; it is God's assembly, the place where God is great, and God's pleasure is served. All acceptable service to God is in the assembly; it is nowhere else now.

Ques Is that the height of the service now, that everything that has come in becomes an occasion of praise to God?

CAC There is nothing higher morally that the praises of Christ as having come up from the depths of the sin-offering sorrow. God is known as glorious in holiness, and He is moving in holiness according to the love of His heart. God is going to be known in that way in all the universe.

Ques In the type should we have to go to David in order to get what corresponds to that of which you are now speaking?

CAC David is the great singer.

Ques I was thinking of that verse in 1 Chronicles 16: 7: "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to give thanks to Jehovah through Asaph and his brethren". David is the mover in it; I suppose he would correspond to Christ; but it is "through Asaph and his brethren"; would they be those Christ uses in that service of praise? Then all the people join in and say, "Amen" (verse 36).

CAC I think that is right; so you can see the service of praise reaches a height when Christ takes it up which cannot be surpassed. The praise of the assembly is to come up to that.

Ques Do we see something of that in the end of Luke's gospel? It says there that they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. The glorious greatness of God had come before them.

CAC "All were astonished at the glorious greatness of God" (Luke 9: 43). There is nothing that makes God so great as the sin-offering, for it shows how God can move out from Himself, and through the precious work of Jesus He can glorify Himself in the whole universe about sin, and fill the whole universe with His praise as known in the holy light of redemption.

Ques Will you say a word as to "I will declare thy name to my brethren"?

CAC I think it is God known in the light of redemption; and God's name as known in the light of redemption is very great.

Ques If this is the highest expression morally, what is beyond that?

CAC What I had in mind is John 14. You get an affectionate thought in the Lord's words, "No one comes to the Father unless by me". Now you have come into the realm of holy affections.

Ques Does that give us the family thought?

CAC Yes, and it gives us the thought of the wonderful place which we have with the Father in sonship having been first taken up by Christ on our side; we do not apprehend it aright until we see it as taken up by Him. The true glory and blessedness of sonship are only known as we apprehend it in Christ.

Ques Is that why He says, "Unless by me"?

CAC Yes, and He says, "I am the way". That is not the Father's way out, the way of revelation; but it is the way to the Father: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless by me". It is the way in.

Ques Does Hebrews 10 connect with this?

CAC There the writer speaks about our "having a great priest over the house of God", as much as to say that we could not approach if we had not a priest. He is over God's house as Son and as Priest in order to make the thoughts of divine love dominate there. The great Priest secures a footing for us, so it is by Him we approach: "Let us approach"; it is put in a hortatory way. The writer does not say that we do approach, because he knew how few of us do.

Ques Would you say a little as to the distinction between the declaration of the Father's name in John 17 and what we have in Hebrews 2: 12?

CAC In Hebrews it is God as such who is declared, and it is God who is praised. It sets forth God as coming out to make Himself known in love, and being known and praised in that light.

But when we come to John, it is the Father, and the Lord going to the Father; so that our place with the Father is determined by His place. 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". The Son goes to the Father representatively in John 14, as having His own in mind. He had you and me in mind when He went to the Father, and He was the first One to go into the Father's house in sonship. He went into the Father's house as Man in sonship, and He is going to bring us there; and He is the way. It is in the apprehension of how He has gone, and the blessed affections in which He has gone, that we can come to the Father; because in those early verses in John 14 it is not the Father coming to us, as in verse 23, but our going to the Father, and none of us go to the Father unless by Him. We come to the Father in the apprehension of the wonderful place which Christ has taken on our side so that the Father's pleasure might be served by our going to Him in the Father's house, in His circumstances and for His pleasure. I think that is the consummation of it.

Ques Is association with Christ previous to this?

CAC Yes, it is. This scripture shows how, as going to the Father, into the Father's house in this blessed relationship of Son, the Lord had in mind to bring all His saints of the assembly into the same place, and to bring them all there for the Father's pleasure, because it is the Father's house that is in view, and we can be quite sure there will be nothing in the Father's house that it is not for the Father's pleasure.

Ques Does this involve the truth of sonship for us?

CAC Surely it does; and not only so, but unless we apprehend the thought of sonship in the Son who has gone to the Father, we shall not apprehend it at all. It will not be in our souls in its living reality except as we apprehend it in the place which He has taken on our side as having gone to the Father.

Ques How does the thought we have in John 20 — His ascending to His Father and our Father — stand related to John 14?

CAC I think it is as ascending that He enters the Father's house, because the Father's house is a heavenly thought, a heavenly association. When He actually comes and takes us there, we shall be in that heavenly place; but before we are actually there, we are with Him with the Father spiritually. It involves His going to the Father in ascension; the ascension shows the elevation of it. But it is the affectionate side of it in John 14.

The Lord spoke of the Father's house, and the place He was going to take there. The apprehension of sonship as thus presented is very important because this is sonship apprehended objectively in the Son as having gone to the Father, and in Him we have the full manifestation of it. The Spirit is the Spirit of sonship; He has come into our hearts, and cries, "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4: 6). A babe who has the Spirit can cry, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8: 15), but he has not the full thought of sonship until he apprehends it in the Son as having gone to the Father. The full thought of sonship comes into view when we see the Son going to the Father in a heavenly scene, in a realm of heavenly affections, making a place there for us. We apprehend Him objectively in that scene, and we apprehend in Him the fulness of it. We shall never throughout eternity have anything greater than the place the Son has taken on our side with the Father.

1 PETER 2 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 Peter 2: 13 - 25

CAC Peter is in harmony with Paul in showing we are to be subject to the government that exists in this world through the ordering of God.

Rem Peter puts it, "To every human institution".

CAC It would be most difficult for the Jew to accept that authority had passed into the hands of gentile powers.

Rem It would be a matter for believers to look through these things to God, recognising they are from Him. The things that touch our pride and our will in connection with the government of men — it would help us to get back to God about them. Subjection would be on the line of what touches us; it would be something that touches us very much.

CAC It suggests that this subjection is part of our testimony, even though it may seem to act against us at certain times as it did to the Lord. "Thou hadst no authority whatever against me it if were not given to thee from above", He said to Pilate (John 19: 11). The power of government in the world so worked against Him as to condemn Him to death; but He subjected Himself to it. He could have had more than twelve legions of angels to act for Him — greater than all the Roman power — but He subjected Himself to it. It would bring to light that God's government is favourable to His people in its general bearing. There was a period of suffering for His people. The result of it all is the great liberty we have today. God allowed things to go so far that the natural conscience rose up in rebellion against it, so it has worked out for good. The Lord's example in this chapter is most touching, because He was most unrighteously and unjustly treated by those in authority. But what a Model! "When reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously". It would seem it was entrusted to the saints to carry that on for His sake — to carry it on, not looking for outward deliverance, but to suffer. Is that not christianity? Sometimes we expect to be protected. No one could think that, who sees what happened to the Lord Himself and the apostles at the beginning of the dispensation. We must not expect to be protected ourselves, we must expect to suffer. The saints have liberty to go on with well-doing. Nebuchadnezzar's government sometimes acted violently against the people of God.

Rem "God's bondmen" (verse 16) would be nothing but the will of God in the mind of the saints, I suppose — very testing, of course.

CAC The easy times we have had have somewhat tended to relax the fibre of conscience. If we suffered more we should have more tender consciences.

Rem It is a great test to go on in the face of great difficulties. The Lord is a "model" for us (verse 21).

CAC Naturally we resent what we feel is unjust, and if we are not very careful, Satan will take advantage of that and put us out of the testimony.

Rem I knew that happened to a brother after three bereavements; he felt hard done by. He was afterwards restored.

CAC It would not have done him any harm to have read the book of Job. The saints have to go through severe experiences sometimes to bring them into harmony with the Spirit of Christ. If we consider Him we should feel ashamed of those feelings in us that are wrong. He went through every kind of wrong in preparedness to suffer. He gave Himself over to God, though He could judge of the wrong so perfectly and entirely. "Who ... gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously".

Rem It would help us if we could watch Him under all He suffered at the hand of man, and imbibe His Spirit.

Ques Why is it "a cloak of malice" (verse 16)?

CAC The cloak would rather explain that it is hidden,

but it is there. It is wishing something may happen to anyone, unkind or evil; but there is to be no such thing even at the bottom of the heart. If a person has done me evil, that is the person to be pitied, not me! It is all testing to us as to whether we have the Spirit of Christ. Is that our true, vital wealth — the Spirit of Christ? "Shew honour to all": men are entitled to respect as God's creatures. Man may be degraded by lust and self-will, but faith would look underneath all that and see the dignity that attaches to a creature of God. We see that Peter and Paul always addressed men respectfully. It should be the attitude of gospel preachers. We used to think that the more we called them wicked sinners the better for them. The dignity of man is that he is set in the creation as God's representative, and we recognise that. He is made in the image of God. So it is good for us to have that side of things with us. Any persons having the grace of life, surely, have an additional honour. You would shrink from the disparagement of any person, but most of all of a saint. We address men as having Christ as their Head, so the human race is distinguished by having such a Head. Adam is not the head of man. The thing is to get people's eyes opened to the truth.

1 PETER 3 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 Peter 3: 14 - 22

Ques Does verse 13 suggest the saints "have become imitators of that which is good"?

CAC In the footnote it says it might read, 'him that is good', it is a very personal reference to Christ. So the thing is to sanctify the Lord the Christ in our hearts. It is a beautiful thought that the hearts of the saints are to be a sanctuary for the Lord. All that is right outwardly flows out of that.

Ques What is the force of the expression, "The Lord the Christ"? Probably it is an allusion to Isaiah 8: 13: "Jehovah of hosts, him shall ye sanctify; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread".

CAC I wonder whether it is one of the many scriptures that bring the thought of Jehovah and the Christ into very intimate connection. A pious Jew would see that all that was attached to Jehovah is now attached to Christ. I think "the Lord the Christ" was a blending of the two thoughts.

Rem It is like "the hidden man of the heart".

CAC I thought so. It is very wonderful that the hearts of the saints can be a sanctuary for divine Persons. There is something greater in the hearts of the saints than anything that was known in the temple of old, which after all was a dead thing; but the hearts of the saints are living, full of vital affection; that is the thought, and the Lord the Christ is sanctified there.

Rem In John 17: 19 He says, "I sanctify myself ..., that they also may be sanctified by truth". In His going to the Father, He set Himself apart, and it would draw the affections of the saints to where He is.

CAC Yes, it is positional sanctification there, is it not?

Rem There was no temple here, the Lord and the disciples were cast out, but they would give Him a place in their hearts.

CAC It is just so today; neither Jehovah nor His Christ have any place except in the hearts of His saints.

Rem The saints are in the midst of what is profession and not real.

CAC That is not good enough for Him. It is an insult to God to think that He would value a cathedral. He dwells in the affections of the human heart; it is what is inward. The feeblest saint can sanctify the Lord the Christ in His heart. If all the world and the church is wrong, there is nothing to hinder me from so sanctifying Him, and if you do it too, we will get on very well together.

Rem You really get the material for the house in that way.

CAC And this is to be an intelligent matter, not mere feeling or sentiment, so that if any ask a question, we are prepared to give an answer.

Ques Would the thought of the Christ be His answering as the anointed One to the thoughts of the Father?

CAC So that it is not only the thought of Jehovah abstractly, but identified with that, the Christ. All the will of God has come into effect by His anointed One — that is to be sanctified in our hearts, and carried about in our hearts all day long. So we are not taken aback by a question, because we are ever so pleased if anyone gives us a chance of giving a reason — it is not worked up.

Rem "Whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world" (John 10: 36). He is cast out, but elect of God and precious.

CAC Well, what a secret to carry in the heart. You feel how small and unworthy every human conception is compared with that. It must lead to men acting very strangely in the eyes of other men, and so people ask questions. Christians generally think it right to accommodate themselves to the things that are, but a real Christian wants to act true to what is in his heart, "An account of the hope". What are you looking for that makes you act in such a strange way? So that God and His Christ are more intimately near to us than any other person or thing.

Ques The spirit in which we answer would be of importance, would you say?

CAC Oh, I think that is so important; that is a lesson I have to learn yet. I find it so easy to put people right in a sort of way that gives some impression of my importance. But "with meekness and fear" is a real testimony, not only what we say but the spirit in which we say it. It is to be obvious that we have been subdued to divine Persons, so that we speak in a subdued and reverential spirit. I have often to judge myself as to that. We should like to give that impression.

Rem If we were living in our hope, the questions would be rather different sometimes from what are put to us.

Rem They could not resist the wisdom and the spirit with which Stephen spoke.

CAC His spirit was such that they could not meet him. I was thinking when reading Stephen's address quite lately, that it is a most remarkable address when you come to think of it. There is nothing to show from beginning to end that the man Stephen had any place at all. There is not a word about himself,

it is entirely a vindication of the ways of God; that is, it seems that the glory of God had come in and excluded everything else from his heart. The glory of it was shining in his face, it was effulgent. That is the sort of man to imitate. And Peter gives the impression that suffering is bound up with all this. If we sanctify the Lord the Christ in our hearts, there will be suffering; Stephen found it so.

Rem In Psalm 2, "The kings of the earth set themselves ... against Jehovah and against his anointed", and he says, "Be ye wise, be admonished, ye judges of the earth", and he brings out the preciousness of "his anointed" in spite of all the opposition.

Rem Suffering is connected with the will of God here, not with what is in opposition.

CAC It is very striking that the will of God should will it. The saints accept it as the will of God.

Rem Our manner of life is to be a cause of testimony. Sometimes we are inclined to force ourselves upon people, not waiting for our manner of life to speak.

CAC "Your good conversation in Christ". Peter is not given to saying very much about being in Christ, but gives enough to show he does not leave it out. Evidently, it refers to the public conduct of the saints, as it is a thing that may be calumniated. The public conduct of the saints is to be in Christ, as much as to say it is a very high standard. Is it expressive of Christ? is the question for a Christian.

Ques Does suffering for well-doing go beyond suffering for righteousness' sake?

CAC It comes to pretty much the same thing whichever way we look at it; whether for Christ's sake, for righteousness' sake, or for well-doing, it is all really the same character of things. "Christ indeed has once suffered for sins"; it is quite out of place if Christians have so to suffer; Christ has done that. It is now for Christians to suffer for well-doing. As we move in Christ, the suffering we shall get will be for well-doing.

Ques Is it the thought of the atoning sufferings of Christ?

CAC Yes, because it says, He "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God". So that He has brought us to God without sins. He has been prepared to suffer for sins that He might bring us to God without sins. So that the Christian now suffers because he will not sin. Men would like him to sin, and because he will not sin he suffers.

Ques Is it all linked up with the long-suffering of God seen in the preaching to the spirits in prison — longsuffering, all in view of the salvation of men? And so would it be in the suffering of the saints?

CAC It shows what the state of things around really is, so that the Christian must be saved from it. It is very much like what it was in the days of Noah — the type of God's long-suffering. Everything that is displeasing to God He is bearing with in patience, and His Spirit is still preaching.

Ques "Made alive in the Spirit". Would that be His coming out in resurrection?

CAC That is, the flesh order even in Christ had ended — yes, I think so. The flesh order is not the thing that we want to preserve. It had not been, even in Christ; it has been put to death.

Rem As we get in Genesis, "The end of all flesh is come before me" (chapter 6: 13).

CAC The spirit order is permanent, not the flesh order. So we do not want to preserve ourselves from suffering, because that is the flesh order, but we want to preserve the spiritual order, because it is that into which Christ entered in resurrection.

Rem "In which also going he preached to the spirits which are in prison".

CAC That is, God is really concerned about men's spirits.

1 PETER 4 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 Peter 4: 12 - 19

CAC It would be well to read the whole epistle in the light of verse 12: "Beloved, take not as strange the fire of persecution which has taken place amongst you for your trial, as if a strange thing was happening to you". That is to say, we should bear in mind that it was written to saints who had been undergoing persecution of a very severe form.

Ques Does it not seem to show the spirit of the remnant of Israel that will go through the fiery trial, and come out through it into the kingdom, and would not the saints taste of it as faithful to the Lord?

CAC It is not to be accounted strange if they do.

Rem We are inclined to forget in an easy path that the true character of the dispensation is one of fiery trial and martyrdom.

CAC One can understand the word of God comes with peculiar force and comfort to those actually suffering persecution, those who went through the fire.

Ques Would not the thought of being sharers in the sufferings of Christ be a great consolation? It is a great honour.

CAC Yes. And this is not such suffering as the world is passing through now. There is no special fire of persecution at the present time, nothing of this extreme character, but it is normal to saints to share in the sufferings of Christ, and as saints are faithful there will be some kind of persecution, maybe of a mild character.

Rem It is wonderful to think of the Spirit of God resting upon such. I was thinking of Daniel's companions in the fiery furnace; there was a fourth in the fire, with them in it.

CAC Why should the Spirit be spoken of under this peculiar title, "The Spirit of glory"?

Rem Has not the suffering glory in view, as in verse 13? "But as ye have share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, that in the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exultation". Also in chapter 1: 11 it speaks of "the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these".

CAC It is not that glory at all.

Rem It is wonderful that the early disciples counted it an honour to suffer for His sake.

CAC Yes, and the Lord Himself said, "Now is the Son of man glorified", referring to His sufferings.

Rem "And God is glorified in him" (John 13: 31).

CAC Yes.

Rem "The Spirit of glory" rested upon Stephen.

CAC Yes, I was just thinking of Stephen in that connection. Well, he was morally glorified; never was any man more glorified than Stephen, in the face of the greatest persecution and enmity. He was really clothed with glory, was he not?

Rem It was reflected in his countenance.

CAC Yes.

Ques Would you say a word on the thought of the revelation of His glory; it has a special position in Scripture, has it not? It is not only that the glory has been, but there is the revelation of it in a day to come. Peter has it in his heart.

CAC The one who suffers most for God is the one whose glory will shine greatest in that day. There are two kinds of reproaches, are there not? We may be reproached because we are not like Christ. Well, there is no honour in that!

Ques Does it not suppose that we should be reproached now, and moving in relation to His name brings it?

CAC Yes, that is a kind of reproach that is an honour. We see how ready the world is to reproach the inconsistencies of Christians if not like Christ, while in others they will pass unnoticed. We have to see to it that we do not come under that sort of reproach.

Rem The Lord could say, "The reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me" (Psalm 69: 9).

CAC Yes, if people reproach us it should be because we are exhibiting features of Christ, and that is an honour. The reproach of the Christ is greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. It is suffering as a Christian that is the test. We are not to be ashamed, but to glorify God.

Ques "In this name" (verse 16) would be the name of a Christian?

CAC Yes.

Rem In Hebrews it says of Moses, "Esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (chapter 11: 26).

CAC Yes, it shows that the reproach of the Christ was a thing that extended backwards. It was long before He came into the world.

Rem It was in relation to the people of God.

CAC Yes, that is it. He might have been a very great man in Egypt, but he turned away from that and identified himself with many suffering slaves really, and the Spirit of God credits him with "esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt".

Rem "For he had respect to the recompense", it says.

Rem The word "reproach" is used differently in the reproach of Egypt (Joshua 5: 9).

CAC Well, it is a reproach before God if we bear the reproach of Egypt. For Christians to be worldly is a reproach under the eye of God, but the reproach of Christ is an honour.

Rem To refuse to take up arms for your country is a reproach.

CAC Quite so, but it is a reproach upon a Christian if he is prepared to identify himself with what is of the world. Some great general just lately said that 'the knowledge of Christ had been a great help to him in his army career'.

What do you think of that?

Rem Well, we know what he meant, but it is a great incongruity. In his life as a soldier he had found the great comfort of it. Such believers think of themselves as helped in their individual careers. Cornelius was a soldier; we are not told whether he gave it up after.

CAC He had not been baptised.

Rem It would appear that as far as he was a God-fearing man, he was supported in a measure.

CAC That will be always so as walking in the fear of God; but it would hardly be right to think that Christ would help him in his army career. We recall the officer who could not carry his sword any longer. He was crossing a bridge and he threw it down into the river. That is how Christ helped him.

Rem The government of God uses a faithful man for the deliverance of His people or of a nation.

CAC You would not expect, nor preach, that the support of Christ would bring a man to honour in the world, would you? The support of Christ would help him to take the path of reproach and suffering. That is what this led Peter to.

Now how does this connect with judgment beginning at the "house of God"?

Rem The rendering seems to be, "From the house of God". Judgment is the way God purifies His people. God is after securing what is precious to Himself. It is a question of the righteous being secured, and that is difficult, but I thought the element of judgment comes in. In connection with Babylon it says, "God has judged your judgment upon her" (Revelation 18: 20). It says of saints at the end of the Psalms that it is an honour placed upon them to execute judgment: "To execute vengeance against the nations, and punishment among the peoples" (Psalm 149: 7).

Ques What have you to say about that?

CAC Oh, I was anxious to learn.

Ques There is a reference to Ezekiel 9: 6. Are we to understand that the judgment of God is going on?

CAC Is not the thought that God begins to judge what is nearest to Himself? That is the first thing to come under God's judgment.

Ques Why does that come in, what is the connection?

CAC That was what I was wanting to know.

Ques Is not the revelation of the glory of Christ connected with His sufferings? Will not the day of Christ's glory be ushered in by this period of judgment, and all who are purified share with Him?

Ques Would Ananias and Sapphira illustrate it?

CAC I should think so. God is not going to pass over anything that is wrong in those near Him. He said to Israel, "Therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities" (Amos 3: 2).

Rem It will be a terrible period, as we see in the minor prophets.

CAC Is it that Peter would recognise that in the suffering that comes upon as Christians, involving very severe trial, there may be an element of God's judgment? That is, God is using this fiery trial to burn up the dross that is in His people.

Rem It says, "Many shall be purified, and be made white, and be refined" (Daniel 12: 10).

CAC I think Peter had something of that in his mind. We must not think that all trial and pressure is of the devil, for God may be in it, judging something in us not according to His mind, and we should be prepared to submit to the solemn dealings of God with us, committing the keeping of our souls "to a faithful Creator". God will be faithful to His creatures. He may have to scrutinise and judge many things in ourselves that are not in the Spirit of Christ, but it is all in His faithful love, and we may trust Him to be faithful; and it is all with a view to salvation. But it is rather remarkable after speaking of the sufferings of the saints for Christ's name,

He should bring in judgment beginning at "the house of God". It is a thing to ponder — why He brings in there two things which on the face of it do not seem to have much in common.

Rem It says, "Commit their souls in well-doing".

CAC Our exercise is to be going on with what is right and pleasing to God, and accepting any trial that may come as God's way of purifying us.

Rem It is our souls He is after.

Ques So is the suffering in the way verse 19 speaks of it more governmental under the hand of God, not persecution?

CAC Yes, I think the general thought is, it is a time of suffering for any who confess Christ's name, and there is God's judgment in searching out what is not suitable in His saints. There may be things in those near to Him which He cannot put up with. Those in His house are close to Him, and He says, 'I must scrutinise you and bring to light that in you which I have to deal with'. "Wherefore also let them who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing to a faithful Creator".

1 PETER 5 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 Peter 5: 1 - 14

CAC I suppose it would hardly be elders in an official sense that are addressed here; it simply means older brethren in contrast to younger ones in verse 5. Peter himself was not an elder in an official sense. I think he takes his place among them because when he wrote the epistle he was a man advanced in years, and he addresses the elders in contrast to the younger ones in verse 5, and put special responsibility on them to care for the flock, which all of us who are getting on in years must accept — we must accept the exhortation.

Ques Why does the apostle link it with the thought of being a witness of the sufferings of Christ?

CAC Peter himself was a witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker of the glory. It is on that ground that he exhorts the elders to be faithful as shepherds of the flock.

Rem So that "the sufferings of the Christ" are intended to affect our spirits in regard of care for the flock.

CAC He has suffered much for the flock, as we sometimes sing,

> 'We'll sing of the Shepherd that died,
> That died for the sake of the flock'. (103:1)

Well, if He suffered so much, it is a poor thing if those who have had long experience of His grace are not prepared to suffer a little.

Rem Shepherding suggests that there will always be care that is needful; it is more than just feeding.

CAC Yes, shepherding would include seeing that the wolf did not get any of the lambs.

Rem David shone in that direction.

CAC There is a principle of care and oversight set up by the Lord, and it is largely vested in brothers that are advanced in years. It would be a pity if any brother who had had long experience of the Lord's shepherd care over himself was not prepared to exercise a little care over younger ones now.

Ques Would a "fellow-elder" be a step down from an apostle?

CAC Yes, but he takes his place as an elder brother; sometimes it is right to do that. Paul says, "Being such a one as Paul the aged" (Philemon 9). He

appeals to Philemon on the ground of his age. He is an aged prisoner and he mentions that in order to give weight to his petition for Onesimus.

Rem It says, "Who am ... witness of the sufferings of the Christ, who also am partaker", etc. It is a suffering pathway, and it is in the present tense; though aged, Peter is still suffering.

CAC And all this is just in contrast to the clerical spirit that would rule over the saints in an official way and regard them as its possession. It is not to be for gain to themselves, but rather to care for the saints and to have to suffer, so those who exercise oversight must be prepared for suffering. In seeking to care for others, and especially younger ones, we must not be surprised if they resent what we seek to do. We may have to suffer in that way; we will not always be acceptable. People do not always like being helped or admonished, they resent it. Is that not part of the suffering that belongs to the beautiful service of shepherding the flock? And there is an unfading crown of glory for such. Those who are faithful in looking after the flock may have to suffer, but then the unfading crown of glory is assured; the chief Shepherd will see to that. "The flock of God" is a beautiful expression; it is God's property, not ours. It is good to think of the preciousness of the saints to God, even if they are not aware of it. We ought to cherish each lamb and sheep of the flock.

Rem The old ones are often as awkward as the young.

CAC They are often more awkward; old ones are more difficult to deal with. We have been reminded of late that many saints seem to be naughty at the end. So many in the Old Testament went on for a long time but became unruly at the end, like Asa and Jehoshaphat; so it is well for us to be prepared for subjection and to "bind on humility towards one another". He does not say the elders are to be subject to the younger, he would not say that, but we are all to bind on humility.

Rem The elder is to be a model in every way, not putting on burdens like the scribes and Pharisees, which is just the opposite to this.

CAC And marked particularly by this feature of subjection and humility. There will be no trouble if we maintain that spirit. A person marked by that will never give any trouble to the brethren.

Ques What is the thought of binding it on?

CAC I think that means you intend to keep it on. We can all keep humility on for five minutes; but it is to be a permanent thing. We sometimes affect to be humble. There was a brother in Y. and he was proud of being humble. I have told him that often. There is such a thing as "voluntary humility" (Colossians 2:

18, Authorised Version). You may put it on for a certain purpose, but we are to be definitely invested with it as the real clothing we wear habitually, and it is well to do so because God resists the proud; they are an abomination to Him. But He gives grace to the humble. So if we want grace we must be humble, and if we want to be humble, we must ask grace for that; it does not come naturally to any of us. We have to own the mighty hand of God, casting "all your care upon him". I have seen that often in people's houses but do not remember seeing the first part of the sentence! It is very important in this case that we take it in its setting. If I humble myself under the mighty hand of God, I shall find it possible to cast my care upon Him. If I do not humble myself, it will not be possible. We have to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God when things go wrong, or circumstances are against us. When we do humble ourselves under the hand of God, He can do what He likes to do. It is a pleasure to God to exalt us — not after the flesh but spiritually. It is His great delight to exalt us spiritually. It is much better to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God than to be devoured by the devil.

Rem It seems to be in a way the alternative, because it brings in the sufferings of the brotherhood.

CAC It seems to be Satan's object to devour anything that is of God, but he is to be resisted.

Rem Failure to be humble gives the devil opportunity in the exposure.

CAC Yes, and in times of persecution the mighty hand of God would have to be owned — saints perhaps thrown into prison or martyred, things happening that are very distressing. Well, the mighty hand of God is to be owned in all these things.

Rem Otherwise it might mean the entire overthrow, so that the devil comes in and destroys. There is salvation in the recognition that it is the mighty hand of God.

CAC And the selfsame sufferings are accomplished in the brotherhood "which is in the world"; that is, it is a general thing — not confined; saints suffering in the power of faith are all over the world. It is rather touching that he speaks in verse 13 about some in Babylon, which would rather suggest that there is faith amongst some of those who had been carried away to Babylon long years before — some who had never come back to Jerusalem — now come to be God's elect for heavenly blessing. It would be very interesting to the remnant in Asia Minor that there were saints in Babylon; God had some elect ones in that part, showing the faithfulness of God in securing this elect company — really the flock.

Rem The Lord refers to the disciples as a little flock, "Fear not, little flock, for it has been the good pleasure of your Father to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12: 32). Peter seems to have the thought of the kingdom; the elect are secured for that, and the revelation of the glory.

CAC So that it is, "The God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered for a little while, himself shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground". All is secure on the divine side. Now the saints have just to be content to suffer, knowing the suffering process tends to strengthen, ground. So that suffering is for that purpose. It is notwithstanding the sufferings that may be connected with the path. The tendency with Jewish believers would be to think, Why are all these sufferings coming upon us? Can it be right? Is this the blessing of God when we are suffering in a variety of ways? The Jews looked for the blessing of God, but Peter writes that they may be assured that the suffering path is the right one.

Ques What is the force of being made "perfect"? Does not Scripture refer to the Lord being made perfect through sufferings?

CAC Yes indeed. It would seem to show that suffering is part of the perfecting process.

Rem Verse 10 is a very powerful, elevating verse to get into our souls.

CAC Yes, it is. "This is the true grace of God in which ye stand" — this is the true, genuine thing.

Ques Would it be making perfect on the lines of refining — a purifying process?

Rem It has the thought of completing, as with the Lord.

CAC Yes, He was made perfect by being introduced into new conditions beyond death. He was perfected as to His condition; that is not flesh and blood, He is in the condition of purpose. The saints are going to be brought to that too. Really there is no perfecting for the saints except to be like Christ in glory. Well, if we are to be like Him in His glorified state, we need not be surprised if suffering enters into the process that is going on now.

Rem Psalm 119: 96 says, "I have seen an end of all perfection".

CAC But he adds something to it: "Thy commandment is exceeding broad". I suppose it refers to the perfection set forth in Christ, that there is a great breadth of perfection to be found in the Man who is there; that is, God's will perfectly expressed in a glorified Christ. People who look for perfection here will be disappointed, for there is no perfection in the man who is here. But

those who look for it in the right place will find it, and the beautiful thing is that the saints are going to be brought up to the divine standard, conformed to the image of His Son. Well, no one can improve on that, can they?

Rem I suppose Marcus is the writer of the gospel.

CAC I should think so.

Ques How would you understand Peter's remark as to Silvanus, "as I suppose"?

CAC Well, I do not know that "suppose" in Scripture implies any doubt. John says, "I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written" (John 21: 25). It was a very well-founded supposition, was it not? I think it shows that was the account that he took of that brother, he regarded him in that light.

Ques "Peace be with you all who are in Christ". Is that the power of the kingdom in our souls?

CAC Yes. Peter does not speak a great deal of being in Christ, it is more Paul's line, but Peter links on with Paul in thought — there are those that are in Christ.

Rem As to the "kiss of love", mere forms do not help; love is the great thing.

Rem "Salute one another". It puts all the saints in touch with one another. It is a heart matter, not merely a formal matter.

Rem A handshake may be merely formal. Our handshake is to be a handshake of love; the other follows then: "Peace be with you all".

2 PETER 1 (NOTES OF A READING)

2 Peter 1: 1 - 11

Ques Is there any reason why Peter is spoken of as a bondman and an apostle of Jesus Christ?

CAC It is noticeable that all the writers of the epistles refer to themselves as bondmen. A bondman is a slave, he had no option. To have the sense of the Lord's ownership and His right to command us utterly and in every detail of our lives is most important. Peter would not be fit for apostleship if he were not a bondman. So it is most important, in reference to any gift or service that we render, that we do it in the spirit of a bondman, and that would be most important in these days when lawlessness abounds.

Rem "To shew to his bondmen what must shortly take place; and he signified it ... to his bondman John" (Revelation 1: 1).

Ques Would you say that the combination of apostle and bondman would show that what was sent was unreservedly of the Lord?

CAC And there is the one also who has "precious faith"; the three things together would complete the thing: bondman, apostle, and one who has precious faith.

Rem It speaks of the Lord as "taking a bondman's form" (Philippians 2: 7).

CAC That is the most wonderful of all!

Rem It is the rights of the Lord as Despot over us; if they are recognised we should fall into our right place, to be put where He pleases and for Him to do what He pleases with us, and He always does the best for us.

CAC It would settle most of our difficulties at one stroke. I suppose most of our difficulties arise from the fact that we think that we are entitled to do what we think best, which is really not true.

Rem It is really in principle lawlessness.

CAC Yes. The bondman became such by purchase, did he not?

Rem If by purchase, each one cost something.

CAC Yes.

Ques Does the first epistle give the other side — redemption — which is a fuller thought than purchase? The Lord is Despot, absolute Owner of what He has purchased, but does redemption bring in a fuller and deeper thought of the cost and suffering, though it enters also into the thought of purchase?

CAC Redemption has in view, I suppose, the satisfaction of the Redeemer in having secured for Himself what had come under some liability. We get a positive side; we are redeemed to God — a positive result. God gets what His heart desires.

It is good to think of having just the same precious faith that Peter had.

Ques Is it not remarkable that the righteousness of God is brought in in that connection?

CAC Yes, I suppose so. I ask a question, Is righteousness used there rather in the sense of faithfulness? The righteousness of God there signifies His faithfulness. That is, it is a matter of God's faithfulness to bring about that there shall be those with the same kind of faith as the apostle here. The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes, shall he indeed find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18: 8). Unless God worked, it would not be so. There will be such, but only through the faithfulness of God. Righteousness and faithfulness go together in the girdle of the Messiah (Isaiah 11: 5).

Rem Only God could bring about that the saints together enjoy these things as one in the truth of the body.

CAC Yes, you can count upon that whatever happens, and however men fall away. We can fall back upon the righteousness of God. He will see to it that precious faith shall become the portion of His elect people.

Ques Why should Peter style himself Simon Peter in this epistle?

CAC It is the responsible name. He is writing to saints, largely having in view their responsible course and the exercises and diligence requisite on their part in order to get the good of things.

Ques Would it relate to what Peter as a vessel had been under the teaching of the Lord?

CAC Yes, he needed a good deal of education and formation, did he not? He seems to make very much of the knowledge of God.

Rem He links grace and peace with it.

CAC It is what we know of God that will carry us through. He has come out in righteousness, grace, peace, etc.

Ques Is it the experimental knowledge of God, so that I learn what He is and can be in adverse circumstances, or what had you in mind?

CAC Yes, a personal knowledge of God.

Rem We learn what He can be to us in our pathway, and there is what He is in His attributes and glory, so there are the two ways.

CAC It would seem from these two verses that we should be completely furnished if we had this knowledge of God. It is a word that means personal knowledge, not anything which we might only have heard or read, but personal knowledge of God; that is a great matter. J.N.D. said of a brother at one time that he did not know anybody who knew so much of God and so little of the Bible!

Ques Would it be something like Hagar who could speak of a God who revealed Himself?

Rem Enoch was one who walked with God when there was no Bible.

CAC Yes, that is so. You may have read a good deal, and then when any little test comes in you are all at sea. It shows the importance of finding the knowledge of God for ourselves. Proverbs sets it out as a great prize to be won — a great treasure to be found. So it says, "If thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hidden treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of Jehovah, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2: 4, 5). Well, it is better to have the knowledge of God than to know the whole Bible by heart. It is through the knowledge of God Himself spoken of as wisdom. That is, God becomes that personally Himself, so that to those who know Him He becomes the pledge of everything that may be required or necessary. That would include everything you might have, a circumstance in which you could not find a scripture, but you could find God! So that all things that pertain to life and godliness are given through the knowledge of Him.

Ques Should we be thus prepared in view of what is ahead of us, if we were spared?

CAC Certain things will be necessary as long as we are here to maintain us in life and inward spiritual vitality. And certain things will preserve us in outward godliness and walk, but a knowledge of God will furnish all the things that we need.

Ques You have not yet explained what it is?

CAC Well, I suppose it lies in all that in which it has attracted us. It says He has called us by His own glory and virtue, which is what He has set forth of Himself in Christ. It is that which has attracted us and really separated us from the world. We cannot ponder too much on the precious record of the life of Jesus; it is God's own glory. We should read every word of the gospels as the shining out of God's own glory. It is by the attraction of all that that God has

called us. God has laid Himself out to charm and attract our poor hearts by the shining out of His own glory in Jesus. Well, it throws everything else in the world into the shade. So the life of Jesus is the form that divine glory necessarily takes in a world of sin. With the presence of sin and evil it must come in to crush that which cannot be the revelation of what God is, nor is in the form of the life of Jesus, so that not an element of sin or evil crossed His path that did not bring out a ray of God's glory. And I suppose He attracts us that some little ray might come out in us, "that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4: 11); but we must know the attractiveness of it first. God has begun by attracting us, so that the life of Jesus is presented to us in the gospels. If it does not attract us, it shows we have no link at all with God. Every flower has a power to appropriate that part of the sunshine that will come out in itself, as its own colour. Each flower makes its own selection, and according to grace each member of the household of faith selects a ray of glory to reproduce it.

Rem It is remarkable that glory and virtue should be put together.

CAC What would you say that virtue was?

Ques Would it be that glory comes from God, and virtue is the power to appropriate it?

CAC I think that is very beautiful. We can see that glory without virtue would not have been of much account in a world of sin. You could not think of such a thing as glory without virtue in Christ. Glory comes out in the life of Jesus, but He never surrendered one jot or tittle that belonged to God; that was virtue. He never allowed anything of the glory to be soiled; He preserved it. We see virtue set forth in the life of Christ; it is not dreaming of wonderful things that are unobtainable.

Rem Godliness is to be brought into every circumstance of life.

CAC There is a necessity all the time of virtue and living in godliness. A godly man will suffer rather than allow anything that would soil the glory.

2 PETER 1 (NOTES OF A READING)

2 Peter 1: 1 - 21

Rem There is so much in this chapter. Will you tell us what is specially in your mind?

CAC What I had before me was the thought of *power*. I feel I would like to be enlarged and encouraged myself in the sense of the divine and spiritual power that is available to us. I do not think we could get over the whole ground; there is, as you say, so much in the chapter; but if we could get a little impression from God of the great resource of divine power, it would be a help to the youngest as well as the eldest. What strikes me is that God is doing something.

Men are busy doing many things, but there is something greater than what men are doing: God is working. The first thing that strikes you is that God is maintaining the line of faith. The apostle begins, "To them that have received like precious faith". He adds later on, "The greatest and precious promises". It was a matter of righteousness with God to maintain the line of faith.

Ques Was it because of the promises?

CAC Yes; the word righteousness is used in the sense of faithfulness. It is a great cheer to see the beginning of the movements of faith; you see it in a little child, it begins to take in the things of Christ and to feel it can confide in the Lord and tell Him what it wants with the sense that He will answer prayer. You have something the same as the apostle had; it is God's doing. You look round and see the world today taking wonderfully attractive forms — Satan is calling out his reserves — but God is going to maintain the line of faith. A person in the line of faith has no need to be afraid of anything; there will be no shortage, everything will be supplied and there will be divine power.

Rem "All things which relate to life and godliness".

CAC Life is connected with the spiritual side; the most important part of our lives is that part, our secret history with God. Godliness is the practical working out of things, how we carry ourselves in our home, in our business. God's power has furnished us with all that we need. It is fine; there is nothing for us to do but make use of it. It all started with God; if ever there has been a movement in my heart, a sense of the preciousness of Christ, it shows that God was thinking about me before time began. It is an immense thing to recognise that there are those in this world called by God. Abraham is a leading example, and we find how God has called us; it is "by glory and

virtue"; that is how God has approached us, by what He has set forth in Christ.

Ques Do you mean that has attracted us?

CAC I think that is the way He has called us, by setting forth glory and virtue in Christ; He has made it all shine out in a Man. God is the God of glory, and He has made it all to shine out in a Man. All that God is, is set forth in Jesus.

Rem Everything is brought to a focus there.

CAC Yes; every right thought we have, we derived it from the Lord Jesus.

Rem He says in verse 2, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God".

CAC Everything hangs on how we know God. There is a remarkable scripture in Daniel, "The people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Daniel 11: 32, Authorised Version). You see some of the exploits here. "In your faith have also virtue, in virtue knowledge, in knowledge temperance", etc. Those are spiritual exploits. Faith can go triumphantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Ques What is the meaning of virtue?

CAC It is to my mind an excellence that cannot be corrupted. It was seen in the Lord Jesus in all His words and His works of mercy; there was virtue too. A blessed Man who could not be corrupted, although Satan plied every art and brought all his weapons to bear; but there was an excellence there untouched by evil, incorruptible. God has shown Him to us; it is the powerful magnet God uses to draw us out of the world; it is how God calls us.

Rem It is beautiful the way it is put, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust".

CAC If there were not something in us that answers to what is set forth in Jesus, it would not be attractive. If you put a magnet into a dish of brass pins and screws and iron nails, you will see that the brass will be unmoved, but the iron nails will rise to the magnet. Whenever God works in a soul there is something there that answers to glory and virtue when set before it. One can remember as a little child the sense that one could go to the Lord Jesus and entrust everything to Him; that is the beginning of it. God calls us in that way and attracts us so that He may be our confidence and the source of power for us, and we may learn to make use of that which divine power has given to us. Faith alone is not enough; it has to be furnished and if it is not it will not go

triumphantly through and have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ques Was that suggested on the holy mount that Peter refers to?

CAC Yes.

Rem Virtue seems to be the first thing.

CAC Through our Lord Jesus Christ we have got the greatest and precious promises in having the revelation of God in Him. He has pledged Himself so that whatever we need, God will supply. We get things as we need them, and of course we have to acquire them and use them. A believer does not go very far before he finds a need for virtue; there are things going on in the world, and a time comes when you must either go on with them or stand against them, and for that you need courage — virtue. "The fear of man bringeth a snare" (Proverbs 29: 25); you want virtue then. The Lord never did anything to please man. He was marked by an excellence that went steadily on — He could not be corrupted. There comes a time when you feel you cannot do without it — you must either give up or have virtue. With Joseph of Arimathaea there came a moment when he *must* take a definite stand; he had been a secret disciple for some time. There is many a person who has faith who has not virtue — there comes a time when it must be both; with Joseph he had to say, 'I honour that One whom you have crucified'. When you feel you must have things from God, you get them; you feel you *must* have virtue or faith will fail, and you go to God and tell Him so. That is the sort of prayer God answers. Everyone knows how far he has gone with his acquisition. God will put you into circumstances which will bring out your need of these things. The next thing is knowledge that can stand against the moral influences of this world. Courage is not enough, you must have knowledge. You have to acquire God's mind; there comes a time when we *must* have knowledge of God's mind. When people give up seeking God's mind there is an end of the practical power of their faith; we only "know in part"; there is always something more to be added. David speaks of his desire to dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days and to enquire of Him in His temple (Psalm 27: 4). When people cease to enquire, they drop out of the path of faith.

Rem You have to get knowledge all the way along.

CAC God's mind has always to be sought for; one would say reverently, God wants intelligent persons. The Lord speaks of knowing the truth in John 8: 32 and the truth setting them free. It is only got by going to God. Temperance is the next thing. If you have not got temperance you get under the influence of your own feelings so that you do not take a sober estimate of things; either

they are exaggerated, or you get hard and think too lightly of them. When you come to the point that you need temperance, you will get it.

Rem Without it certain things might be forced.

CAC Yes; these features give you a perfectly balanced character. It is seen perfectly in Christ. The next thing is endurance; that is bearing with things you do not like. The man that can endure is the man that will reign; it is a sign of an apostle so far as I know, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12: 12, "The signs indeed of the apostle were wrought among you in all endurance".

Ques Is not endurance the evidence of power?

CAC I think so. So that you can go on with things you do not like a bit. I have seen a meeting with people in it who were such opposites in character, naturally and spiritually too, that you wonder how they can go on. In these things we learn to endure, to go on with all. Then you go on to godliness; you might have expected that to come sooner, but you need the others first before you can consider for God, before you can take account of what is due to God. You are then pretty well furnished. Next comes brotherly love: you consider for the brethren; that takes account of everything connected with their interests. There are two sides to brotherly love: not only do I take interest in what concerns my brother, but I am very pleased that he should take account of my concerns. I have heard people say, "I do not want the brethren talking of my affairs". They are lacking in brotherly love. You begin to see what it is to have brethren. Last of all you come to love. Love is the nature of God; everything is to be marked by love in the assembly, the way of surpassing excellence. When you have got that you are fully furnished.

Rem It is wider than brotherly love.

CAC Yes, love is the spiritual side. So faith is fully furnished, and there is nothing to hinder the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rem Scripture is wiser than we are; we have to be led on to it.

CAC Yes; these things have to be acquired, you must have diligence; the result is we are neither idle nor unfruitful;

he says, "Doing these things you will never fall"; there is power. Nothing is a greater indication of power than that a believer never falls. It is not once for all, it is a constant exercise. The fact that I had virtue yesterday is no guarantee that I shall have it today.

Rem It is very solemn, the way it is put, "Using therewith all diligence".

CAC Yes, on the divine side it is all furnished, but on our side there must be all diligence; that is most important.

Ques To lack diligence is to get into a sort of Laodicean condition, is it not?

CAC Yes.

Ques How would you advise us to get about going in for it?

CAC The only way I can advise is that when you come into the circumstances, when you find you must have it, you go to God about it. In having God you have all the promises in the Bible. God has pledged Himself to you, and you have them all in Him; the question is, How many have you got the good of? We always find that when we get to God about it we get it, and it is through exercise, having the conscience exercised and making use of God. The result is, faith is furnished; there is nothing to hinder an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful thing, to think there is such a kingdom; nothing can bring that to an end.

Rem I suppose that really explains what faith is.

CAC One is truly in the path of faith in dependence, and not otherwise. When you think of the everlasting kingdom, you cannot see it; it can be entered into, though — it is a question of faith and a fully furnished faith. Everyone that loves Him can say what a wonderful sphere to go into. When you go in there, there is nothing but majesty, honour and glory, and what they heard. His majesty shone in His countenance and His raiment. The kingdom is full of the effulgence of God. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hast hated lawlessness"; you begin to think of that and you think very little of the glory of this world. Great men in this world are not a bit like Jesus; perfect moral suitability to God is His raiment.

Rem Mark says of His garments, "Such as fuller on earth could not whiten them" (Mark 9: 3).

CAC Then they heard a voice, and honour and glory came with that. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight" (Matthew 17: 5). It is really in the sanctuary we learn sonship; it is the relationship in which Christ is with the Father, and we learn we are sons with Him. In the end of Matthew 17 the Lord says, "Me and thee". "The kings of the earth, from whom do they receive custom or tribute? from their own sons or from strangers? Peter says to him, From strangers. Jesus said to him, Then are the sons free. But that we may not be an offence to them ... thou wilt find a stater; take that and give it to them for me and thee". Peter heard Him speaking and saw His majesty, and He as Son puts Peter alongside Himself; and if people are not in the kingdom

they will not be in the good of sonship. I do not think anyone can reach it any other way. Peter gives us all this, that we may be put in remembrance till the morning star arises in our hearts. On God's side it is a free gift, on the other side it is entrance into the everlasting kingdom, so that there is a condition suitable. The morning star arises in the heart; the kingdom is going to come, but what comes now is the morning star.

> 'The Spirit brings Thy glory nigh
> To those who for Thee wait'. (81:2)

What subsists in divine power makes everything available for faith. Divine power fills the kingdom.

2 PETER 1 (NOTES OF A READING)

2 Peter 1: 12 - 21

Ques Do "these things" in verse 12 refer to what has preceded? "I will be careful to put you always in mind of these things".

CAC It shows the importance of continued ministry of the things we know, reminding us of the tendency of our hearts to let things slip away that have been known and enjoyed. We need to be preserved in our minds by the continual presentation of them.

Rem That would be one great value of reading the Scriptures, as we are doing this afternoon. I suppose Peter would leave these things on record for the saints, passing on the greatest and best impressions of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would leave what he had so much enjoyed of the Lord Jesus himself, for the inheritance of the saints.

Ques Would it be part of Peter's shepherd care? It seems to establish a very important principle, that we should be continually reminding ourselves and others of these things. We should be continually going over the ground, not excluding anything, so that things would be balanced with us.

CAC I am sure it is very important that no part of the truth is allowed to fade in the minds of the saints; not even the most elementary things should be forgotten. So we read the epistle to the Romans with increasing delight each time we read it.

Rem Mr. Kingscote, towards the end of his life, felt the benefit of bringing forward the elementary truths as he went round the country; he found it greatly freshened the saints.

CAC I suppose the special impression that any of us may get from God is to be regarded as a holy trust, and passed on to others when opportunity occurs. Every saint exercised and answering to the Lord in his affections gets a special impression that answers to what they saw on the holy mount. They got an impression of Christ glorified. It was beforehand, really before the time. What a good thing to have such an impression and to pass it on!

Rem Such an impression should shine forth now for the edification of our brethren. We get an illustration in the precious stones, each having a peculiar ray, not all alike.

CAC One of the first impressions made on me after I was brought to the Lord was through the ministry of a brother about the white stone and on it something written which no one knows but the one to whom it is given

(Revelation 2: 17), and I think that ministry gave character to my prayers for years.

I craved to have a special secret with the Lord, something like the disciples on the mount. I have always looked back at that as a very good impression for a young believer to get.

Ques I suppose this epistle is peculiarly in view of what shall be established in secret and come out openly. That is, it is a matter of testimony, is it not?

CAC That is, he speaks of the day dawning and the morning star arising in our hearts. Does he not look for that to be brought about in the saints? That which belongs to the coming day should arise in the hearts of the saints now.

Ques Does the thought of the Holy Spirit being the earnest of our inheritance come in in this connection? We have in the power of the Spirit what is coming out in its fulness later.

CAC Yes, and it would seem to be especially connected with the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rem The expression "the present truth" would seem to show that he is in the light of the truth of the moment and in the power of it.

Ques What do you understand by "the present truth"?

CAC Mr ... ., that is a fair question for you to answer!

Rem I would like light and help. I am enjoying what you were saying about remembering the things we know. Our forgetfulness causes depreciation in value. There is reference to an entrance richly furnished into the kingdom; we are always to be in the state of readiness to be ushered in to add to the glory of the kingdom; forgetfulness weakens all that.

CAC Yes surely, and it is the kingdom of the Person, "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"; it is all connected with His majesty, what they saw and heard on the holy mount. All that must have been the great dominating power in their hearts, bringing by its impressiveness and glory the power of the kingdom to bear even now.

Ques Would it be something akin to "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1: 7)?

CAC What is coming out publicly has already come into the affections of the saints privately, the day dawning and the morning star arising in their hearts.

Rem Peter would never forget that word, "My beloved Son"; he is engaged with the Person, and says, "Our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 14). Several times

he uses the expression.

Rem We would be glad of the answer as to what "the present truth" is. Would it be really the truth of christianity? Peter being the apostle of the circumcision, this is in contradistinction to what has gone before. There is the danger with us of reverting to a previous dispensation.

Rem At the end of chapter 3 he brings in what Paul has written; it was given to Paul to complete the word of God.

CAC Well, it is really connected with the present place and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. I suppose that is the great point; before He has any public glory in the world, He is glorified by God, and there are hearts in this world given the light of it. So that Christ glorified is a greater reality to the saints than the whole system of seen things, which is thrown into the shade for those who are "eyewitnesses of his majesty" and who hear the wonderful voice uttered from heaven. It is really a transcendent moment this; it is far beyond the world to come!

Rem You mean this will go on into eternity? If we had a distinctive sense of Christ, it would contribute to the response that God and the Lord Jesus Christ are so worthy of. "Richly furnished" would be not on our own account, but going in as adding to the wealth of that sphere. It would encourage us to treasure the impression we have, so that it might be enlarged. So Peter passes on his.

Rem I was thinking of the treasure-store; in it are things new and old, what has come out already as well as what has come before us quite recently. Some have a greater scope than others and can make use of things. I wondered if Peter had something like that in his mind. So that it is not only a question of the current ministry, but all that has come out should be a matter of exercise with the saints, and its rehearsal would be a service to be rendered at any given moment.

Rem Yes, I think so. Peter's ministry seems built up very largely of the Lord's own ministry in the gospels, and is increased.

Rem Diligence is urged by Peter — "Use diligence ... for doing these things ye will never fall" (verse 10).

Ques Is the idea as to the "entrance" that the Lord Jesus Christ has been given the kingdom? "For he received from God the Father honour and glory". What is conveyed in that thought?

CAC The whole thing has been seen in the threefold presentation that comes out in the gospels: a kingdom in prospect in Matthew, the Son of man coming

in His kingdom; and then the kingdom in power in Mark; and the pattern in Luke. It is all brought together, it seems to me. If Peter saw and heard, he passes on to us what he saw and heard, so that it all may become a reality to us as it was to him. I should think that is the thought.

Rem The note says, '"Admitted into immediate vision of the glory", a word used for full initiation into the mysteries' (note f, verse 16, Darby Translation).

CAC That is, what is invisible to the natural eye is brought into clear vision spiritually.

Rem Peter had the vision to pass on to the saints.

CAC And as we sing sometimes,

> 'The Spirit brings Thy glory nigh
> To those who for Thee wait'. (81:2)

It comes very near.

Rem It is remarkable how he refers to "the putting off of my tabernacle".

CAC The eternal scene fills his soul. It is remarkable that Peter had the thought of the tabernacle on the mount; and all the precious vision of the kingdom had been enshrined in Peter as a tabernacle. The saints were to be the tabernacle of the glory, and now Peter about to put it off is anxious that the tabernacle thought should be transferred to the saints, and that all the saints should be tabernacles of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is necessary for it to be tabernacled now; it has a mysterious character. It was in view of the saints who are here present now, as well as myriads of others, being a tabernacle in which the glory dwells, all unknown, unseen and unsuspected by the world, tabernacled in the affections of the saints; what Christ is manward — that is, His majesty — and Godward. He is the beloved Son, He is the object of God's affections. It covers what we know of Him. "His face shone as the sun" (Matthew 17: 2); that is, all that God is, shining forth in Him. But there is something more blessed still, and that is what He is Godward; and the saints are to have part in both, are they not? There is an excellent glory; it is remarkable that He should speak of it in that way. There was something that surpassed what could be seen, something not seen but heard.

Ques Does one follow the other? If there is a condition able to see His majesty, the other side follows, what is heard?

CAC And the excellent glory is the glory of the Father which surpasses everything. It says, "Uttered to him by the excellent glory"; Peter is using it as

relating to the Father. That is, he is leading us to the top note.

Rem There are eyes to see His majesty first, those who take account of Him as far as discernible to man; they will hear this voice uttered by the Father.

CAC I should think this is something like the course things should take when we are together in the morning meeting. Are we not constituted eyewitnesses of His majesty, the glory that shines forth so majestically in Him? We worship in the presence of that. But He would lead us on to see what He is to the Father, and how He regards Him; so it is what would engage us in the assembly when we come to the full height of privilege. We regard the Lord according to what He is to the Father, and what the Father finds in Him, and how He can sing in the midst of the assembly. I think the thought of His leading the singing spoils it.

Rem I should like help on it.

CAC Does Peter not take pains to let us see no man but "Jesus alone" (Matthew 17: 8)? That is the wonderful thought of what He is to the Father, and what the Father is to Him, and how He can express to the Father how He knows Him — the full response that is seen in Him. If we thought of how it relates to Him, we should come into it in a fuller and better way. So that it is, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises" (Hebrews 2: 12). You see the "I" in the second part is as personal as the "I" in the first part. "I will declare thy name to my brethren" is very personal, and it is just as personal in the second case; but the assembly surrounds Him to have the blessed experience of how He sings to God and the Father; the assembly listens to it. So that really the excellent glory brings the Father into it. The majesty they were eyewitnesses of does not exactly bring the Father into it.

Ques How do we sing praises to God and the Father?

CAC If we hear how He sings, that will bring us in too; that is, He will take a place on our side to express all that is due to God and the Father in that way, and it is perfectly expressed. And we surround Him in the midst; it implies that the assembly is capable of taking in what He sings and how He sings. It is Himself, so to speak; it is "the love with which thou hast loved me" — not "them" (John 17: 26) (though that is true too, as it says in verse 23, "Thou hast loved them"). It is that the love with which the Father regards the Son may be in the saints, and the Son in the saints. It brings us into the presence of the excellent glory, and that surpasses everything else. The saints' hearts are filled with the utmost satisfaction to see what an Object the Father's heart has in the beloved Son, and the Son answers to those affections perfectly, and can sing; that is, God is celebrated.

It is very remarkable that as to the first song recorded in Scripture it says, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel", but it is "Then sang Moses" (Exodus 15: 1)! How long the blessed God waited for the song!

Ques It speaks in Job 38: 7 of "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy"; where would you put that?

CAC But is was outside this scene altogether. It is the song of unfallen creation; the intelligent part of creation breaks forth in melody to God when they see Him laying down the stage, so to speak, where He was going to perform His great and everlasting wonders.

We get the thoughts in our minds of all that we can link up in Christ, and of all that stands connected in Him with God; so we get at the Supper all that can enlighten and rejoice us in Christ, but we must not stop there — there is the realm of the Father, "the excellent glory".

HOW PETER AND PAUL CONTEMPLATED DEPARTURE

2 Peter 1: 13 - 18; 2 Timothy 4: 6, 7; 1 John 3: 2, 3

These scriptures came before me as showing that the great servants of the Lord — Peter and Paul — contemplated departure by way of death from the scene of their service and testimony.

Peter speaks of putting off his tabernacle, and in doing so he is concerned that what had been carried in that tabernacle was so precious that it should be transmitted to others, that it might be carried on by them in this present tabernacle condition. Peter uses the word tabernacle in connection with his body being about to be put off in death, showing that his thoughts reverted to that moment in his history when on the holy mount in presence of the glorifying of the Son of God. He proposed at that time to make three tabernacles, and his thought was in measure right; he thought that the glory seen by them should be retained here; but he was wrong in thinking that Moses and Elias should be on a level with Jesus; but the three disciples on the mount were intended to be tabernacles themselves. For a number of years Peter's natural body had been the tabernacle in which what he had seen on the mount was enshrined. It was held in that frail tabernacle as precious as the golden vessels in the tabernacle of old. Believers today, in weak tabernacle conditions, contain such living things, and wonderful things have been carried in the tabernacle that is before us today. His tabernacle has been put off and there is going to be a worthy shrine provided soon, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5: 1). At the present moment the testimony of the glory of Christ, the Son of God, is to be carried; and one who has carried in his heart that testimony, when he puts off his tabernacle, lays an obligation on us to carry on in testimony.

Paul thinks too of departure, he speaks of being ready to be poured out, of having finished his course in the same spirit in which he began — a sacrifice, a spiritual drink-offering — poured out in devotion to the Son of God. Now, he says, my release has come. Beloved brethren, it is not a wrong thought to think of departure as release, it is a divine thought. As long as we are here, pressures continue which are connected with the groaning creation of which we form part, and there are deep exercises connected with the truth and testimony. It is a suffering time, and departure means release. Paul says, "The time of my release is come". We should entertain this aspect of departure — the time of release. It is a word gathered from the thought of a ship loosed from its moorings. We are held by many things in present conditions; departure means release from every natural burden.

I should like to add a word as to John. John does not contemplate departure. Peter does and Paul does, but John gives the precious ministry that the children of God are in the present possession of eternal life and he does not speak of departure. The saints as in the possession of eternal life are not thinking of departure, but John tells us that we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is; that is John's attitude. May we know how to blend this threefold testimony in our souls in the power of the Spirit! It will not be unprofitable to us, and will lead to the glory and praise of the One who was seen on the holy mount. May the Lord bless His word.

CHRIST'S GLORY KNOWN IN OUR HEARTS

2 Peter 1: 16 - 21; 2 Peter 3: 8 - 18

CAC I was thinking, in suggesting these scriptures, of the great spiritual reality of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ being known in our hearts at the present moment, so that all that is yet future, a matter of prospect actually, really governs us.

Ques Do you mean the present glory and majesty as Peter describes it?

CAC Yes. One would gather that the day dawned for the three when they were on the holy mount; they got a glimpse of it beforehand. What the three disciples got on the holy mount is what God would have us to have. They got a special and private view of the kingdom as centred in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is our privilege at the present time to have what we may speak of as a private view. We are taken apart from the world and set on a spiritual elevation. It is the privilege of the saints at the present time to be on a spiritual elevation from which we get immediate vision of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in our affections we anticipate what is future.

Ques Do you mean the whole outlook of the saints, or only certain moments of privilege?

CAC I meant the whole outlook, because it is not a question of special moments of privilege, but a definite point being reached, as Peter says, "Until the day dawn and the morning star arise in your hearts". The proper privilege of the saints is that the day has dawned and the morning star has arisen in their affections.

Ques Does it mean that the day has begun already?

CAC I thought so; that was what "our beloved brother Paul" said: we are "sons of light", and we are "of the day"

(1 Thessalonians 5: 5, 8).

Rem Though the kingdom had not come publicly it had come for the three.

CAC Yes. If you put together the three narratives in the gospels you will find that in Matthew it is the kingdom in prospect, the Son of man coming in His kingdom; it has not actually come yet. In Mark it is the kingdom in power; that seems to lie in purity, for attention is called to the whiteness of His garments. In Luke it is the kingdom in pattern; all the features that would be seen in His saints as in the kingdom are patterned in the Son of God. One feels what an extraordinary favour from God it is to be abstracted from all the influences of

the present time and world, to be brought apart and initiated into this wondrous reality, so that we get in a spiritual way immediate vision of the glory, as J.N.D. says in his note (f) to this passage. This belongs to people who are on the holy mount. We get allusions in the Psalms to the hill of God's holiness; no doubt there is a moral force in it. We read too about the mountain of Jehovah's house (Isaiah 2: 2); there is a moral elevation, and we are all conscious when we come under the influence of these precious realities that the world and its atmosphere are far beneath us.

Ques Is it available at any time for us that we should be morally superior to things here, not simply when we are together in assembly?

CAC Yes, it marks the saints that they are sons of light. The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ was a great reality to Peter, and he writes his epistle in order that it might be a great reality to us. Peter reminds us of the unretentiveness of our minds: we may let things slip, even things which we have known and tasted the preciousness of, there is always a tendency that they may get dim and enfeebled, and Peter uses diligence to put us in mind of these things. A great part of the ministry of the present time is not to tell us something new but to put us in the spiritual freshness of what we have known.

Ques What is mount Mizar in Psalm 42: 6?

CAC That is the little hill; it is more the place we take in this world. As conscious of the dignity we possess, and the spiritual elevation we have with God, we can be content to take an obscure place, content with mount Mizar in this world. The Lord was in great obscurity in this world; He was cast aside as worthless. The more we are in the light of His majesty and the glory and honour which rest on Him with the Father, the more thankfully we shall be in the shade of His rejection here.

Rem The Lord spoke of His decease when He came down from the holy mount.

CAC Yes, and Moses and Elias were speaking with Him of His exodus; they quite understood the necessity for His going out. We find in Luke that as He prayed the fashion of His countenance became different; that is the practical working out of the kingdom as patterned in Him. That is the way we are brought into correspondence with God's world; we shall be changed as we pray. Moses and Elias were not speaking of His death in its atoning character; it was not that side of things that occupied them, but that He was going out from this present world, going out from that city which should have been, and was truly, the city of the great King. He was going out from the best and most

glorious spot on earth, of which glorious things were spoken, and leaving all of earth behind. That gives character to the kingdom in its present aspect.

Ques Is there any link with the fact that Peter in mentioning this had in view his own going out?

CAC I think that Peter had in view the perpetuating of things in the saints; he was going out himself, he was shortly to put off his tabernacle. Peter as a vessel of testimony was going out of the scene but he provides for the perpetuating here of what he had seen and heard; he leaves this epistle to put us in mind so that we may cherish in our hearts what he cherished in his heart. He would have the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ to be a great reality to us as it was to him. We have the same faith as Peter; he writes to people "that have received like precious faith with us through the righteousness of our God" (2 Peter 1: 1). How wonderful that the righteousness of God, His faithfulness, has made it necessary that He should give to us the same kind of precious faith that He gave to the apostles.

One is filled with holy wonder to think of the grace that has removed us in any measure from this world of darkness and brought us to where we can see the effulgence of God in a Man. There are no speculations in our hearts as to God, no questionings, no misgivings, no uncertainties; we have seen and contemplated the effulgence of God in a Man; any right thought we have of God we get by seeing His effulgence in that blessed Man. In the kingdom the effulgence of God will shine out in a Man; that is the glory of the kingdom. And in that same Man is found every moral quality that is suitable to God. "His raiment white and effulgent". It speaks of the complete satisfaction of every desire of the heart of God in a Man. As we contemplate that, and as the Spirit brings the glory and preciousness of it to our affections, it must separate us morally from this present world so that we become in our affections an unworldly and heavenly-minded people.

There are two things. His majesty is connected with what they saw, "Having been eyewitnesses of his majesty". We need to cherish a great thought of the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are brought near to a majestic Person; He is majestic in divine and moral glory. Nothing will subdue our spirits and deliver us from the working of our own wills like being brought into the presence of all that is majestic in that Person. The sense of His majesty should profoundly affect us. Then there is His honour and glory. The Spirit distinguishes between His majestic character and His honour and glory. His majesty is connected with what they saw,

and His honour and glory with what they heard: they heard the voice from the excellent glory which saluted Him as the beloved Son.

Rem One needs an education for these things; Peter speaks of adding to our faith; his list begins with faith and ends with love.

CAC Yes, the early part of the chapter is most important as showing that we are furnished with all things that relate to life and godliness; divine power has furnished us through the knowledge of God. If I am weak on any point I must learn to know God better, if there is a defect in me I must learn to know God better. What a claim on divine attention we should have if we went to God about all our exercises and difficulties with a sense that the solution and answer to all would be found in an increased knowledge of Himself. I believe we should get answers to our exercises and needs much sooner if we started with the conviction that everything is furnished for us and lies in the knowledge of God. If we get to know God better we shall be furnished at every point. Our faith has to be furnished with all the beautiful qualities referred to; faith needs them if it is to be carried triumphantly through into the kingdom.

The prophetic word is very good as a candle in a dark place; it is of the greatest value to us and would fill us with precious thoughts of the kingdom. But many people today have the prophetic word; there are many diligent students of Scripture putting together the prophetic facts and glories of the kingdom revealed in the prophets; but the great thing is to have it in our affections through the day dawning and the morning star arising in our hearts. I believe that is as the Spirit gives Christ place in our affections.

> 'The Spirit brings Thy glory nigh,
> To those who for Thee wait'. (81:2)

I understand that to be the day dawning and the morning star arising in the heart. The Spirit can actively bring the glory of that Person into my affections so that it transforms me and governs me, and I am put into correspondence with what is future. We have to ask ourselves, Am I in correspondence with that Person, and with all that He will bring in? There is a great tendency with us to adapt ourselves to what is around us, but as Christians we have to learn to adapt ourselves to what is future, to that coming world which is going to be lit up with the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rem Moses says "Make me now to know thy way" (Exodus 33: 13).

CAC He got his answer. Moses prayed two prayers, the first, "Make me now to know thy way" — how was God going to reach His end? God's purposes were there in the way of promise, but there was a naughty, rebellious people, and Moses says, 'How wilt Thou deal with a question like this? Show me now Thy

way'. God showed him His way typically by putting him in a cleft of the rock and covering him with His hand, and then He passed by and revealed His glory. It was as much as to say, 'That is My way, Moses; there is a place by Me where I am going to put man out of sight completely, and I will be known in all My glory there' — that was the death of Christ.

Rem Elijah went into a cave on Horeb.

CAC Yes, my impression is that the prophet went back to the very place in the cleft of the rock, where God put Moses out of sight. We all have to learn to go to Horeb and get into the cleft of that rock where all man's pretensions and sufficiency are put out of sight, and we see the glory of God.

Ques What about Moses' second prayer, "Let me ... see thy glory"?

CAC The answer to that prayer is in the tabernacle in which God presented the whole universe of accomplished glory in type. The whole vast scene of His glory was pictured in the tabernacle; but then surely Moses got a blessed view of the glory when he stood on the holy mount.

Rem Moses had to wait a long time for the answer to his prayer.

CAC We have to reckon on time with God. One was thinking of all this in connection with its present effect. If the day has dawned and the morning star has arisen in our hearts by the power of the Spirit, what a complete detachment it will effect from the whole present system of things! It will connect our desires, our happiness, our expectations and aspirations with that unseen system of glory of which the Lord Jesus is the Sun and Centre. It will give us to understand how to value the moment that remains in a new way. Peter says that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation (2 Peter 3: 15), and in verse 9, "The Lord does not delay his promise ... but is longsuffering towards you". I have read that as towards *man* but it is longsuffering towards you.

Ques Why do you think it is "you"?

CAC Do you not think that we ought to consider the fact that the Lord not yet having come there is an opportunity for us to judge every single thing in our lives and hearts and associations that is unsuitable for the coming world of glory? The Lord has not come, up to this moment, so that we might have the opportunity to judge and clear ourselves from every element unsuitable for the world of His glory. If we have been ever so unfaithful, and if we have allowed ever so many earthly, worldly and fleshly things to govern us, we have a moment yet in which we can repent as to it, so that we may be ready with shouts of triumph to pass into the day.

Ques Is Peter not writing to saints?

CAC Yes, I believe it is repentance on the part of saints. Are we going on with anything that we are not happy about? The more we get into the light of the kingdom, the more active our consciences will become and the more sensitive our hearts will be to condemn us as to what is unsuitable. If we never did anything we were not perfectly happy about, it would keep us divinely right. The secret of all unsuitability is that we do things we are not happy about, and we keep on doing them until we cease to be troubled, because we do not regard those tender sensibilities which utter their voice over and over again. There is a peculiar solemnity about it. The Lord calls us now to repent and judge every single thing in our moral being, our associations and ways that is unsuitable to the scene of His glory. We must learn to reckon with the Lord; one day with the Lord is as a thousand years.

Rem The scripture refers to Lot; he was told to get to the mountain lest he perish.

CAC Yes; I think we had better get to the mountain or else we may perish; that is, we may perish as regards any true testimony. What a solemn thing to miss the privilege of such a moment as this! I would like to reckon with the Lord, one day with the Lord is as a thousand years. I should like every single day of my life to be as a thousand years, to have the same kind of value with God as will fill the millennium. It is not a question of the length of time; we might only have another day to live, but we can fill that day with characteristics that belong to the thousand years; we can be morally according to the thousand years. The Lord would have things reckoned that way with every one of us. I feel more and more the extraordinary privilege that attaches to the few moments that are left to us in this present time. None of us may be left here more than a few moments longer; an extraordinary value attaches to the little time left; we shall never have it again.

Rem You cannot be always on the holy mountain.

CAC Peter was not always there, but what was there was always in Peter's heart — that is just the difference. We can move about every day in business and domestic duties and the Lord's service with the morning star, not in the sky but in our hearts. It is a powerful force that governs us at all times so that we are not assimilated to the present course of things. We too readily take colour from what is around us, but I feel an intense desire to be assimilated to the world of glory, to be in conformity with that so that every day in my history the Lord might take account of as having the character of the thousand years. It would be good for us to think what a full value can attach even to one day.

Rem Peter speaks of "such a voice being uttered to him by the excellent glory".

CAC What could be more affecting than the tones of that voice in which the Father expressed His own ineffable delight in His beloved Son! The effect of hearing that voice would be that we should hear the beloved Son; we should open the ears of our hearts to His instruction and teaching.

We shall then come more and more under the influence of Christ. Paul says to the Ephesians, "*Ye* have not thus learnt the Christ, if ye have heard him"; he assumes that the saints have heard the voice of Christ and been instructed in Him.

Peter reminds us at the end of his epistle that a thousand years with the Lord are as one day. That is, even the thousand years of millennial reign will have time limits, but what God has before Him is eternity. Peter finishes his epistle by speaking of the day of eternity; he goes beyond the glory of the kingdom and carries our thoughts to eternity. We are to be governed morally even now by what belongs to eternity, to the day of God.

Ques How can we hasten that day?

CAC I think that as the saints are marked by holy conversation and godliness, and as they wait for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness, and as they move on the line of being without spot and blameless, they come into accord not only with the kingdom but with what is eternal. God is going to have an eternal scene where everything is right. What a wonderful scene it will be! It is not altogether all right in the kingdom, because we find decline there. I think that the exercises of the people of God on earth in the kingdom as they take account of the declining character of things will make them long for what is eternal when everything will be in perfect correspondence with the will of God, everything divinely and eternally right. Our privilege is not only to be in accord with the kingdom, but to be in accord with what is eternally right, eternally pleasing to God, so that He can rest in His love. What a blessed thing for us to move about in this world carrying the impress in our affections, spirits, demeanour and ways of the coming glory and of what is eternal. If we had that before us the influences of time would not leave much mark on us.

Ques Would the cloud be the shekinah glory of God?

CAC It says, they entered into the cloud. It was the cloud of divine glory, and the wonderful thing is that God is going to display His glory in His people. He dwells in the praises of His people now. There is a circle where God is praised in His nature, His attributes, His ways, His purposes and His counsels, and

indeed in the fruition of His love. God is glorified in the praises of His people; He dwells there. The praises of the saints are, in a certain sense, the cloud of glory now. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Psalm 50: 23). When the city comes down out of heaven, having the glory of God, it will be composed of holy myriads of persons, every one of whom will have taken up in affection and praise some part of the divine glory so that the whole city will be luminous with divine glory. But it has been acquired here and now under divine teaching.

Ques Is it the same glory as in John 17: 22, "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them"?

CAC That I understand to be the place of sonship. The Lord goes on to speak of the saints being loved as He was; He was loved in the relationship of Son. We must take verses 22 and 23 together. Correspondence with the glory involves suffering now; it must be mount Mizar now! We have to be small today, but what are we suffering for? If we have suffered because we were governed by His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, what a righteous thing it will be for God to clothe us with His glory in that day! He will be justified in doing it.

I am sure if we were rightly affected by the precious realities that have come before us, there would be more suffering now. We should be less ambitious, we should not be wanting to improve our position in this world, but we should take a course in present circumstances which would probably involve loss in this world. We should not be governed by worldly advantages or better positions which might seem attractive, but we should be governed by the light of another system. What a divine favour to be permitted to suffer here and now, and to have the Spirit of glory and of God resting on us!

2 PETER 2 (NOTES OF A READING)

2 Peter 2: 1 - 11

Rem It would help us if you would say a little as to the import of the thought of prophecy in this dispensation. It says in chapter 1: 19, "We have the prophetic word made surer". I suppose that refers to the prophetic truth in the previous dispensation as to Christ.

CAC Yes, clearly, I think. It is "no prophecy of scripture"; that refers to what is written, what "holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Spirit". It is well to take heed to it.

Rem The prophecies formed a great part of the Old Testament — "the prophetic word".

CAC Yes.

Rem These false prophets call great attention to themselves.

CAC Well, it has been pointed out that prophetic words all speak of Christ, of His sufferings and the glories after these, and it had all been made surer by the actual vision of Christ glorified. They had seen Him glorified on the holy mount. Now the terrible fact comes to light that, notwithstanding what had been seen on the holy mount and testified by those who saw it, there would be false prophets "among the people", that is, among Christians. We need not be surprised if we find false teachers.

Rem I suppose a true prophet would bring the mind of God to those to whom he is sent. I wondered if it was wider than prophesied events; that is, things that are to come. The prophet had in view a scene that God would bring in, all doubtless centring in Christ. In Corinthians, Paul speaks of prophesying, not future things, but things in the mind of God bearing on His people at the moment.

CAC Yes. There is a difference between the inspired prophetic word and the prophetic word as we may have it in the assembly; that is, we have to exercise ourselves when listening to prophecy to follow it carefully and judge if it is right. So it is on a different footing from the prophetic word in the Scriptures. You do not judge the word of Isaiah or Jeremiah; we allow their word to judge us, so it is a different character of things. These men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and so are worthy of the most serious consideration. What we have to do with now is persons who are false teachers perverting Scripture. And their general tendency is to covetousness. Nearly all the false teachers in our day do very well by it; they get fabulous sums of money.

Ques Might it be also to get a place or a hearing, a following?

CAC Yes.

Rem It says, "Do not lightly esteem prophecies; but prove all things, hold fast the right" (1 Thessalonians 5: 20, 21). I suppose that is the right word for us.

CAC Yes.

Rem "Do *ye* judge what I say". Paul used that word, he would have the saints to judge (1 Corinthians 10: 15). Scripture would provide a means by which things should be judged.

We were referring last time to the scope of prophecy, "The scope of no prophecy of scripture is had from its own particular interpretation". The true width of the scope would balance with the whole truth.

CAC Yes, that was always to be kept in mind. False teachers pick out certain parts of Scripture to suit their ideas; it is what marks false teachers. They never take the scope of Scripture, they take isolated passages out of their context.

You can prove anything like that. But God is going to judge evil wherever it is, and false teachers are generally persons who live in a fleshly way. We do not always hear that side, but I believe false teachers lead evil lives as a general principle. But everything is going to be judged; it is one great subject of Peter's writing in this epistle, that God's government is active and unfailingly works against the wicked wherever they are. God does not spare even angels if they sin, so He certainly will not spare false teachers and those who bring in destructive heresies. They are sure to be judged.

Ques And "bringing upon themselves swift destruction". Is it that they bring themselves under destruction morally?

CAC Yes.

Rem So this outline is itself prophetic as to what is coming in. These teachers verify what he writes. It is like what Paul says in Acts 20; all these features verify it.

CAC And it is rather noticeable that the false teachers of the present day make a great deal of the coming of the Lord, and ensnare people, showing that whatever is of God, Satan will take up and use for his own ends. We have to be careful when we listen to people, when they say a good deal that is true. If I find a person seeking to spread what is evil, I always feel I must be very reserved in what I may say to them of the truth, because they will use any truth I may put in their way to serve their master. So I should say very little. It

is very little good arguing with them; you want to push the sword of the Spirit right through them! Get at their conscience; and none of them have a good conscience, you can be quite sure of that.

Rem They generally declare themselves sooner or later.

CAC This chapter is an important part of Scripture as showing there will be false teachers, and they are mostly marked by the features Peter speaks of. It is well to be warned. Peter does not speak of these people as having any hope of recovering them; there is no thought of that; they are earning what they will get. They will most certainly come under divine judgment.

Ques In reference to Noah he says, "The eighth". Why does he add that?

CAC There was a very small minority who escaped at that time.

Ques Was it perhaps to emphasise the fewness of those who were right? People often boast of vast numbers. The Roman Catholics say, we are several hundred million; surely we must be right. It never does to think that majorities are right; Scripture would make one afraid of being with a great number.

CAC We certainly would not gather from Scripture that it was safe to go with the multitude, and God is all the time judging things morally. If evil teachers were all turned inside out and exposed to view as they really are, who would listen to them?

Ques Why is Noah spoken of as "a preacher of righteousness"?

CAC I suppose that was the character of his testimony; he insisted upon what was right. He was the only right man of his day, and he was a herald of what was right. But people prefer to listen to what is wrong. One great teacher of heresy in our time said before he died that the vast fortune that had come to him was because he told people there was no hell. People prefer to be told what is wrong. It is very much easier for false teachers to get money than for those seeking to spread the truth! A great deal of covetousness is mixed up with it all.

Rem It is beautiful to see that "the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah" (1 Peter 3: 20), giving an opportunity of escape.

CAC And God is doing that now, He is waiting patiently.

Rem The thought of preservation through judgment is very encouraging.

CAC Yes, you see that in Noah, and in Lot, too, though Lot was not a very noble character. He says of him, "Dwelling among them", or 'Settling down among them' (see note h, Darby Translation). You would wonder that a man

of any piety could settle down in such a place. Lot is a warning to every Christian today.

Rem I suppose with such the fact that their souls are vexed is an evidence that there is something of God in them. It is a beacon, a warning; at the same time there is the faithfulness of God in rescuing them.

CAC Lot had the wrong sort of advantage in his mind. It was all very pleasant to look at, it looked like the "garden of Jehovah" (Genesis 13: 10). Well, what sort of eyes have we got? If we are looking out for worldly or temporal advantage, we shall probably find ourselves in Sodom! We have to learn to judge of things morally and not to be impressed by the nice things that people can say, or the advantage things seem to be, but to judge of them morally, what they are in the sight of God. If believers were set on a better and fuller knowledge of Christ they would be preserved, because Satan never brings that.

Rem To execute judgment is the honour that God will put on His saints (Psalm 149).

CAC Yes.

Ques Why does Peter refer to those who despise lordship and "do not fear speaking injuriously of dignities"? He says such are bold and self-willed.

CAC The persons whom Peter has in view are governed in every way by fleshly lusts and pride, and self-exaltation of the flesh. It is not good to get on that line at all. We can test everything very simply by asking, Is it of the Spirit of God, or is it of the flesh? All these persons that Peter has before him are persons moving entirely in the flesh. It comes out in false teaching and ungodly lives, and in speaking evil of dignities; it is all part of the same manifestation of the flesh. The holy men of God spoke under the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the great safeguard from all these things, to move in company with the Spirit. The flesh will never move us on to the line of being meek and lowly in heart, will it? Man's pretension, arrogance and boastfulness are all contrary to the Spirit of Christ, and Christians have to stand apart from them with something like horror, firstly as we find them in ourselves, and then as we find the same kind of thing in other people. So if we are to keep clear of all these evils, the only way is to move with the Spirit on the line of Christ. It is through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ that we escape from the corruption that is in the world; and there is a danger of being drawn back into those very things that the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ brought us out of. Peter has in mind all through, the possibility of going back to the thing we were led to escape from (verse 20). It is really a chapter

chiefly profitable by way of contrast; we profit from it by bringing almost every verse into contrast to what we have learned in Christ, and that is what will keep us, for there is no means of escape but by following Christ.

2 PETER 3 (NOTES OF A READING)

2 Peter 3: 1 - 18

CAC It is evident that Peter has in view the great corruption that would come into the christian profession, so that every kind of wickedness would be found there. It would suggest to us the great need of being kept in mind of what was in Scripture.

Rem So that Genesis 1 would seem to be in Peter's mind, and comes in in connection with these two chapters. There is the thought of darkness, and the thought of "the deepest pit of gloom" in chapter 2 in connection with the angels that had sinned. "God ... having cast them down to the deepest pit of gloom has delivered them to chains of darkness". At the beginning there was darkness on the face of the deep, and God spoke to bring in the light, and yet the darkness was not wholly gone. And the thought here seems to run out to the new heavens and new earth; while this darkness seems to be the judgment of the ungodly, yet he speaks of "the day of God" and of eternity, of "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness".

CAC It is very solemn to think of men going back deliberately into darkness after the light has shone.

Ques Do you think that the fact that the apostle writes a second letter shows he felt the seriousness of the position, and the necessity of the saints taking account of these things? "I stir up" would mean we should be on the alert.

CAC There is always a danger of settling down into the state of things by which we are surrounded; therefore it needs to be kept in mind. The ministry of the word is usually not to teach us something fresh, but to remind us of the things which we do know, and we are conscious oftentimes how good it is to have revived what we have known.

Rem These people shut their eyes to it.

CAC That is the ground people take today; they do not believe there ever was such a thing as a flood. They dare not believe it, that is the simple fact!

Rem Some people think things are getting better.

CAC They must have a peculiar outlook; there is very little evidence of that today!

Rem He speaks of "your pure mind".

CAC He supposes that amidst the corruption there are those who have a pure mind, so that there are those in it who are not part of the corruption. It is

good to see throughout Scripture that God has always reserved something for Himself.

Rem Four times Peter says, "beloved" to them in this chapter, and he mentions once "my beloved Son" (chapter 1: 17). It is good to bear in mind how they are regarded.

CAC Well, we had better look out for them, and be amongst them. It would not be at all like God to give up all to Satan. And God being God is the only security for any of us.

Rem There is a word in Zephaniah that speaks of the day of Jehovah. "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and gross darkness" (chapter 1: 15). The next chapter speaks of the day of His anger, and then it says, "Seek Jehovah, all ye meek of the land, who have performed his ordinance; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of Jehovah's anger". The meek of the earth He is going to save. Here it says, "Be diligent to be found of him in peace" (verse 14).

Ques He does not doubt the saints, they are in line with the "beloved", so there is a basis to move on, would you say?

CAC That is very encouraging, is it not?

Rem I should like to hear a little more about the "pure mind".

CAC Peter speaks in another place of God having purified their hearts through faith. God is really working to bring about pure conditions of heart and mind. I suppose that is what Peter had to learn in the great vessel like a sheet let down from heaven, having all kinds of animals in it, but all presented to Peter as cleansed, showing that God was going to cleanse those of the nations who were very impure. Well, God is carrying on that work, so that all sorts of unclean animals are brought in, but have been cleansed.

Ques Would this be the working out in the internal point of view of what has been done externally for us, so that we are in keeping with the position?

CAC Yes, I think it is illustrated by the household of Cornelius. They all had pure minds, but they were not yet saved. They had an estimate of things according to God, and they wanted to be saved; and anyone who really wants to be saved has a pure mind. That is not going too far, I hope. Purity of heart and mind is the sovereign work of God; it does not depend on the previous condition of men, because the cleansing of those animals in the great vessel did not depend at all on their natural history, for they were unclean animals

representing the Gentiles. He had said He would sprinkle water on His people, on Israel, to cleanse them from idolatry.

Rem Peter says, "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him" (Acts 10: 34, 35).

CAC Everybody that fears God has a pure heart and mind; that is, it is true in the principle of it. Then when the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ is brought in, there is something very positive.

Ques Would there be stages in it?

CAC I think Peter had in mind the saints, those who had received the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Rem It would be those affected by the word of God rather than a state — ability to take it in.

CAC I think that helps us. We find at a certain point in the history of souls that they begin to take an interest in the things of God, and want to hear more, and they read the Scriptures; it is all the evidence that God has cleansed them. It is the sovereign work of God with which they have had nothing to do: "What God has cleansed" (Acts 10: 15). We are always looking out for such people, and it is no good preaching the gospel to them otherwise.

We must pay continued attention to the Scriptures, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, which latter is spoken of here as "the commandment of the Lord and Saviour by your apostles". Here they are brought together in verse 2.

Ques Why does he speak of it in the singular, "The commandment"; he does both here and in the previous chapter (verse 21)?

CAC Yes, it all has that character, the character of commandment. Paul says to the Corinthians, "If any one thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment" (1 Corinthians 14: 37). It all has the character of commandment.

Rem And it is not that it is past, it has its effect today, it is directed to us.

CAC And it is authoritative, it is not submitted to us as a matter that we can argue about.

Rem It is "the living and abiding word of God". "*He* spoke, and it was done; *he* commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33: 9).

Ques What is the Lord's commandment?

CAC The apostle seems to take up the Old Testament. "Lo, we turn to the nations; for thus has the Lord enjoined us: I have set thee for a light of the nations, that thou shouldest be for salvation to the end of the earth" (Acts 13: 46, 47). The Lord was to be for salvation to the end of the earth — it is a word of Scripture written hundreds of years before, but Paul takes it as the Lord's commandment to preach to the Gentiles.

Ques Why is it "Lord and Saviour"?

CAC Peter seems to like to bring in that thought and does it more than once or twice. The Lord is the Saviour; that is, His long delay, as we should speak, was that all men should be saved. This period of two thousand years is a testimony that He is the Lord and Saviour; He is not purposing that any should perish. I suppose that is one reason why this present period is the longest that ever has been known in the ways of God. It is prolonged because of the thought of salvation in the mind of God and of the Lord. It is called the day of salvation.

Rem And the acceptable year of the Lord. The thought of a year and a day comes into Peter's mind here. "A thousand years as one day" with the Lord, so that this day of salvation has turned out to be two days!

CAC Yes.

Ques Does this letter suggest there is finality in connection with this earth? Judgment by water was not final in that way, but in view of a renewed earth. But here it is burnt up, it is complete and final.

CAC So that even the world to come, the millennial period, is passed over in this chapter. Peter passes right over it to the "day of God" — to what is eternal, and, as you say, to the final adjustment of everything. The whole scene marked by the lawless will of the creature is all going to be burnt up.

Rem The flood destroyed from off the face of the earth, but here nothing will be left; sin and the platform of it gone too.

CAC So that "according to his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness". Nothing else will do but new heavens and a new earth. It is remarkable that there will be a new earth; it belongs to God's eternal thoughts, it is not all going to be heaven!

Ques Is there any indication as to who will inhabit the earth?

CAC It enters into God's eternal thoughts that there should be heavens and earth. In the beginning He created the heavens and the earth. That was in His

mind, and He is going to secure it for His pleasure; so that there will be new heavens and a new earth throughout eternity.

Rem The expression comes in Isaiah 66, "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain". That might embrace the millennium.

CAC I suppose its explanation refers to the millennium, when the influence of heaven will be exerted over the earth, so that it can be morally true. But Peter speaks literally of new heavens and a new earth, and righteousness will dwell there; everything that is right will be there; you cannot improve on what is right.

Rem And it says, God will tabernacle with men.

CAC Well, there are things of which very little is made known to us in Scripture, but they are very wonderful. There is very little in Scripture about the eternal state, perhaps not more than about four verses in the whole Bible.

Ques There are the day of the Lord and the day of God; what is the distinction?

CAC I suppose the day of the Lord will be the time in which everything will be adjusted in relation to the present conditions, and it goes on to the dissolution of the whole created scene, It takes place in the day of the Lord. The last action will be this burning up of the earth and the works in it; it comes under the administrative authority of the Lord. But that gives place to the day of God, which is an eternal thing. Peter passes over the millennial kingdom and would bring the day of God much before us. The day of the Lord supposes certain things have to be dealt with and set aside. When He has dealt with all rule and all authority and power, then He will give up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father, that God should be all in all. 'Lord' is His administrative title to put all right, and then He delivers it up. God all in all is the day of God. "God all" is God objectively before the hearts and minds of the redeemed, and "in all" is that there will be nothing but purity left. Well, it is wonderful to touch that a little bit in spirit, and we can — we do touch it in measure.

Ques Are we tested out by the authority of the Lord, as to where we are practically as to it?

CAC Yes, because the Lord would subjugate in you and me all that is contrary to God. What a seething cauldron of evil the human heart is, we each know, but if we are upright the Lord will deal with all the evil, and bring Himself in. We touch it in private and in the assembly, where all is new and all is of God,

and the old is done away. We can touch that order of things — the eternal day — in mind and spirit.

Rem We touch it in His life.

CAC It all came out on earth and in contrast to all that was so evil. That is like the day of the Lord, where He was subjugating demons and death, and everything that was contrary to God. What a wonderful thing to think of that day before us, when nothing will be left in us of what had its origin in the fallen creature, but everything left in us will have its origin in God. Peter says, "Hastening the coming of the day of God"; hasten it in myself, that is, that blessed day of God! If we can get it for five minutes even, it is wonderful, to be filled with God and nothing else!

Rem "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight" (Matthew 17: 5), is what He was here. It has been said: What there was for God in one day of the Lord Jesus!

CAC You cannot measure it; what there was in every incident, so that we should linger adoringly over what is in the gospels, because we come to what is purely of God and powerful enough to displace what is evil. And it is worthy of God that there shall not be a trace of the scene left that was characterised by evil, there shall not be a trace of it left!

2 PETER 3 (NOTES OF A READING)

2 Peter 3: 1 - 18

CAC I was thinking as I came along it might be well for us to consider the different days that are referred to in Scripture. We read in this chapter of the day of the Lord, the day of God and the day of eternity. I thought it might be well to get our thoughts a little clarified as to the different aspects of the coming day.

Rem It is striking they should be called days, because days are periods of time. The day of eternity, the eternal state, would evidently be the most glorious of all. It is striking that eternity should be spoken of as a day.

Rem Micah 5: 2 says, "He ... whose goings forth are ... from the days of eternity", and we are in a day when the day of eternity can be spoken of. He is Shepherd and Ruler.

CAC That is, He is Jehovah, and in the Old Testament we read in many scriptures about the day of Jehovah; it is in contrast obviously with what Paul calls, "man's day". He says, "For me it is the very smallest matter that I be examined of you or of man's day" (1 Corinthians 4: 3). That is a very striking designation of the present period, it is "man's day". Of course it has other aspects for the saints and for the world too, for it is the day of salvation on God's part for men generally and it is the day of the Spirit as regards the saints. The Lord said, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14: 20). But publicly it is "man's day".

Rem And then Paul speaking to the Philippians can speak of "Christ's day" (Philippians 1: 10).

CAC Yes. It would be well to get clearly before us these different days in Scripture, each aspect having its own distinctive meaning.

Rem The introduction of days in creation seems very impressive; the days having an evening and a morning. The day of Jehovah is spoken of as a terrible day, "a day of darkness and gloom" (Joel 2: 2). But a morning comes in for the remnant.

CAC And what a comfort it is that God is going to crush all the evil in this world, and bring down what opposes itself against God. It is one of the things we rejoice in. Man has his day; well, it is a great comfort to God's people to know that God will have His day.

Rem The thought of "Christ's day" is His coming into public manifestation, who He is and what He is — in contrast to man's day.

CAC And Paul says of the Philippians, "Having confidence ... that he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day" (Philippians 1: 6), which would seem to bring before us very clearly what may be called the moral character of that day. That is, the title Jesus Christ brings before us what He was in His wonderful pathway here, such a contrast to every other man. So that there is a day coming which will be Jesus Christ's day. It will carry the impress of that blessed Man, His features will be imprinted on men. Jesus Christ's day has begun morally in the saints, so that the divine thought is that by the completion of God's work in us we should be perfectly suitable to enter into Jesus Christ's day. They will shine in that day, because they have learnt to judge all that is unsuitable to Jesus Christ.

"Jesus Christ" seems to suggest the beautiful moral features that shone out in Him, whereas "Jesus Christ's day" is a little more official, when He will shine out as God's Anointed. That One will have His day. Its character is light. "Now light in the Lord; walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5: 8).

Ques While it all has in view the day of eternity, has it not a bearing on us, as to coming out in a coming day? The sun is to rule the day, and the Lord is going to rule, but the saints are going to be with Him in it. "A king shall reign in righteousness" (Isaiah 32: 1). The saints will have a great part in that day.

CAC Yes, those who are fit for it.

Ques What do you mean by that?

CAC Well, the Lord never puts incompetent persons into any position, does He?

Rem It is the pleasure of the Lord to give credit to faithfulness. "*Ye* are they who have persevered with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you ... a kingdom, that ye may ... sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22: 28 - 30).

Rem And that is worked out here.

CAC It would appear so. In learning to please the Lord in little details we are acquiring competency to act for Him in great matters. Some very trifling crisis crops up and we learn to act in it for the Lord; well, that may determine our place in the kingdom. It may appear a very trifling thing, but it brings out that we are in subjection to the Lord, and everything we do in subjection to the Lord is a qualification for ruling.

Rem "Be diligent to be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless" (verse 14).

Rem It is the little things. "He that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16: 32).

CAC Yes.

Ques What is the bearing of the day of the Lord? In Thessalonians we have the same expression, the day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night.

CAC Well, actually it is the very end of the millennium in verse 10. He speaks of the day of the Lord, and he passes over the millennium as if it did not exist. It was not yet present. The peace of the Thessalonians was disturbed by that thought, supposing their sufferings were on account of it. The apostle shows the day of the Lord could not be present until the day of apostasy and the man of sin had been revealed. That shows how Satan can pervert the truth purposely so that it becomes a distress to the saints. I have no doubt there is a good deal of it going on at the present time.

Ques What day is it in verse 13?

CAC Is that not to take the place of the whole created scene which is dissolved? I think that is included in the day of God. It seems as if the day of the Lord and the day of God both involve the setting aside not only of the will of the creature, but of the scene where it has operated, and which has been defiled by it. Both the Lord and God are involved in this matter — that the whole created scene is to be dissolved.

Rem The thought of waiting comes in. "Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God", and in verse 14, "As ye wait for these things"; it involves faith and patience.

CAC It is a very solemn reflection to think that even the reign of Christ of one thousand years will not suffice to make the earth satisfactory to God. We find at the end of the thousand years the greatest rebellion that ever took place on earth. After men have experienced the rule of Christ for a thousand years, and of the assembly too, there will be the greatest rebellion that ever took place. There are unruly conditions that could not be satisfactory to God or to Christ. Satan will be released in order to bring to light what is there, which is terrible to think of — a most terrible thing that Scripture brings to light. When you think of that, it almost spoils the millennium!

Rem You cannot spoil the divine side.

CAC Oh, there will be a company of saints found in the millennium just as we find them now. But they will be hated too. As soon as Satan is let loose the latent hatred of men will come out.

Rem It hardly seems possible.

CAC It shows that under the most favourable conditions man is impregnated with evil, and it is not possible to remedy that evil by the most blessed conditions brought in.

Ques Would that be why the world was not put right after the flood, but only showed man's heart is incorrigible?

CAC I think that one great object of the Scriptures is to show that man is incorrigible. The whole population of the world stood round Noah's altar, and the whole population had the knowledge of God. But they did not wish to retain the knowledge of God, and soon after, idolatry came in, and men became devil worshippers — that is man! God called Abram out of that idolatrous world. He was an idolater, he worshipped idols. And God said, 'I will have some of them, in spite of what they are', and He called a remnant out; and so it has been all through, and so it will be in the millennium.

But then God is going to burn it all up, it is so defiled. And it all helps to show us what we are, for we are just of the same stock, not a bit better. It is so wonderful, with all the rebellion on the earth, that God has visited the earth in human guise to express what He is. And we see what the result was; light shining in darkness was hated. "Now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15: 24). Nothing that has ever happened, or will happen, is so terrible as that. So it necessitates the setting aside, not only of the human race with its incorrigible evil, but the dissolution by fire of the whole created scene where man's evil has exhibited itself. It is a solemn fact.

Ques What is referred to in Isaiah 51: 6?

CAC It refers to the millennium, this in 2 Peter goes further. No doubt Peter had it in mind, but he applies it in a more extensive way. Well, God's judgments are unsearchable. Paul says, "How unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways!" (Romans 11: 33). But all God's purposes and ways are right, and He is going to have a scene which is the abode of everything that is right. It will not be so in the millennium. The new earth will be populated with those who have been here. They are formed while in a scene that is characterised by evil. It is all educative for us, not to be brushed aside; God is putting us through trials in view of the coming day, and we shall pass into it as having had experience of a scene that is evil. Time has been said to be a dip down from eternity to eternity.

Rem The long-suffering of God is seeking to recover persons out of this evil world.

CAC So God is giving a continual testimony through His saints and those who preach as to what He really is. It is a dreadful thing if people are not interested in knowing what God is. A bishop said, 'If you want to know what God is like, read the gospels'. That sentence deserved to be written in letters of gold. The preaching is to make man aware of what God is like morally.

Rem It is humbling if His character is not seen in His children.

CAC Quite so, but God's character is at stake by the way I behave myself this next week. Either I shall belie Him, or in some very small and feeble way I shall give a right impression of God; well, that is what is going to be eternal. God is going to mark the new heavens and earth; according to Paul, everything will issue in God being "all in all". What a wonderful universe it will be when God will be the only object of every heart, and will be operating in everyone, so that it will be a scene of universal love — and that is the only thing that is right.

Rem It says, "Christ is everything, and in all" (Colossians 3: 1).

CAC Yes, that is in the new man. It is not universal, it is in a limited area. In the new man, Christ is the object, He is in all as life.

Ques When we are together in the after-part of the Supper, do we touch it as we sing, 'Eternity's begun'?

CAC Yes, I think that is right. So that the eternal scene will not be a strange scene to the saints, but we know something of it. Because of our infirmity now, we cannot sustain it for long. We are not allowed to forget the infirmity of the flesh. "I speak ... because of the infirmity of your flesh", Paul says (Romans 6: 19, Authorised Version). If the Supper were entered into more spiritually, all being unified in the thought of Him, we should be led really into what is eternal.

Ques Why in verse 18 ("To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity") is "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" brought in?

CAC As intimating to us the Lord's headship in eternity. He will never give up His headship. Priesthood supposes a certain weakness and infirmity on our part, so is not needed.

Rem But headship can never be dispensed with.

CAC It is an opportunity for Christ to fill the place that is due to Him as the Source, the vital Spring and Fountain of all that is for the pleasure of God for eternity. All will recognise that, or hold Him as Head. Peter leaves us with good prospects, does he not?

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN AS CONNECTED WITH "BEGINNINGS"

John 1:1-3; 1 John 1:1-4; 1 John 2:24,25

I have suggested reading these portions of Scripture with the thought that we might have before us something of the precious ministry of the apostle John. I am sure we have all noticed that John speaks of "the beginning" in several different connections. The first two verses of his gospel contain what is probably the most profound statement in Scripture. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Genesis 1: 1 had stated that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". But John wrote, by the Holy Spirit, of One who had been known by himself and others as Man here, One who had now ascended up where He was before. It was of that known Person that John declared, "In the beginning was the Word". No one reading this could doubt for a moment that this statement refers to the Person concerning whom the whole gospel was written. Before anything was created, He was.

"And the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

"In the beginning" He had distinct personality, and was "with God": the Greek preposition used here implies activity of intercourse, but it was on the part of One who was Himself God. Ineffable greatness and majesty were His; whatever is true of that great Being whom no one has seen at any time is true of Him in the most absolute sense. He was, and is, 'of full *Deity possessed*'. But it is repeated in verse 2 that "He was in the beginning with God". The repetition of this statement shows its importance in view of all that John would present. He was "with God", and therefore could act according to the wisdom of the divine counsel to effect creation. For "All things received being through him, and without him not one thing received being which has received being". So that, even as to creation, God acted by or through Him, as we know also from Colossians 1: 16 and Hebrews 1: 2. We are told this, I have no doubt, to prepare us to understand how God would by the same blessed Person act in a way that far transcends the wonders which He wrought in creation. He would bring in life and light for men after death and darkness had come in upon all men. He would shine out in a glory which was full of grace and truth. He would make Himself known to men, but to effect this the Creator became Man. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1: 14).

In speaking of the Lord as "the Word", John was using a well-known designation; he was not introducing it for the first time; it was a designation which Luke had applied to Christ probably at least thirty years before John

wrote. See Luke 1: 2. Every reader of Luke's gospel — and by the time that John wrote his gospel this probably included saints in every assembly — was familiar with the title, "the Word". It is perhaps the most comprehensive title of the Lord that can be used, apart from saying that He is God. For it conveys the wondrous thought that God is in expression so as to be known by intelligent creatures. There is thus a range and depth of meaning in this title which has a fulness perhaps beyond what is conveyed by any other that is applied to Him in manhood. Indeed this is directly affirmed by the scripture which says, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psalm 138: 2). "Word", as used in that verse, does not answer exactly to the Greek word "logos", but as it "fixes the mind more especially on what is expressed" (see note on the same word as used in Psalm 119: 11 in the Darby Translation), it does bring out the exceeding greatness of what expresses God. So that we can understand how great is the thought conveyed when Luke speaks of some as having been "eye-witnesses of and attendants on the Word" (Luke 1: 2). It was a glorious designation, and was used because it was so. The marvel of all marvels was that a divine Person should be here as Man, and should be known to men as "the Word".

God has been expressed here in the fullest possible way: in His nature and character and in His thoughts of love towards men. Jesus as the Word was the intelligible expression of all that was in the mind and heart of God to make known of Himself to men. Creation shows God's skill and wisdom, His eternal power and divinity, but it does not express Him morally, any more than a beautiful watch expresses the character and nature of the watchmaker. But a divine Person has become Man in order to express God to man. John was full of this, as well he might be. He was writing of a Person known to him and many others as One in whom God had been expressed. And it seemed good to John, and to the Holy Spirit, to use this known title of the Lord (attaching to Him as here on earth, according to Luke 1: 2) when he referred to Him as "in the beginning". "The Word" was identified with His Person in the mind of John; it was of that known Person he was writing. He would have us to know the infinite divine greatness and majesty of the One concerning whom he was going to write. It had been reserved to him to bring what that Person was as "the Word" much more fully than it had been brought out before. If we want to appreciate that wondrous title in its greatness and glory we must study John's gospel. We must see how Jesus expressed God in His nature, and in all His thoughts manward, and we need to read the whole gospel in the light of the opening verses.

"The Word" is, and was eternally, a divine Person. John 1: 1 - 3 is intended to make us take off our shoes and prostrate our souls in worship as we see His

eternal place in Deity. Seeing this we should read the whole gospel in the spirit of adoration, connecting every word and act of our Lord with His eternal Person; it is essential that we should do so. The names and titles by which we know Him in manhood, the Word, Jesus Christ, the Son, and many others, do not cover all that is true of His eternal Person, but the intelligent affections of the saints, as taught by the Spirit, never disconnect His present names or titles from His eternal Person. Every name which He bears attaches to One who is eternally divine, and now that they are known we can identify them with Him even when referring to Him before He actually bore them. It is the manner of Scripture to do so.

For example, John tells us that "every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God: and this is that power of the antichrist, of which ye have heard that it comes, and now it is already in the world" (1 John 4: 2, 3). The whole point of this lies in the fact that a divine Person has come in flesh. He did not actually bear the name "Jesus Christ" until He was here in manhood, but after He had "come in flesh" the name which He bore as incarnate was used by John to designate Him as having "come"; that is, as One who had pre-existed as a divine Person. This shows in a very distinct way that His eternal Person is identified with His present names and titles.

Paul uses the name "Christ Jesus" in exactly the same way. He speaks of Christ Jesus as "subsisting in the form of God" before He took His place in the likeness of men (Philippians 2: 6, 7). This was a present known name of our Lord; it did not apply to Him as in Deity in the past eternity, though, of course, it was in divine purpose that He should take it up. But Paul used it when speaking of Him before incarnation; the One who is now known by that name is an eternal divine Person. It would be true to say, Jesus existed from eternity, but in so saying we should identify the name with the Person who bears it, though we know well that Jesus was His name as born into this world.

We have the Lord's own authority for identifying His eternal Person with a title which clearly only applies strictly to Him as Man. He said, "If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before" (John 6: 62). And He spoke of the Son of man as coming down out of heaven (John 3: 13). This is of the highest importance as instructing us in the precious truth that none of His present titles as Man are to be detached in our minds from what He was eternally before He became Man. The names and titles now attach to His Person, but His Person is eternal. Jesus spoke of Himself in John 8: 40 as "a man who has spoken the truth to you" — I believe the only recorded time that

He spoke of Himself as "a man" — but He said in the same chapter, "Before Abraham was, I am". That Man was the eternal God, but any intelligent child would understand that He was not a Man before Abraham's time.

This leads us to recognise, too, that His names and titles as Man do not cover the whole truth of His Person. He is Himself greater than them all. The first three verses of John's gospel assure us of this. He is "the Word", and as "the Word" He is the intelligible expression of God to us. This is a title which corresponds with Hebrews 1: 1, 2, "God having spoken in many parts and in many ways formerly to the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days has spoken to us in the person of the Son". It is soberly reverent to believe that whatever He has spoken to us, He intends us to hear and understand. The speaking of God to us in the Son, who is also the Word, has to do with what He is pleased to express of Himself to men for their intelligent apprehension, and their infinite blessing and joy. When we perceive this, we become concerned to understand what He has expressed and spoken to men.

"The Word" — signifying what is intelligible — does not cover all that attaches to the great and glorious Person who is known by that designation. Hebrews I tells us how God has spoken to men in His Son, but it also says of that glorious One, "By whom also he made the worlds". This is inscrutable, for the act of creation is beyond the compass of the creature mind, though understood by faith. And the next sentence also refers to what is inscrutable: "Who being the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance". (Clearly 'substance', 'essential being', not 'person'. Note c, Darby Translation.) This is beyond us, for the Being of God is beyond our finite capacity, though we can own adoringly that the Son is the expression of it. But what He is as "the Word" does come within our apprehension. Indeed the great object of John in writing is to show that it has done so. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us ..., full of grace and truth; ... for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace" (John 1: 14 - 16). The fulness of grace and truth in "the Word" is there to be received by men; the declaration of God by the only-begotten Son is not inscrutable; it makes God known to us most fully in grace and truth; the speaking of God in the Son is not to be refused, but heard and understood. The Lord's precious title, "the Word", relates to what is expressed in Him so as to be received and understood by us. There had been previous communications from God in the prophets, but in the Son of man here God Himself spoke to men in fulness of grace and truth. The glory which belongs to Christ as "the Word" is infinitely great, and such as could only attach to a divine Person, but it is a glory which is apprehensible by the creature — a fulness of grace and truth of which we all have received. But, while rejoicing in this, we remember with deep reverence that there is a

greatness in Him which is inscrutable. John speaks of this inscrutable greatness when he tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God". The expressions *eternal* Word and *everlasting* Word have been used with pious intent to assert the eternal character of His Person, but they tend to obscure the difference between what He is as "the Word", expressing God to men in fulness of grace and truth, and what He was, and is, in the inscrutableness of eternal Deity. To distinguish between these two things takes nothing from the Lord. It is no derogation from His Person or glory. It gives full place to all that He is as "the Word", and enhances it by connecting it in our minds and hearts with His eternal Person. It is due to Him that both aspects of His glory should be before us, and intelligently distinguished. The incarnation was necessary to the intelligible expression of God, and this is obscured if we think that Jesus was *actually* "the Word" in the past eternity. God would have our minds and hearts filled with what we know of Him as having come now into full expression. The important matter is that Jesus, God's beloved Son, should be to us "the Word".

It has been said that God suffices for Himself in everything but His love, but because of His love — what He is in His nature — He must express Himself so that His intelligent creatures may know and love Him. So a divine Person came into manhood, and John writes to tell us of Him and of what He was before He became Man. He had distinct personality, but was in the unity of the Godhead, was God, before there was any creation.

We read in Genesis 1: 1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". And it is of that beginning that John speaks when he tells us, "All things received being through him, and without him not one thing received being which has received being". The One who is the theme of John's gospel is the Creator-God of Genesis 1 — the eternal supreme Being. His personality, as distinct from the other Persons in the Godhead, was not declared in Genesis l, but it is now made clearly known in John 1. We bear it in mind all the time as we read the gospel of John. It gives a profound sense of the greatness of the Person in whom, as Man on the earth, God has been expressed.

The Lord refers to another wondrous "beginning" when He says, "But I did not say these things unto you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go to him that has sent me" (John 16: 4, 5). God would have us attach great importance to the point of time which the Lord here referred to as "the beginning". It clearly refers to the commencement of His public ministry. Peter speaks of "all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day in which he was taken up

from us" (Acts 1: 21, 22). The first two chapters of Matthew and of Luke give us an account of what preceded His baptism and public service, but Luke tells us that he composed his discourse "concerning all things which Jesus began both to do and to teach" (Acts 1: 1). The Lord's public ministry was his theme; he spoke of matters "as those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses of and attendants on the Word have delivered them to us" (Luke 1: 2).

This is important as giving us the point of time from which the Lord is regarded in Scripture as the Sent One. Indeed He Himself defined it when He read in the synagogue at Nazareth the precious words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor; he has sent me to preach to captives deliverance ..." (Luke 4: 18). "Anointed" and "sent": this is the order; and it is in keeping with the "sanctified and sent into the world" in John 10: 36. So the Lord speaks of Himself as having been "sent forth" to announce the glad tidings (Luke 4: 43).

His coming into the world in John is not exactly His birth, but what He was born for. He distinguishes the two things in John 18: 37: "I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth". As coming into the world He comes after John the Baptist, and He lightens every man. His full mission and ministry are in view. So that as long as He was in the world, He was the Light of the world, and the Object of faith. There is a moral force in it, only to be known as taking account of what His position was after the Spirit descended and abode upon Him. "For judgment am I come into this world" (John 9: 39) clearly refers to His coming publicly as Light; it would hardly apply to the thirty years before He was manifested to Israel. "Because ye are with me from the beginning" (John 15: 27) makes evident that the great subject of witness *begins* with the descent of the Spirit upon Him. In the light of this we can see that His coming out from God and from the Father (John 16: 27, 28) was when He was manifested as coming after John. It refers to His coming as the manifested Light of men rather than to His birth into this world. "I came forth from God and am come from him; for neither am I come of myself, but *he* has sent me" (John 8: 42) indicates His moral origin, so that if God had been their Father they would have loved Him. It is, as Mr. Darby said, *a mission from the divine Person, not from a place at all*. As "in the world" He manifested the Father's name to the men given Him; He gave them the words which the Father gave Him; and they received them and knew truly that He came out from the Father; they believed that the Father had sent Him. "As thou hast sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17: 18) shows that a distinct mission is in view in each case; the statement does not refer only to the presence on earth of the Son of God or of His disciples, but to the fact that from a certain definite

moment He was sent by the Father into the world, and, in like manner, from a definite point they were sent by Him. I believe the apprehension of this is essential to the spiritual understanding of how the Son of God is presented in the gospel of John.

In John's first epistle he speaks of another "beginning". "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life; (and the life has been manifested, 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)" (1 John 1: 1, 2). This "beginning" clearly refers to what was manifested to the apostles in Jesus Christ the Son of the Father. Not exactly His Person, but *what* was manifested in Him — "the word of life", "the life", "the eternal life". For the first time in the history of the world there was a true and full expression of "life", and it was expressed in One who could be heard, seen and handled. This is another wonderful result of God's Son being here: "life" has come into view, or, as we read here, has been manifested. John had spoken in the gospel of the declaration of God by the only-begotten Son; but now he speaks of the manifestation of "life" in Him; that is, life in man relative to God, and God known as the Father. "Life" has been manifested in the same Person who has so blessedly declared God; it has come into the view of men, and it has been reported to us. It came into expression in what the Son said and did, as found in the condition of flesh in which He was heard and seen here, including what was expressed in Him as risen from among the dead.

Death and darkness were in the world, but "in him was life", and it was there in the way of illumination for men — "The light of life", as He said in John 8: 12. It is wondrous to consider that "life" in the true and full sense has shone as light for men in Christ the Son. The darkness did not apprehend it, but it was shining for every man, and it was manifested to those whose eyes were divinely opened to see it. "Life" in which sin was not, and in which there was nothing for the ruler of the world, nothing that gave death any claim upon Him, nothing that the fallen man could take pleasure in, but everything that answered in full perfection to the will and pleasure of God. The "life" was in broad and full contrast with the death that was here. Men would not have known what "life" really was if God had not been pleased that it should be manifested in His Son. We are accustomed to a death scene, and we were naturally part of it, but "life" has been manifested here in Him who was "the Son of the Father" (2 John 3). We have not personally seen it, but the apostles did, and they have reported it to us that we might have fellowship with them.

There was also a specific character of life which had been spoken of in Scripture as "the blessing, life for evermore" (Psalm 133: 3). The Old Testament had spoken of it as being in God's mind for men, and the Jews clearly had it before them as something to be greatly desired; it was to them the life of blessing which would be inherited by God's favour in the world to come. The Lord spoke much of "life eternal" in the gospel of John as the blessing into which men would enter by believing on Him. It is a blessing "which God, who cannot lie, promised before the ages of time" (Titus 1: 2). Now John reports "the eternal life" to us as being "with the Father", and as having been manifested to the apostles. The promised blessing for men has taken form in the Son of God, and it has been known in Him as being "with the Father". Eternal life is seen to stand in relation to God as fully made known in grace by Jesus Christ the Sent One (John 17: 4). And "the eternal life" has been manifested to men, and become their delight, and the subject of the witness. There was that in the Son of God of which men, chosen of Him for that high favour, could take knowledge as being "with the Father". The Father had with Him, in the Person of His beloved Son as Man upon earth, what He had had before Him and promised as blessing for man, before the ages of time, and it was manifested to the apostles, not to the world. It was not exactly the public life of the Lord, such as natural men could take account of, but that which was "with the Father", and which, to His chosen ones, was in manifestation in His words and ways. All that He said and did was the expression, to those who had ears to hear and eyes to see, of an inward life which was "with the Father". Not here His *relationship* as Son with the Father — though He was at the same time the Son of the Father — but the blessed fact that "the eternal life" was "with the Father" in Him. This was a profound delight to John; he and other apostles perceived in Jesus a life which was "with the Father", but in which men could participate by believing on Him. It filled John with joy, and he would have us share that joy. In being able to apprehend the eternal life as manifested in the Son of God, the apostles had fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Father had with Him, in the Person of the Son of man, all that was covered by the words, "The eternal life". And the Son had the joy of being "with the Father" as setting forth in Himself this great blessing for men. Eternal life was one of the great thoughts of God in regard to men. But it has now been brought into actual being, and into manifestation, in the Person of the Son of God so as to be the subject of witness, and it has been reported to us. In apprehending it the apostles had fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and they reported what they saw and heard, that we might have fellowship with them and have our joy full.

The Father's Son in manhood manifested "the eternal life" to His loved disciples. "The eternal life" period began in Him, but it came in that men might participate in it by believing on Him. It was there in Him as a living Source and Fountain of life for men. What a wondrous "beginning"! The eternal-life period has begun, and John writes that we may know it, and have the joy of it as those who have life in the Son of God. The Son of God as a glorified Man is "the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5: 20).

In conclusion, we may consider briefly that John refers in various places to another "beginning". (See 1 John 2: 7, 24; 1 John 3: 11; 2 John 6.) These scriptures show that there has been a "beginning" on our side. That is, we as Christians and believers have had a wonderful beginning. We have all begun, according to God, by hearing the divine testimony which has been brought to us by the apostles. No other beginning than this would be of any account in God's reckoning. This was the "beginning" of the knowledge of divine Persons on the part of men, consequent upon the glorification of Jesus, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the reception of the apostles' testimony. The "beginning" of christianity was the coming to man of the blessed truth concerning the Son and the Father. It is clear from John's writing that the youngest babes in the family of God began with the knowledge of the Son and the Father, and had the unction from the Holy One. These are most wonderful divine realities. Now we are to let these things abide in us. They are what we began with, and we are not to be led astray from them. If that which we heard from the beginning abides in us, we shall abide in the Son and in the Father, and we shall find that this is life eternal. Life eternal is bound up with what we heard from the beginning, so that it is of the utmost importance for us to know what we *did* hear from the beginning. That is, what have we really heard from the apostles, or learnt from their inspired writings? God would have us to regard this as what we heard from the beginning and not what men have said since, even with the most pious intentions. If we are preserved, through grace, from that which leads astray, we shall know the blessedness of life eternal. If our joy is not full, it is because we have not allowed what we heard from the beginning to abide in us.

Paul presents eternal life as an end to be reached by moving on certain lines, but John's ministry gives us to know that this is "the eternal life" period, and that eternal life is bound up with the abiding in us of what we heard from the beginning. The "promise" becomes a reality to those who, by the teaching of the unction, abide in the Son and in the Father. Before "eternal life" is brought in publicly, believers on the Son of God have it in Him; the unction which we have received teaches us to abide in Him.

1 JOHN 1 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 1: 1 - 10

CAC Is there any reason why this epistle is not addressed to any particular person or assembly?

Rem It has been pointed out that it was written for the last time and so to be seen in the light of 2 Timothy — what compares with today.

CAC Well, I was wondering whether the last time was in prospect, in making such an address as the epistle contains; but the precious truth was there presented for any person interested to take it up.

Ques God's family was in view in John, would you say, so that any individual being addressed would narrow the scope of the epistle?

Rem "Children" is used many times in John, e.g. "My children" in chapter 2: 1; there are those he can address as his children.

CAC The apostle ministers to them in an affectionate way, as a father. He could address them as children, so it is just a question of how far we are interested in what he presents. He begins his letter in a way that would arrest the attention of certain persons amongst whom, I hope, we are all found.

Rem J.N.D. mentions that this chapter applies to Christians irrespective of growth.

CAC Yes, the word "children" includes all the family, whom he divides in chapter 2 into three classes. There are "little children", "young men" and "fathers", but all are children, the family of God, and, as being so, partakers of the divine nature and born of God. Those born of God will be intensely interested in what John has to say.

Ques The subject of life is very prominent in this epistle, so would you say there is a certain moral continuation of what we have been having in Timothy? "Lay hold of what is really life", and then we have, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (1 Timothy 6: 19; 2 Timothy 4: 22). Would the teaching of the epistle help to balance us, bringing forward what is eternal if we are to be in the enjoyment of what is really life?

Rem It gives it in a very attractive way.

CAC "That which" — a certain subsisting thing, not exactly the Person of Christ.

Rem It is more connected with what has been made known. "That which we have heard, ... have seen", etc., not so much the Person.

CAC It is what has come into expression in the Person. It is not what attaches to Him so much, but rather what is expressed in Him and by Him. It was connected with the words that He spoke. "That which we have heard". "Thou hast words of life eternal" (John 6: 68). Life is a thing that expresses itself in man by what he says. Perhaps we do not always bear in mind that what we say is the expression of our life, but it is!

Rem It is so among men.

CAC The first thing which John refers to is "That which we have heard". There is a certain substance — it is *that*, not exactly He, but *that*.

Ques What would "That which was from the beginning" mean?

CAC That which was from the beginning of the wonderful period that was introduced by the incarnation, the incoming of Christ. So the words of the Lord Jesus are to be considered, particularly as the expression of a new kind of life which had never appeared in this world before. I suppose this would particularly apply to the Lord's words in the gospel of John.

Rem We have a first-hand witness, just as if we had actually seen and heard the Lord.

CAC It is good to bear in mind that the apostle John is as if he is speaking personally to us, as competent to tell us what was seen and heard and contemplated in a certain Person.

Rem All this is true and substantial.

CAC When there is no assembly that can be addressed.

It has been said that the postman would not know where to deliver a letter addressed to the assembly in T. It is a time when you cannot find the assembly — I am speaking of the public condition — yet this most precious truth abides in all its precious completeness, undiminished. If John were here he would say he had nothing to withdraw and nothing to add. He has put it all in his book and in his letters.

Ques What about "our hands handled"?

CAC It is very wonderful that he should bring in the thought of handling; it is the thought of something very tangible. He connects all he has in mind with the Lord's real humanity. So even in resurrection He had a body that could be handled. It shows that the appreciation of the Lord's humanity is vital to this matter.

Ques What is the viewpoint, His path here or in resurrection, or does it take in both?

CAC I have no doubt the apostle had in mind the new condition in which the Lord was risen from the dead. I think he has that in mind, but he does not leave out in his thought what was here in flesh and blood. F.E.R. said years ago that there was hardly anything in John's gospel which could not be carried on into resurrection, which is an important thing to bear in mind, I think. It speaks of Him here, yet all that could be carried into resurrection. He is spoken of as the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father — well, that can be carried on into resurrection. He is that now. He was seen in it when here, but He is still there. Everything that belongs properly to life can be carried into resurrection. John begins with, "In him was life" (John 1: 4).

Rem That belongs exclusively to Him; you could not say that of anyone else.

CAC Yes, there was a spiritual order of things manifested to the apostles. All His movements relative to the Father belong to that sphere; that is the character of things that John speaks of. "And we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father ...". There was a wonderful life that was with the Father, it was peculiar to one Person, it had never been known as the portion of any man before.

Ques Is there anything in the order in which it is set out? First hearing and seeing, then follows contemplating — a testing of the living reality of the thing. Sometimes we do not take hold in contemplation of a thing so as to be assured of its tangibility.

CAC Very important. Eternal life is a very substantial reality. It was in the Person of the Son.

Rem Eternal life was demonstrated in a Man.

CAC Yes. John and the other disciples being forty days with the Lord in resurrection would learn to regard His life — what they heard and saw in Him — in the light of His resurrection. I believe that is the intent of the Spirit of God. John did not write a single word of his gospel before His resurrection. The whole gospel is written in the light of resurrection. And the disciples took up all they had heard and seen in a new way after they had companied with Him in His resurrection, and had received the Holy Spirit from heaven. As having the Spirit they took it up in a new light and in a new way.

Ques Why is eternal life connected with the Father and not God? The Jews will have it in connection with God.

CAC Eternal life stands in relation to the particular way in which God is known. It is taken up in connection with revelation, He is revealed as the Father.

Rem It is distinctive of christianity.

CAC Eternal life is with the Father. It is the kind of life in man that is in perfect correspondence with the Father. This is very little understood. People speak of Almighty God, but not much is said about the Father. How religious people carefully avoid the Father! They would not think of praying to the Father, and I do not wonder. They would feel it would be out of keeping with that Name. "Father" speaks of revelation in perfect grace, as we get in John's gospel. It is not so much spoken of in the three synoptic gospels. There must be a connecting life in man with the Father, so that it could not possibly be touched by death. So all He did and said in His Person — a life that was with the Father — death never could and never did touch that life. He gives His flesh for the life of the world, but He never laid down eternal life, a character of life that death could never touch. He took up a condition of life in which He could die, His life down here in this character of things. In resurrection He was in the proper sphere of eternal life, having a life which death could never touch any more.

Ques What does "Concerning the word of life" mean?

CAC The word of life is the expression of life. It was not characterised by anything that was of the world, but by His continual abiding in the Father. His whole life flowed out of communion with the Father. "The Father is in me", He could say.

Rem "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father" (John 14: 20) refers to this — it is the Spirit's day.

CAC Yes. The life has been manifested, it has been seen objectively, as F.E.R. said. There was a great controversy years ago as to eternal life, and F.E.R. was asked, 'Would you tell us in one sentence what you were contending for?' He replied, 'I was contending for the objective character of eternal life'.

Ques What did he mean by that?

CAC That is what I want you to think about! Well, what we see here. "The life has been manifested, 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". Manifested *to* us in the Person of Jesus — there to be looked at, seen, handled objectively in Him! People thought it was in themselves, but it is in His Son. It is to be contemplated as *there* — seen objectively in Him.

It is given to the saints, but then we have it in the Son of God. It is in Him that we have it, not in ourselves. Eternal life in its glorious living character is substantiated in Christ, as seen in Him. To enjoy it, we must enjoy it as a substantial reality in the Son of God.

Ques Is eternal life only enjoyed in the energy of love?

CAC Surely, if it is to be enjoyed with the Father. So if we move with the Father we are in enjoyment of eternal life.

It is a thing that can be reported. He says, "That which we have seen and heard we report to you". You see how objective it was, so entirely outside themselves. We have seen and heard — now we report it to you.

Ques With reference to verse 1, would you suggest that what was seen and heard was so attractive that they laid hold of it?

CAC Very good, because in the present economy of love we must begin with what we hear, the mind is arrested and we pay particular attention to it. The great gain of the controversy was that the attention of saints was directed to this subject of eternal life in a way it had never been before. He that believes on the Son has life eternal, was the way they looked at it. There was not the attention given to it. If we knew we were to have the life of an angel, how interested we should be to know all we could about it. It is not the life of an angel we are to have, it is a life in the Son of God, seen in Him, and so it is reported to us to set us longing.

Rem It becomes very attractive.

CAC Yes, it is a blessed reality in the Son of God, and in Him for us, that we might know what it is to live in that region of things that is with the Father. They were privileged to have to do with it first hand, in contact with the One in whom it was seen. We have not, and learn it by report. Are we interested in it? that is the thing! There is not anyone particular mentioned.

Rem "We" is apostolic. Acts 1: 21, 22 speaks of "the men who have assembled with us all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day in which he was taken up from us", though in a certain sense it might extend to those with Him in the forty days after His resurrection.

CAC It is not apostolic in the sense of being official, but a testimony rendered by persons who had been with the Lord right through His ministry. A hundred and twenty are mentioned in Acts who had been with Him in the days of His flesh and in His resurrection. It would spread out all over them, I think.

FELLOWSHIP AS JOHN PRESENTS IT

1 John 1: 1 - 10; 1 John 2: 1, 2

Some of us were looking together the other evening at the truth of christian fellowship as Paul speaks of it. I thought it might be spiritually helpful to us tonight to look at fellowship as John presents it, because our happiness before God and our taking up our right relations with our brethren depend upon our understanding the character of the fellowship in which we are called to walk. There is nothing narrower in Scripture than the fellowship belonging to all the children of God, all saints. We can see that John was a happy man — the apostles were happy men. It is our privilege to be in fellowship with the apostles, for they had no desire to keep their happiness to themselves. The great desire of John in writing his epistle is that all those who read it may be brought into the joy that he and all the apostles had, that we might have fellowship with men who had the most profound joy possible for creatures to have, that we might have fellowship with them and thus have fulness of joy. If we have not fulness of joy, we do not know the fellowship that belongs to us and we to it. There are many who ought to enjoy the fellowship who do not; it is a wonderful partnership. It is connected in John with the family of God. All the children are entitled to be partakers in this fellowship.

It is important to see how John begins to write. He does not write to any particular assembly or individual but in a style calculated to arrest the attention of certain persons. Certain kinds of fish are attracted by certain kinds of bait. Here, it is persons who are intensely interested in the subject of life. If a person is not interested in that subject, he will not care for nor understand John's writings. Life cannot be found in this world at all; it was not found here for four thousand years. All that we find in ourselves (in the world too) is morally death, man away from God and out of harmony with everything delightful to God. When God effects new birth in a soul, the intense hunger and thirst in that soul come to be for life; there is a craving for it, not in ourselves or in the world. All that is in ourselves and in the world tends to intense thirst, and if we have a thirst for life, we shall be interested in John. John and the apostles had found life and that was the secret of their happiness. There is a blessed Person who says by the prophetic spirit, "Whoso findeth me findeth life" (Proverbs 8: 35). You might be a believer and not have found life, nor have fulness of joy. Many have found Jesus as Saviour, Shepherd, Friend, but do not have fulness of joy ("and your joy be full", John 15: 11), they have not found life — we know the kind of ministry that John had heard, for he would have heard John the baptist and would have learnt the necessity for repentance. "And already the axe is applied to the root of the

trees; every tree therefore not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire" (Matthew 3: 10). John's disciples never found life under that ministry. But one day a Person rose upon their vision, the like of whom they had never seen before, and they heard their master say, in hushed and reverent accents, "Behold the Lamb of God"! They saw Jesus walking and followed Jesus. Jesus says to them, "What seek ye?" They said, "Where abidest thou? He says to them, Come and see. They went therefore, and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day" (John 1: 38, 39). That was the start of this wonderful hearing, seeing, contemplating and handling; they found life!

You cannot find life in the world and you cannot find it in yourself, you must find it in Another, where the apostles found it. A soul born again craves for life, and to touch life as before God. Where do we really find life? John is speaking to us here about "the word of life" and "the eternal life"; is there any flaw there? We cannot possibly have fulness of joy until we find life. Where did John and the other disciples find life? They found it, enjoyed it, and lived upon it in Christ, and they had fulness of joy. John's object in writing is that we may have fellowship with them. We have found life in Christ; God has brought in the perfect expression of all that life is in His thoughts; all was there, in this world, in Christ! A perfect answer to God, in every moral perfection, was contemplated and handled in Him. You can only get life there and find it there. The apostle had an intense interest in life, what life is for God. There is no life in this world, there is self-gratification, natural amiability and so on. If I were left to myself I should never know life, but I have found life in the blessed Son of God.

The first section of our chapter is on the line of our joy being full, which is dependent on our having found life. There has been such a thing in this world as the full expression of life. The word of life is that life has been expressed in a divine Person become Man in this world.

The apostles heard, saw, contemplated and handled all that came in that Flesh — it was life. If I have not that, as the satisfaction and eternal rest of my heart, I have not life — 'A life divine below', perfectly delightful to God. He was "with the Father". The apostles found life, they found it there.

The second section of our chapter is connected with God as light. What John presses is that the life has been manifested It has really shone forth in this world in Jesus: "Which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us", John says. They had actually seen and contemplated it, and it had made them perfectly happy, completely outside themselves. They found it in the Son of God; and if our fellowship is with the apostles, it is in the profound delight they found in the Son of God. Absolute perfection! If you have not got

perfection, you are not a Christian — I have found perfection, but I have found it in Another, and that gives fulness of joy.

> 'The heart is satisfied, can ask no more;
> All thought of self is now for ever o'er!' (247:3)

And the Father has found it!

If there is the revelation of God (as there is in the Father), the more we know it, the more we desire to know God's thought for man. The springs of my joy lie entirely outside myself, it is altogether in Christ; nothing else will satisfy me. It is a question the Spirit of God raises with every one born again. Satisfaction for every craving is found in Christ.

If that does not give me fulness of joy, there is something terribly wrong with me. "The message" comes in now, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all". It is something we have to be apprised of and we must allow it to have its full weight with us. God in His character and Being is exactly the opposite of all in the world and in ourselves. This becomes a test — are we walking in darkness, the walk of men in the world who do not know God at all? The light of God does not illuminate them at all, they walk in darkness. "But if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light"; how beautiful!

As Christians we walk in the light; it is the character of christian walk — we walk in the light as God is in the light. God is in the light, He has come out in all the blessed light of revelation. The whole truth of God is out. God is in the light and that is the light in which we Christians walk. It is the light of God fully revealed; there is no other light in which to walk. As we walk in the light we have fellowship one with another. The light in which I walk is a light entirely outside myself and I can only walk there in the consciousness of the cleansing power of the blood. It always abides; it abides eternally. It is the power of the blood here. If you are not walking in the light, you are not walking as a Christian. The Christian walks in the light of God fully revealed in Christ. You cannot add another ray to that light, and we could not be there for a moment except in the cleansing power of the blood. 'That precious blood shall never lose its power'. The apostle wants to occupy us with Christ. If I look at Christ, I find all the light of God there. Christians do not say that they have no sin (verse 8), "If we confess our sins" (verse 9). There are no pretences with the Christian;

he confesses his sins, does not cover them up as the worldling does. Scripture does not suppose that a child of God sins wilfully (Hebrews 10: 26). To "sin wilfully" means to turn away from God revealed in Christ, and there is no

recovery for that. The blood cleanses from all sin; for the relief of the conscience a believer confesses his sins, and God "is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins". All the value of Christ's propitiatory work is before the Father. If I sin, I think of Christ, "Jesus Christ the righteous", "a patron". It is not christianity to sin, but John says, 'If you sin, I want you to think of Christ'. Before there is repentance, I believe the "Patron" moves; He moves first and starts repentance in my heart down here. All these things affect the character of our fellowship. We can afford to be quite open and above board with God and with one another, and that is the character of our fellowship. I have found death in myself but life in Christ. Romans 7 is not true Christian experience. It is bondage, not christianity; but in Romans 8: 2, I am free! "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death". There is liberty in Romans 8. Romans 8, as has often been said, is the Christian's 'Magna Carta' through the power of the Spirit of life. Christian liberty is occupation with divine Persons. When divine Persons are before me, at that particular moment I am holy. The more occupied we are with divine Persons, the more holy we shall be.

1 JOHN 1 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 1: 3

Ques In verse 3 would "*ye*" include in the fellowship those from the time the epistle was written to the present time?

CAC Yes, I think so. The saints now come into these things as matters which have been reported to us. We have not exactly seen and heard for ourselves, for it has not been granted to us to be actually with the One here spoken of, but men were with Him and they saw and contemplated and handled certain things. The eternal life was manifested to them, not exactly to us; we could not say that. They reported, and we are very dependent on the report now rendered by the holy Scriptures, particularly in John's gospel and first epistle; we have to pay great attention to the report.

Ques Would it include only the apostles' fellowship, or others?

CAC Primarily with the apostles, because it is John particularly who has reported to us, but our attention was called last week to the fact that there was quite a goodly company of persons who had been eye-witnesses of and attendants on the Word, and things had been manifested to them. It shows the true character of eternal life. It is something to be discerned and apprehended in the Son of God. The witness is that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, so that it is only known and apprehended in Him — something not in us, but in Him.

Ques Is that not really the character of christian fellowship?

CAC Our fellowship is constituted by what we have had reported to us as true in Christ. It is the real bond of fellowship. It is not that we like each other naturally, or to be with a set where doctrines commend themselves to us, but that each one has an apprehension of the eternal life seen in Jesus.

Ques How would you speak of eternal life in a simple way; it is hazy in the minds of many?

CAC John writes his gospel and first epistle to take away all mystical thoughts from us and give us to see it is spiritual substance. It is what has been seen in all its reality in the Son of God. It does not belong to God as such, though God alone has immortality. Eternal life is the act of favour of God to men, and it is the gift of His love that men should have it and apprehend it in Christ as a present reality. It is all to make us believe on the Son of God.

Ques In Him we have life; would that be eternal?

CAC Certainly, but we must pass over from ourselves to Him to apprehend it.

Rem The Lord Jesus set the thing out in all He enjoyed in communion with God as a Man.

CAC Yes, and all that can be carried on into resurrection. All that can be carried into resurrection has the character of eternal life.

Ques Would "the Son of man who is in heaven" (John 3: 13) convey it?

CAC I should think so; it would bring out the heavenly character.

Ques All the traits of Christ seen in us, is that eternal life?

CAC But there are traits of Christ which do not belong to eternal life. The fellowship to which God has called us in 1 Corinthians 1 belongs to the wilderness side; John speaks of a fellowship that belongs to the land — to the sphere of the purpose of love.

Ques How does Paul come in?

CAC Paul's knowledge of Christ began really outside the scene of sin and death. He did not know Christ after the flesh at all, but entirely after a spiritual order, a life which was with the Father.

Ques Would you say a spiritual state is necessary?

CAC Yes, because it speaks of entering into it. The great type is the land of Canaan. Israel in type passing over the Jordan into the land came into a region beyond death, and that is properly the sphere of eternal life, heavenly in character, but known on earth. Eternal life will be in the world to come. There will be a spiritual life enjoyed by saints in the world which is outside earthly conditions, and that will be eternal life. Brethren will dwell together in unity, and that is how it is known now. They have enjoyment of what is in the Son of God. Without it we cannot possibly have unity.

Ques What traits of Christ do not belong to eternal life?

CAC None of His natural relationships, so that He is not the son of Mary in eternal life.

Ques Is it enjoyed in the company of the saints?

CAC Yes, there is not much enjoyment of life in solitude. There is not much life about solitary confinement. Companionship contributes to it, and that is so with eternal life.

Rem "For there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore" (Psalm 133: 3).

CAC It is the greatest exhibition of eternal life in the Old Testament. There are two mentions and two sides: the setting aside of the power of death in Daniel, and then the positive side when brethren dwell together in unity and enjoy God. The catechism in the Scotch church asks the question, 'What is the chief end of man?' and answers it, 'To glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever'. It is a very good definition, no wit of man could have devised a better. John says, "This is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17: 3). It is to enter into the Father's thoughts of Christ, and into what He is Himself as Father, and to see a perfection in Man corresponding to the Father and say, That is my life and I can enjoy it in Him. It is all as clear in Scripture as a beam of light! The difficulty is in ourselves, we are so complex, we need pulling to pieces and putting together in a new way altogether.

Eternal life is for the earth, and the character of it is untouchable by death. The sweetest and highest character of life, such as in family relations, can be touched by death. It is terminated by death, so it is not eternal life.

Rem The gift of life is connected with purpose; I like that.

CAC Anybody can see that what we have in Christ cannot be touched by death. "The wages of sin is death; but the act of favour of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6: 23). Eternal life is God's great contrast with death. It cannot be thought of in connection with heaven, for death has never entered into heaven.

It is presented in two ways by Paul. In Romans 5, "through Jesus Christ our Lord" — that is the medium by which it reaches us, and in chapter 6, eternal life "in Christ Jesus our Lord", showing it subsists in the Person. And it is through Him it is ministered to us, He is the channel. So that in each case our thoughts are turned to Him. It does not turn me in on myself, but directs me to Him. John 20 emphasises that He was to be touched in a new sphere. Mary had touched Him after the flesh; she was now to touch Him as having gone to the Father.

Ques Does the tree of life bear on this?

CAC Yes, I think the promise was in the tree of life, a pledge on God's part that He had a life far more wonderful than Adam would have had if he had never failed. His thoughts of God would have been limited, for an innocent being could not have any conception of righteousness or holiness. The very presence of that tree was a promise. 'I have something better than this beautiful, perfect garden. It is perfect, yet I have something far better!' It would have set Adam and Eve thinking even in that day. The fellowship of the

Father and the Son brings us into the region of divine thoughts. The apostles say, "We know"; we enter in and pass it on to you, that in result your joy may be full. I do not suppose there is anyone today who would not like that.

Rem It is not good that man should be alone.

CAC All that we are brought into now was in the mind of God before He created Adam. Christ was first in the mind of God, not Adam. It could not be known apart from the incarnation of Christ, a divine Person become Man; and He has an inward life with the Father and it is ours through grace. God has given it to us.

Ques Is there any difference between eternal life and life?

CAC They run very closely together; God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. I think the character of life God has for His saints is eternal life now. Of course there is a certain kind of life that can be enjoyed in the wilderness, and there is such a thing as pious confidence in God in regard of circumstances here. It is a kind of life here, but it is not eternal life. I may be happy that I have a God in whom I have confidence; it does not matter what bombs fall, it does not change Him. With the Lord, the swaddling clothes and manger were God's care for Him. It does not touch eternal life, which is a new region. He said to the woman at the well, "If thou knewest ... thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water ... whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life" (John 4: 10, 14). There is the divine proposal, showing it is the Spirit that leads our desires and aspirations into the region of eternal life. So if we do not keep on good terms with the Spirit, we shall not know much of eternal life.

Rem We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. That would not be fully eternal life.

CAC Yes, I think that is right. And we ought to pass over and know when we pass over from the wilderness to Canaan. While eating the Supper we are in the wilderness, considering how the Lord laid down His life, and we are where His blood was shed. We should pass on and touch resurrection, go on to where He is risen from the dead, and there you touch eternal life.

Rem If we were touching eternal life we should have no difficulties.

CAC And any of us may enjoy eternal life without thinking of it, in conscious association with Christ out of death, and all may be enjoying it together — the

youngest can enjoy it — when we are consciously happy, even for a moment, in the enjoyment of what death cannot touch.

It is very wonderful to think that there is nothing John had that he is not willing to share with you and me.

Rem Each child of God likes to pass on to others joy that he has himself.

CAC And this particular kind of joy! They found fulness of joy in it. It is about as good a definition of eternal life as you will find in most of the pamphlets.

1 JOHN 1 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 1: 5 - 10

Ques Is the report more general than the message, the message being more special?

CAC What was reported was the eternal life that was with the Father and manifested to us. I was thinking of the difference. There is a change in all the setting of what is introduced in verse 5. It is not a question now of the Father and the Son, but of what God is Himself.

Ques I suppose the "him" in verse 5 is God. Would you say so? It is no longer the truth which is involved in the Father and the Son.

CAC Yes, he comes to the moral basis of things. We could hardly enter into what lies between the Father and the Son without entering into every moral question as in the presence of God as light. It seems to me that he leaves the question of eternal life as standing in relation to the Father and the Son and he speaks of God, and God in His moral nature. I suppose that is the thought of light.

Rem The first "him", I thought, was God. In Hebrews 1 we get God speaking in Son.

CAC In John's writings it is not always easy to see which Person he is referring to, but this great message, I think, is being connected with what God is essentially. It must be taken as being heard from God in all His greatness as God, as it has reference to what God is essentially.

Rem So the greatness of the Person is connected with the news.

CAC Yes, and that statement is very wonderful, that God is light. It is not revelation or relationship, but what He is essentially, and so would be what He is eternally. If God had been pleased not to make a revelation, it would still be true. His motive is love, His moral nature is light. It must be so if darkness has come in. The very fact that God is light necessitates that, if He moves at all, it is as bringing in light.

Rem "Dwelling in unapproachable light" (1 Timothy 6: 16).

CAC That is different, showing the greatness of God as such. He dwells "in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see". It marks the immense distance between God in His being and man, so if God had not come out in the way of revelation, we should never have known Him at all. This is a *message*, which it seems to me came directly from God to John and

those identified with John in the service connected with revelation — a particular message that God is light, which men do not think of. They have a loose, casual way of thinking of, "God is love". You do not often see the text up, "God is light".

Ques Why does John take light first?

CAC Because light is what He is essentially, revelation or no revelation. "God is love" is that certain persons at any rate have so come to know Him that they can say, God is love. It is what the family of God can say — that is the setting of it. It is wonderful. It is as having experimental knowledge of Him and having come to this conclusion, and if we follow through this epistle we shall come to the same conclusion. Light and love are His moral nature and motive. What moves God always is His love. Light does not put God in motion. It is a great moral statement that endures for all eternity that God is light. There can never be connection between light and darkness, so "if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practise the truth".

Rem Fellowship with Him is a good slant.

CAC Well, the test has to be applied to it. We must not walk in darkness or we give the lie to it. John has in mind the possibility of certain things being said.

Rem He writes in the light of the last day.

CAC It is the time now of talk. The terms and phrases of christianity are taken up with no meaning to them.

Rem It supposes profession. It is a question of what we are and do, is it not? There is no 'grey' with John, but you get the extremes in his epistle.

CAC Walking in darkness is defined for us in the next chapter, "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in the darkness until now" (chapter 2: 9). So the brother is the great test.

Rem In verse 7 it is fellowship with one another that is brought in. "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness" (John 8: 12). It is a positive thing.

CAC *He* loved His saints and He walked in the light, and if we follow Him we shall love them too. John makes love the great test. "In *the* darkness" it says (1 John 2: 9), so that there is no knowledge of God at all. He treads in the world system.

Rem Public testimony is connected with it. "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves" (John 13: 35). It shows

how closely light and love come together, perfectly in God, and also in His people. But we are never said to be light and never said to be love.

CAC Well, I suppose there is something very absolute about love, but light is relative to darkness. This relative quality of light can be applied to the saints. "For ye were once darkness, but now light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5: 8). That can be said of the saints. Love is what God is absolutely.

Rem "Partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1: 4).

CAC But is must be reserved to God — love is His nature. In the creature everything is in measure, but in God there is a fulness, an absoluteness.

Rem We should apprehend God first as light, or we should not have a right thought of His love.

CAC Yes. I think that is so.

Ques We are more at home with God as love than as light. Why is that? Has it been presented to us more in the gospel and then after conversion we learn more?

CAC Well, that may be so. Things begin in a very infantile state, and bit by bit the knowledge of God comes in, then enlargement and adjustment morally. It is a question of learning to walk in the light. It is the position God has taken up. In revealing Himself He has come into the light. God is not now in darkness.

Ques Is it in relation to Sinai?

CAC I think it is a certain contrast to that; thick clouds and darkness were about Him, but now God is in the light.

Ques Is there a difference between "darkness" and "thick darkness"?

CAC Thick darkness is being enshrouded in a darkness that man's eye cannot penetrate. Darkness is what marks the world, where there is no light as to God, no knowledge of Him; properly it belongs to the heathen world. So that christianity is to walk in the light as God is in the light.

There is nothing to be made known of God that has not been made known. He is declared. It is not a question of men seeking after God, but He is in the light. It is something for us to walk in all day long. It is the light in which the children of God are set, all that is made known of God in His beloved Son. We have no other light, we walk in that light. We have no uncertainties about God. The believer's uncertainties are all connected with himself, not with God. Nothing can be added to or taken from that light. The wonderfulness of Jesus

in His outshining is that every ray of light is there, and we walk in the light; we have nowhere else to walk.

Rem If we do.

CAC Well, yes. His face means His Person; it is all set forth in Him.

Rem "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him" (John 1: 18).

CAC That is the idea. God is declared, so we are not at all in a fog about God, but in the full light of His motives and acts, and that is the basis of fellowship. As walking in the light we must have fellowship with one another. It is what we know of God that is the real basis of fellowship, and we all have the same character of knowledge of God, as it is in Jesus.

Ques How does the last clause of verse 7 come in, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin"?

CAC I think that comes in very beautifully. The Darby Translation note is 'every sin'.

Rem It would not be exactly on gospel lines, but more in connection with our walking with one another.

CAC It is a great basic fact which is always true, that if we walk in the light of God's revelation we have fellowship because all are walking in the same line, and if a moral question is raised this settles everything judicially: "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin". It is always in your soul, you never get away from the ground of your being in the light. It is very good gospel, but it is gospel for the saints. Cleansed from your own individual sin, 'every sin', it says.

Rem You would not mind it used as a subject for the gospel.

CAC No, because it is an absolute statement, always true whether for saint or sinner. F.E.R. once illustrated it by, 'Such a medicine cures the ague'. It is the efficacy of the blood. It is so efficacious that it cleanses under the eye of God every sin. It is a sense of cleansing judicially, so every sin is washed away. He has "washed us from our sins in his blood", John says (Revelation 1: 5).

Ques How would it compare with verse 9?

CAC Oh, that is practical; you confess it, and God is righteous to forgive when it is confessed, but you are not to do it again. Repentance is a moral process, so that you do not do it again. The difficulty is that we are not genuine enough in confession. If we were genuine enough in confession of sin we should never do it again. I am convinced God would cleanse us from the

unrighteousness. People confess and sin again and confess again and so on, but there is something wrong on our side if this is so. If I confess, and realise that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse, and see the seriousness of it, then I do not do it again. It is judged in the light of the necessity of Christ's death — His blood had to be shed. I may say anything against a brother or sister, and forget that without the shedding of His blood I should be eternally damned — a much more serious matter than most of us think. We are never on the ground of self-righteousness. The only christian ground is that God has come out into the light, having revealed Himself in Jesus, and we all walk in the same light and have the same thoughts of God; everyone who has received the gospel has, so there is fellowship, and the blood of Christ cleanses — there is complete settlement of every sin.

There is the abiding consciousness in the soul of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and God would not have us move away from it. We stay put, as people say. Satan often does raise questions, especially with people who have very tender consciences. A tender conscience is a very good thing, but it exposes them to Satan, making them the more assailable by Satan.

Luther relates a vision where Satan brought him a long roll of his sins. 'Is that all?' Luther asked, and the devil brought him a second and third roll in answer. Then at length said Luther, 'Write at the bottom, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"'. Well, that is right, we are never going to be on any other footing with God. I think the reason many people have not peace is lack of knowledge of these things. A tender conscience is to be coveted, but you can soon lose it.

1 JOHN 1 AND 2 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 1: 8 - 10; 1 John 2: 1, 2

Ques Forgiveness and cleansing in verse 8 are contingent on confession, is that right?

CAC Yes.

Rem In verse 8 we have "sin".

Rem It is "every sin", every kind, I suppose, an inclusive thought.

CAC Paul and John are in agreement. Paul speaks of the same thing. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell" (Romans 7: 18). John recognises that there is sin present with us, and if we denied it we should deceive ourselves, and he tells us he is writing to us that we might not sin. There is no excuse for sin in any believer. To the woman found in John 8 the Lord says, "Go, and sin no more", which He says to each one that He deals with in marvellous grace. She was a sinful woman, but he said, "Go, and sin no more". That was different from His answer to the man in chapter 5, "sin no more, that something worse do not happen to thee", showing that He had no confidence in him.

Ques Does this thought of confessing include what James says about confessing to one another as well as to God?

CAC I should have thought here it was more particularly in mind that we confess our sins to God — or to the Father. It is very useful to confess our sins to one another. If we did, there would be much more confidence and love amongst the brethren.

There is the provision made. We are written to in order that we may not sin, but there is the possibility, and provision is made in the blessed service of Christ with the Father.

Rem This is the only time the Lord is spoken of in this particular way in Scripture.

Ques I wondered if the first two verses in chapter 2 were the exposition of the verses we have just read, the facts first and then the secret of how that is worked out. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins". Is it because He is the propitiation with the Father?

CAC Yes. It is remarkable it does not say He *made* propitiation. We should have expected it to be put like that — but He is the propitiation.

Rem He is set to draw out the affections of the saints. It is all the grace and power in Him as He is before the Father.

CAC The propitiation was actually accomplished on the cross. The value of it subsists abidingly in His Person. It is very good to bear that in mind.

Rem The same would be true of justification; it is His Person more than work in Acts 13: 39, "*in Him* every one that believes is justified".

CAC And justified by His blood. The efficacious ground is His blood. We could not be justified in Another unless everything had been cleared away righteously in His blood; so that we are justified in the One who has cleared us. Nothing could be more satisfying to the conscience and to the blessed God Himself. All the value of His work is stored up in His Person; it is never absent from His Person.

Rem We think of it as in the past, but it is in Him continuously.

CAC Yes, it gives a key to "This do in remembrance of me", not 'of My work' or of what I have done, but for a remembrance of *Me*. And this propitiation, if we look at it, is of wondrous extent, is not only for the sins of believers, but for the whole world. Think of something under the eye of God which is far greater than all the sins in the whole world in their aggregate greatness. We can understand how the world is in reconciliation, can we not?

Rem So God can go on with the world.

CAC God addresses men in grace, altogether apart from the question of their sins. So if a poor sinner met God and told Him he was overwhelmed with the burden of his sins, He would say, I have been glorified in respect of all those sins. I have now to speak about the propitiation in My Son.

The publican who smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful (propitious) to me, went away justified; he was in the blessedness of justification — at least that is how God puts it. It makes you thankful to have to do with a God like that.

Propitiation — it is with the Father, with God as known under that precious Name of grace. He had a righteous basis upon which to take up this ground.

"Jesus Christ the righteous", not the merciful. He is entitled to undertake this service, having dealt with all righteously before He said a word about it.

Ques People are not troubled about their sins before conversion, but since their conversion; do you find it so?

CAC Yes, often, "If any one sin"; it is a believer, so it precisely refers to sins committed after conversion.

Rem Such a word as, "Christ died for our sins", is comprehensive.

CAC It was nearly two thousand years before my sins were committed that Christ died for them; they were all known to Him and to God. If one had been left out there would have been no access into the presence of God, just as one sin shut Adam and Eve out. The consideration of this is establishing and sets up the soul on solid ground.

Rem He does not say, If any child of God sin, but "If any one sin".

CAC They are the apostle's children addressed in paternal affection, not exactly God's children here. If John came in amongst us this evening, that is how he would address us — as children. Later on he speaks of children of God.

Ques When he says, "These thing I write to you", to what does he refer?

CAC I thought to the whole section from chapter 1: 5. The first part is that our joy might be full. Then he takes up the great moral questions, for God is light, and there is the question of sin, but all on that line is in order that we may not sin. It is very beautiful to think of the service the Lord is carrying on with the Father whenever a believer sins. I suppose there is not a moment without some believer sinning, so this holy service is going on all the time. So is the service of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; it is the same word as Patron. It is divine Persons carrying on Their service with a view to the one that has sinned being brought to his true bearings — with a view to a change being brought about in the believer, not in the Father!

Rem The propitiation is *there* — there is no need to delay.

CAC And this service is that we may think and feel rightly about it. God would have us confess immediately, and not leave it till the end of the day — it is putting it off too long. Some believers have a settling up at the close of the day. I am finding no fault with that, but it can be done immediately.

When Paul said to the high priest, "God will smite thee, whited wall", the Advocate was ready in a second. At the rebuke, "Dost thou rail against the high priest of God?", he replies immediately without considering injustice, "Thou shalt not speak evilly of the ruler of thy people" (Acts 23: 3 - 5). Paul is saying this as the result of the advocacy of Christ in heaven. He was immediately brought into line.

Rem We should be ready for the immediate presence of the Father day or night.

CAC This particular service is connected with when we go wrong. Before we repent or confess, the advocacy is going on. When we confess, then He is ready to forgive — He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins. So we do not get off our knees and go and do the same thing again, which often happens to us as Christians. Practically and naturally in many things we all offend. The advocacy comes in so that we should not justify or excuse it. Paul might have tried to excuse or justify himself — but no, he goes down. We go down under the sense of the seriousness of it. Then Christ comes before us, His propitiation and the value of His work on the cross; and the consequence is we get freed of the sin and it does not hang round our necks like a millstone for several years perhaps. It is the devil who brings that about with people.

Rem It is like the kiss of a child because forgiven, and it is in favour again. It draws out the affection of the heart to the Person.

CAC Paul spoke a hasty word. If I say a hasty word, do I think it necessitates the work of a glorified Man in heaven? He has moved in service the very minute I said it, not only died for it years ago. You abhor the sin, but you love that blessed Man in heaven who would be your Advocate when you have said a hasty word. If we took it to heart more, nothing would affect us more than that. It would make us holy people if we looked at sin in the light of the activities of divine Persons. It would make me very tender in my heart. If we cherished these thoughts we should be a much more holy people. If we are hard it is necessary for discipline to come in. The advocacy of Christ brings that about to bring it home to us, because we are not sensitive enough, for, if we were, we should not need such severe dealings. I might be sinning all the time without doing or saying anything. I may not have been praying for the saints. The sins of omission are terrible; not to pray for the saints, not to do the good you might have done, is sin.

Ques How is He the propitiation for the whole world?

CAC It says, "And he is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world". It is one of the most wonderful statements in Scripture.

Ques "Christ died for our sins". How can we disentangle these thoughts?

CAC We disentangle them by learning the meaning of two words — propitiation and substitution. Substitution is not a scriptural word, but it embodies a scriptural thought. In substitution the Lord bears the actual sins of certain sinners — of God's elect. It never says He bears everybody's sins. In a general way you can say, "Christ died for our sins", to a congregation of people. Each one can appropriate it if he has faith.

Propitiation is far wider — "For the whole world". It is like the two goats on the day of atonement. The blood of one was carried in and put on the mercy-seat; that is propitiation — all the value of the blood in the presence of God and He glorified by it. Then the goat on whose head all the sins were confessed was sent into a land uninhabited. The sins of the people were transferred to that goat and never seen again. But propitiation is greater than substitution. If for a lot of captive slaves a vast sum is put down for their ransom, all can put in a claim. That is propitiation. Substitution is not for all, but for God's elect, those who are called in grace. God is more glorified by the death of Christ than if sin had never come in; that is a universal aspect of the death of Christ. So on the ground of propitiation we can preach the gospel. Certain persons come into it. Christ actually bore your sins, died for them, and His present work is not propitiation. That was done once for all, but the value of it remains; it is all in His own Person. A man, woman and child anywhere can say, Christ died for me, not one is excluded from the benefit of Christ's death. The propitiation is so extensive in its value that the whole world comes into it. God is not raising the question of sins with anyone now, He is raising the question of Christ; that is the test.

THE ADVOCACY OF CHRIST

1 John 2: 1, 2

It is often asked, 'But what about sins committed after conversion? How are they dealt with?' That this is a very important question no believer would deny, for "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1: 8); and practically "we all often offend" (James 3: 2). At the same time we must remember that there is no excuse for a Christian when he sins, for we read, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall no way fulfil flesh's lust" (Galatians 5: 16). It is our privilege and responsibility to walk in the Spirit, and if we always did so we should not sin.

In the first place let us recall the fact — so clearly and fully presented in Scripture — that there is but *one* efficacious sacrifice for sins. The Spirit of God draws a pointed contrast between the oft-repeated "sacrifices, which can never take away sins" and the "one sacrifice for sins" offered by Christ; and He asserts plainly that by God's will "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once" and that "by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified" (Hebrews 10: 10 - 14). The Son of God has by Himself purged our sins (Hebrews 1: 3). The work was accomplished centuries before the sins were committed, and in due time, when we believed the gospel, its efficacy was made known to us that we might have purged consciences, and be assured that God will not impute sin to us. Any repetition of the sacrifice is impossible, nor is it ever suggested in Scripture that there can be a reapplication of its cleansing virtue to our souls. On the contrary the believer is "sanctified" — he is set apart for God in the unchanging value of the offering of Christ and is "perfected in perpetuity". He is continually before God in the efficacy of an eternal redemption. All his sins, whether committed before conversion or after, were borne by Jesus. If so much as one of them had not been taken into account at Calvary he must perish, for there remains no more sacrifice for sins.

We do not wish to lessen in any Christian's mind the sense of the evil of sin. That which cost Christ such untold agonies to put away cannot be lightly thought of. But it is deeply important for every believer to know that if he does sin, his standing in Christ *remains unchanged*, his relationship with God as one of His children is *not* thereby broken off, and he is *not* put back to the position which he occupied before he was converted.

What, then, is the consequence of a sin committed by a believer? His heart condemns him; his communion as a child with God is interrupted; and, consequently, he loses his spiritual joy; but he is still a child, though a *naughty*

child. What he needs is to have his communion and joy restored, and for this there is a provision made, as we read in 1 John 2: 1, 2, "And if any one sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and *he* is the propitiation for our sins". The One who has made full atonement for our sins on the cross is now our Patron with the Father. The believer's sin requires, and calls into exercise, this gracious activity of divine love. Nor does our blessed Patron delay His service until we repent and judge ourselves; His advocacy is rather the secret producing cause of every movement in our souls towards restoration. Consequent upon His advocacy *up there*, the Holy Spirit *down here* makes us feel the sorrow and shame of the sins we have committed, and we "judge ourselves". Then, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1: 9). It is not a question of putting sin away before God — that was settled at the cross — but a Father forgiving a child, and communion being restored.

ADVOCACY

1 John 2: 1, 2; Numbers 19: 1 - 22

Observe the contrast, beloved friends, between 1 John 1: 4 and 1 John 2: 1. "These things write we to you *that your joy may be full*"; "These things I write to you *in order that you may not sin*". These are the two keys to the epistle. In chapter 1 he had been writing about the eternal life which was with the Father, and had been manifested to the apostles. There was that which they had heard, which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon and which their hands had handled of the Word of life; and they have declared unto us that which they saw and heard that we may have fellowship with them. Surely no privilege could be more exalted, more supremely blessed than to have fellowship with the men who could say that their fellowship was with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Such a privilege must be fulness of joy for every one who enters into it.

But from verse 5 down to the end of the chapter are things which he writes to us *that we may not sin*, and in this section he does not speak of the Father but of God, and tells us that "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". *Sin can only be measured by God*. I am quite sure that a great many believers have never weighed this great but simple fact. A well-known and widespread definition of sin is that it consists of a conscious violation of a known law. That definition leaves God out altogether. It measures sin by our knowledge or our conscience, so that if I am in the dark and do what is wrong without knowing it, it is not sin! You might as well say that black is white if a man is such a fool that he *thinks* it is.

Then we cannot measure sin by our consciences, for a man's conscience may be so seared and defiled that he is positively not conscious when he does violate a known law.

If we do not measure sin by *God* we have no proper thought of what sin is. It is my conviction that one of the greatest needs of the present time is a right thought of sin. The different 'holiness' movements of the present day are characterised by total ignorance of what sin really is. And I may say that the definition of sin which I have quoted would never have been invented by any man unless there was a desire to support an entirely unscriptural idea of holiness. If a man wishes to be able to say that he has not committed a sin for a year or a month or a week he must invent a definition of sin for himself that will meet his own ideas, but these ideas are darkness and not light, and the definition is in the face of it unholy and false.

How different the language and the reasoning of the apostle! It will not do for me to make my conscience or my knowledge the standard. Our minds and our consciences are often darkened so that we do not know right from wrong. As the hymn says,

'Deeds of merit as we thought them, He will show us were but sin'.

Have you never been very well pleased with yourself for doing a certain thing, and perhaps afterwards you have discovered that vanity was the motive which was largely at work in connection with it? The most holy person on earth is often sensible of different motives working in the mind. Often we have to consider and balance our motives, and it is not always easy to find out the source of them. It would be blasphemous to suppose there was anything of that kind in God. He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, our whole life is a lie. If a man says he has not committed a sin for six months, he is walking in darkness, and while professing to have fellowship with God his whole life is a lie. He is not near enough to the light to judge the darkness, and his professed holiness is a falsehood from end to end, because it amounts to saying that darkness is light. If a man does not judge the darkness that is in him, he is walking in it, and if he *professes* to be walking in fellowship with God his whole life is a falsehood.

Verse 7 is christianity pure and simple. We walk in the light and everything is exposed and judged by it, and this is the true basis of christian fellowship. It is not the fellowship of people who are deceiving themselves and others as to what the flesh is, but the fellowship of those who are walking in the full light of God and judging the darkness that is in them in that light, those who, through grace, have a common judgment of the flesh, and have no confidence in it.

But if there is the judgment of sin, there is the knowledge of that which removes it altogether in righteousness from before God. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin". This is very different from saying that we have no sin; indeed if we thus say, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Then the work of Christ has made it a matter of faithfulness and justice on the part of God to forgive sins when they are confessed, and in the confession we get such a judgment of them that we are practically cleansed from them. No one ever truly *confesses* sin to God until he abhors it.

Then finally, it is said, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us". These are the solemn things which the apostle

writes to us that we "may not sin". Who could consider the solemn nature of these things and remain in a state of indifference to sin?

"And if any one sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous". I do not know any scripture that is more solemn and suggestive than this as to the gravity of sin, nor any more calculated to give deep and gracious exercise to a godly soul. The smallest sin of my life demands the attention and consideration of divine Persons! Think of Jesus Christ and the Father having been together occupied this day about something in my life which has probably not as yet cost *me* a single thought! My sin *needs* to be taken into consideration by divine Persons; taken up in infinite grace, I need hardly say, for it is "*with the Father*"; but I do not think anyone could consider this without a deep effect being produced in the soul.

Then how blessed to know that while Jesus Christ is with the Father about my sin, it is as "the righteous". Every movement of His on my behalf brings afresh before the Father the wonderful fact that He has been glorified to the full about sin. He is not, in this connection, 'the merciful' or 'the gracious', but "the righteous". He can be with the Father about my sin as One who has maintained to the full the divine glory in reference to the very sin which He is concerned about. Hence the conference between divine Persons which my sin calls for is *entirely* with a view to my deliverance and restoration. It is not a criminal question which is raised. It is not one who appears in a court of justice to turn aside a just sentence from being executed. You may get a better idea of it if you think of a child who has got into debt and deeply disgraced and displeased his father by so doing. But one has paid all the debt, and the one who has paid it is now conferring with the father as to the terrible condition of the boy, and they are together considering how he may be exercised about his conduct and brought back to the right affections and behaviour of a child. The object which the advocacy has in view is to bring us to a divine judgment of the sin; that is, to bring us to confess it.

Confession is not such an easy and trifling matter as some people think. I do not believe there is any true confession until we go deeper than the wrong action, and recognise the act as the outcome of *what we are*. An unconverted man will acknowledge a wrong action, but I do not think an unconverted man every truly judges *himself*. He thinks he will be more careful in future, and do better another time; he has no true judgment of the root and source of the evil. In Psalm 51, David does not occupy himself so much about the wicked action as about the person who did the action.

He judged *himself*. The terrible fruit that had come out brought before David's conscience what he was as a child of Adam. There cannot be true restoration

or true confession, until we arrive at this. We have to learn and to own that we have been allowing the flesh — that we have been living after the flesh — and that the flesh can yield nothing but *sin*.

But in order to see how this is brought about, let us turn to Numbers 19, which illustrates very fully what may be called *our side* of this subject — the way in which the advocacy of Christ has its practical effect upon our souls. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without blemish, wherein is no defect, and upon which never came yoke" (Numbers 19: 2). Unblemished perfection and absolute freedom from the yoke of sin were essential to the One who alone could bear the holy judgment of God upon sin. None could ever fill the requirements of divine judgment but the Holy One of God — His beloved Son.

Then we find in verse 3 that Eleazar the priest was to "bring it outside the camp, and one shall slaughter it before him". The camp was a congregation of men in the flesh, and if God brought the judgment of sin into connection with such a people it could only bring death and judgment upon them. Hence the burning of the sin-offering is always "outside the camp" (see Hebrews 13: 11). If God is solemnly raising the question of *sin* He cannot recognise the camp or man in the flesh, except to bring death and judgment upon him.

Death and judgment must pass upon the man in whom sin is; that is, upon man in the flesh. Then the blood of the heifer was sprinkled before the tent of meeting seven times (verse 4), setting forth the deep, divine truth that it is only on the ground of death that God can have to do with man in grace, or that man can come to God.

Further, the heifer must be burned; "Its skin, and its flesh, and its blood, with its dung, shall he burn" (verse 5). All must go into the consuming fire of judgment. Think of the unmitigated judgment of that awful hour when the One who knew no sin was *made sin for us*, and all that God's holiness must be against sin was expressed! It is beyond measure solemn for each one of us, for if we think of ourselves as children of Adam — men in the flesh — there is positively nothing in us but sin. Sin is woven into every thread and fibre of our being as men in the flesh, and God can only deal with sin in consuming judgment.

"And the priest shall take cedar-wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer" (verse 6). The *cedar* is symbolical of man in his greatness and loftiness — it must go into the fire. If I had the most wonderful character, if I were great in moral excellence as Job or Saul of Tarsus, what is it in presence of the cross? Then there is the *hyssop* — symbolical of man in his littleness, in his vileness and wretchedness, or, if you

like, of man in his most humble guise. Some people are proud of their humility, and always saying disparaging things of themselves. This is only a subtle form of self-occupation and self-righteousness. There is nothing in it for God; the hyssop goes into the fire as well as the cedar. I take the *scarlet* to be typical of everything in which man can glory. A man may glory in being tall or strong; he will make a scarlet robe for himself out of any bit of physical or mental ability that he possesses; but everything of that kind is under judgment with God; all the glory of man must go into the consuming fire. If you want this truth in the plain words of the New Testament you may find it in 2 Corinthians 5: 14, "One died for all, then all have died". There is nothing more solemn than that. It is the divine judgment upon man in the flesh, with all his pretensions and voluntary humility and glory. Everything that is of man in the flesh finds its true place before God in the consuming fire of judgment.

In the light of the cross we come to a true estimate of what sin is. Not one particle of man in the flesh has escaped the judgment of God, and this conclusively proves that he is incapable of yielding anything for God. Every phase of his conduct and character only presents some aspect of sin.

There is not a movement for God in him — his whole condition is morally one of *death*, and in the death of Christ he is seen to be judicially dead before God. "All have died" is God's sentence upon the race of Adam. Man in the flesh cannot yield a single thing for God; he is under death; and if we touch him or come within the circle of his influence we are defiled. If we sin, it is the outcome and activity of the flesh; that is, we come morally into contact with that which cannot yield anything for God but sin. We touch the dead man and are defiled. Observe that it is man under death who is the great source of uncleanness (see verses 11, 13, 14, 16).

If my body acts in virtue of its own life it will yield nothing but sin. Hence it is written, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit life on account of righteousness" (Romans 8: 10). The Holy Spirit is the only divine controlling power or source of life in the Christian.

The wonderful thing is that though the believer still has the same body as when he was "in the flesh", the life that is connected with that body no longer controls it, but the Spirit of God. As to its own life, the body of the Christian is dead, and now it is moved by the Spirit of God. Of course, I speak of the Christian *as such*. If we sin, it is the activity of the flesh. We have allowed that to act which yields nothing but sin. To use the typical language of our chapter, we have come into contact with *a dead man*.

Just a word, at this point, about the "tent" (verse 14). I take the tent to be the sphere of man's influence — in a word, *the world*. Man in the flesh has formed

round himself a circle of things which takes its character from him. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2: 16). That is the circle of things in which the dead man is found, and you cannot get into it without becoming unclean.

The world is a system of things perfectly according to man in the flesh, and all the elements of the world are *in me* as a man in the flesh. It is easy enough to get away from the *outside* world, but not so easy to keep entirely clear of the *inside* world. Indeed, there is only one way to keep clear of it, and that is by having our hearts filled with the divine affections proper to the children of God. Take the verses I referred to at the beginning. If you and I were in the fulness of joy that belongs to the divine fellowship into which we are privileged to enter, we should be entirely clear of the dead man and his tent. We should be basking in the sunshine of *a brighter world*, and in the enjoyment of the Father's love.

May I add a practical word as to verse 15. "And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, shall be unclean". As to our surroundings in the world we are passing through, everything is permeated by the influences and principles of man in the flesh, and if we are not careful to keep ourselves "covered" we shall soon find how quickly these influences will steal into our hearts and draw us away from the Father's world and the Father's love. I think the covering on the vessel is something like the girding of the loins. You cannot let your affections and thoughts be loose and free in a scene like this. You cannot leave yourself open to the influences that are about without quickly being rendered unclean.

"And a clean man shall gather the ashes of the heifer, and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the assembly of the children of Israel, for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin" (verse 9). The deep import and necessity of the use of this water of purification may be gathered from verse 20: "The man that is unclean, and doth not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of the congregation, for he hath defiled the sanctuary of Jehovah: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled on him: he is unclean". If we allow the flesh without self-judgment we cannot go on with God — there is an end of our walk with Him. As I said before, there is no true confession without self-judgment, and this is not so easy and light a matter as some people seem to suppose. "He that toucheth a dead person, any dead body of a man, shall be unclean seven days" (verse 11). I have heard people say, after behaving very badly, in a jaunty way as if it was a very small thing, 'I have confessed it to the Lord and got all right with

Him'. I do not think a person who looks upon confession of sin as a light and easy thing knows much about the "seven days". Of course for us it is not a literal week, but it is a sufficient period for us to learn what a defiling thing sin is, and to get a true judgment of what the flesh is in the sight of God. God cleanses us from all unrighteousness by giving us a perfect abhorrence of it. And observe that the water of purification was not sprinkled upon the unclean person until the *third day* (see verses 12, 19). In the first stage of exercise we learn what the flesh is by the painful consequences of allowing it, and by the darkness of soul into which it brings us. During the three days previous to the application of the water of separation, the unclean person was learning in isolation what sin was in the eyes of Jehovah. God allows us to prove in the experience of our souls what a defiling thing sin is. There was a dog that liked to kill chickens, and to break him of it they tied a dead chicken round his neck until it fell to pieces. After that he would not look at a chicken; he had had plenty of it. God makes us so feel the darkness in our souls that we turn with disgust from the thing that caused it. In this way sin, instead of being a gratification, becomes a real object of aversion to us.

Then on the third day the ashes of the burnt heifer were taken, and running water put thereto in a vessel, and this water was sprinkled with hyssop upon the unclean person. The ashes are evidently typical of the remembrance of fully executed judgment, and the running (or living) water is symbolical of the Holy Spirit. There is no full self-judgment, except in the active remembrance of the holy judgment which has passed upon sin in the flesh at the cross, and this known in our souls by the present power of the Spirit of God. We remember the judgment — its deep reality is brought home to our hearts — but we know it as completely and eternally exhausted. Nothing gives such true self judgment as this, but withal a deep sense of grace predominates in the self-judged soul who thus learns the terrible nature of sin and the flesh before God. The darkness of soul is past when grace is thus known, repentance is deeper and God more truly known.

Then on the seventh day there is a second sprinkling, and the unclean person becomes clean at even. It is only in the active remembrance of the complete removal of our "old man" from before God at the cross, and this now known in our souls by the Spirit, that we can resume that walk with God which has been interrupted by the allowance of the flesh.

Just a word about what people call 'besetting sins'. It does not seem to me that Scripture supposes that a man would sin and confess, and sin again the same way and confess again, and so on. When people are not delivered from a 'besetting sin' I believe the secret is that they are not with God about it.

There is a great reality in having to do with God. I believe if we are honestly *with God* about things of that kind their power is broken.

In conclusion, notice the significant fact that a "clean person" must sprinkle the water upon the unclean. One thing is very plainly suggested to us by this — that we are dependent on Another for purification and restoration. We are absolutely dependent upon our Advocate for this service. Of course He may use one of His servants, or may do it without human instrumentality, but in either case *He* is the Source of this ministry; it is He who sprinkles the water of purification upon us. There is no mistake more common than to try to restore ourselves by self-examination, instead of turning to the Lord. It is only He who can give us a true judgment of the source of our sin, and it is a great thing to have such a sense of His grace and to be so drawn to *Him* that our hearts really turn to Him for this service when a cloud comes over our joy.

The man who was unclean and not purified was cut off from the congregation (verse 20). The man who sins and is not restored is certainly not in the joy of the wonderful fellowship of 1 John 1: 3, 4, which may be called the fellowship of the assembly today. It is not that he is cut off from relationship, but he has not the joys proper to his relationship. But for the wonderful service which we have been considering we might go on days, months, and years without having fulness of joy. I need hardly say that the advocacy goes on, but I am persuaded that we do not get the good of it if our hearts do not turn to the Lord for it. I dare say there are hearts here tonight who could bear sorrowful witness to this. You know it is possible for a believer to go on weeks or months or years without ever having his joy full. It will be an immense gain to us if our souls are awakened to look more to the Lord for this precious service.

I have not spoken on such a subject without much exercise of heart, and I pray the Lord to grant us a true apprehension of what sin is, and a better knowledge in our souls of this wonderful service of the One who is our "patron with the Father".

1 JOHN 2 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 2: 1 - 25

Rem "Know" is a very characteristic word in John's writings. One thought of knowing is conscious knowledge: "That ye may know that ye have eternal life" (chapter 5: 13). Knowing is a great feature of christianity.

CAC Yes, surely. Everything is vague and uncertain to us unless we know.

Ques The thought of commandments is clearly linked with that, is it not?

Rem The word "keep" comes in between (verse 3).

CAC Yes, we keep His commandments. We are not under law, Paul lays that down very distinctly, but we are under commandment. It is the contrast to lawlessness. John tells us sin is lawlessness in this epistle. It is not simply doing wrong things but the principle of lawlessness — that is sin. Man doing what he thinks is right, his own will, that is lawlessness.

Rem The Lord was the exact opposite. He came to do the will of God.

CAC We might have thought if the Lord had done His own will it would be all right, but He disclaims that principle. It would have been the giving up of the whole principle of His life as a Man on the earth. "I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15: 10). It was the condition on which that blessed One abode in His love.

Rem And if we keep His commandments we shall abide in His love.

CAC This is the Lord. I think the One referred to here is the One who walked here as Man. The Lord was greatly rejoiced when a gentile soldier recognised the principle on which He was acting. "I also am a man under authority". He perceived that He was acting under authority and because it was so, He only had to speak the word and the servant would be healed. The Lord was very pleased and said, "Not even in Israel have I found so great faith" (Matthew 8: 9, 10). I suppose the only way to escape from lawlessness is to be under commandment. Is there any other way?

Rem I was thinking it says, "He that loves me not does not keep my words; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but that of the Father who has sent me" (John 14: 24), showing how entirely He was expressing the Father's word and the Father's will.

Rem "I know that his commandment is life eternal" (John 12: 50).

CAC The Lord can only be known in an obedient nature. He can only be known in a nature that is kindred to His own nature as Man. We pray

sometimes that we might know Him better. The way to it is to be found in that spirit of obedience in which He walked.

Rem That nature is from above.

CAC That is what I was thinking. The Lord introduces the truth of new birth in John's gospel very early. The first chapter speaks of persons born of God and who have received Christ.

Ques How would you distinguish between "word" and "commandment"?

CAC I suppose a commandment in the principle of it involves subjection to the will of another.

Rem I meant what we speak of as the ten commandments, a particular sort of commandment. This is much wider than that.

CAC I thought so.

Ques Are these commands of the Lord Himself, commandments of love coming from One who does love?

CAC But He Himself becomes the great commandment, we might say. That was in your mind in contrast to a code of rules.

Rem Something akin to sitting at His feet, hearing His word, coming under Him in every kind of way, under His control.

Ques Does it mean doing anything you know that is pleasing to Him? With David's men, he was their commandment, so to speak, for they had such love for him. If we were on that line we should know Him better.

CAC And if we knew Him better we should be on that line. It is reciprocal. I suppose there is a difference between keeping His commandments in verses 3 and 4, and keeping His word in verse 5.

Ques Would it be right to say that His commandments are the expression of love?

CAC His commandments are the expression of what God's love would have us be, but His word is the expression of Himself. It is addressed to the individual soul. "In him verily the love of God is perfected". John is very individual.

Ques Do you think teaching and commandment are very much on the same line? It is one of the things we come to. We are taught so that we should come into line with God's own thoughts.

CAC A truly exercised soul wants to be freed from every other control and come under His commandments. We want to escape from our own wills and

come under divine control — the will of the One we love. We dread our own wills.

Rem The disciple becomes as his Master, perfect in his Master's teaching, I take it.

CAC Yes.

Ques Is your thought that the "word" is deeper and more comprehensive than the "commandment"?

CAC Yes, His word expresses Himself — the whole tenor of what is expressed in Him.

Rem Philadelphia is commended by the Lord: "Thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word" (Revelation 3: 8).

Ques Do you regard that as a much more personal thing?

It draws out the affections.

CAC The Lord speaks of keeping His Father's word, does He not? He says, "I know him, and I keep his word". That is John 8, where there are several references to His word.

Ques Is all that seen in result at the end of verse 6, "Ought, even as he walked, himself also so to walk"?

CAC Yes. The gain of keeping His word is that the love of God is perfected in those that do.

Rem We need the divine capacity to take in His word: "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word has no entrance in you", the Lord said (John 8: 37).

CAC There was no capacity to appreciate His word. One must have the same nature.

> 'And with adoring fervour
> In this Thy nature grow'. (51:5)

Ques Is there any difference between keeping His commandments and His word?

CAC In the word "keep", do you mean? I do not know that there is.

Rem 'Keep' in John's writings carries the thought of observe. You do not hide it in a napkin, but positively express and carry it out in your life.

CAC Mary was listening to His word, she was absorbed.

Rem You say the word of the Lord comes to an exercised soul, so the Lord knows exactly what word to give that soul, and then it enlarges and opens out.

CAC Yes, touching all that He is. It makes a very great difference when we read the Scriptures and learn what Christ is. We often do it to get comfort for ourselves, but we shall get greater comfort if we read to know more of Him, and put ourselves under His influence and His control. The thought of affection underlies all this. The thought of keeping His word is a general idea. So by learning Him we learn what is pleasing to Him. We acquire a sense of what is pleasing to Him as was said a little while ago.

Rem In John 14: 23, 24 the Lord links it up so intimately with the Father. "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him ... the word which ye hear is not mine, but that of the Father who has sent me".

CAC There is room there for everything that pertains to the Father and the Son.

Ques So is it what is positive or negative that is spoken of as engaging ourselves — His word or commandment, or a lie?

CAC Yes. The love of God is perfected. I wonder what that means.

Rem It is not an abstract quality of love in God, but as working out in human hearts.

CAC Yes, it is perfected in the individual. It is illustrated, I think, in John himself.

Ques Is that why John is spoken of as expressing lovability?

CAC Yes, no doubt he was lovable and he can speak of the love of God in a very simple and happy way, as one in whom it was perfected. It seems rather the thought of the appreciation of the love of God coming to maturity in a man.

The love of God shed abroad in our hearts is there in Romans, God's gospel love, His love to sinners manifested in the fact that Christ has died for them. It is like the first appreciation of the love of God. But John has the thought of it being matured — perfected.

Rem If we love one another His love is perfected in us.

CAC That is very helpful on this point. It is a wonderful thought — the love of God being perfected. It is an unclouded appreciation of it without any shade of misgiving.

Rem "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4: 18).

CAC I was thinking of that scripture. It is God's perfect love.

Ques Is Philippians 3 on the same line, "As many therefore as are perfect"?

CAC 'Made perfect' is 'full grown'.

1 JOHN 3 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 3: 4 - 12

CAC It is a wonderful word, "In him sin is not". That is said of the Son of God. This refers to His present condition — in Him sin is not, not was not. What is true of Him in His glorified condition was just as true of Him in the days of His flesh. The taking away of our sins was done in absolute perfection because *He* did it — as complete and perfect as the perfection of the One who did it. The children of God know that their sins have been taken away by the Son of God. To think that they have not been taken away is downright unbelief. Otherwise we could not abide in Him. Sins taken away means not a single spot, so that we can abide in that absolutely holy One, and if we do, we shall not commit sin.

Rem One great object in His being manifested in this world is to take away our sins. John the Baptist speaks of His taking away the sin of the world.

CAC That meant, God's Lamb to take sin out of God's world. He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself — the great sacrificial thought that sin and sins are put away, so that in Hebrews 1 it says, He made purification of sins, and having done so, set Himself down, all, the whole work, accomplished in His own Person. These are not sins exactly as resting upon us, but as a pollution before God. He makes purification so that they are all removed from under the eye of God. We are liberated so as to abide in the One in whom sin is not, and whoever abides in Him does not sin. How could anyone sin who derives the whole spring of his moral being from the One in whom sin is not? The thoughts of God are supremely wonderful. If we do not abide in Him, somehow or other we have been led astray. Our proper, normal place is to abide in the One in whom sin is not — like the earth and the sun, every movement regulated by the sun. John would almost suggest that we are either abiding in the Son of God or in the devil. I€ I sin I am really acting like the devil. I have lost for the moment the consciousness of my relation with the One in whom sin is not. There is nothing in common between sin and the One in whom sin is not. It is a dreadful thing if I have to acknowledge that I have done something in which Christ could not possibly have a part. What lover of His would be guilty of such wandering away from Him? No wife who loves her husband would do something alien to her husband's thoughts. The only thing to do, if we do sin, is to get it away immediately by confession; it is an alien element that does not belong to the saints at all.

It is good for us to remember what we really are if we are born of God. We have to consider ourselves as begotten of God and not in the flesh, as of

divine generation. Natural birth brought us into a state of death and sin, but as born of God we come into a new moral condition, an entirely new origin; and as born of God, we are as sinless as Christ. His seed remains in him, he cannot sin. John puts it down in this definite way because he wants us to take it up in this definite way. It does not do to weaken these statements, but to accept them as divine statements. Peter speaks of incorruptible seed — so we are holy in our origin as born of God.

The Son of God was manifested that He might undo the works of the devil — that is, whatever the devil has wrought in the souls of men, the Son of God came to undo it. It supposes that we have been a workshop for the devil, every one of us, and the Son of God was manifested to undo in our souls all that Satan had wrought there — not only in John and James and Matthew, but in you and me. Everything has to be picked to pieces and put together again in an altogether different way. There is a spiritual working out of this in Romans 7, our being extricated from evil and brought into good. It is not deliverance we want, but the Deliverer, the Person actuated by divine power and love, Jesus Christ our Lord. Nothing else is any good to me. There are things in me, such as the law of sin working in my flesh; they are too strong for me and only One Person can deal with them. He is delighted to destroy the works of the devil. He would not leave a single bit active. We do not get it all at once, it is a continuous process. As soon as I become conscious of something in me that is of the devil, I want the Son of God as Deliverer, and He is able to deliver me and to destroy the works of the devil in my heart and to put something else there instead. Romans 7 shows you the passage from the one to the other. Most people who call themselves believers are in Romans 7 to this day. They have never come to the Person who can set them free, and who can give them a new breath of life. We are alive to God in Christ Jesus, and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. You are not sinning when you love the brethren. If I abide in Christ I shall love the brethren, for they are born of God, and in so doing I escape from sin. So that it is a wonderful thing to have contact with the children of God. The whole system of christendom has been built up by Satan to hinder the children of God from loving one another.

It is a great thing to have brethren that we can love. Perhaps they are poor samples, we may say sometimes. Well, do you recognise them as children of God? This is a nasty, cantankerous man, you say, I cannot get on with him. But if I think this man was once convicted of sin by the mighty operation of God and he was brought to self-abasement and to see the value of Christ, well, I want to think of him in that way and to love him. We want to cultivate

that way of thinking. The devil shows us the blemishes, but the blessed Spirit of God would bring before us that they are born of God — and from that viewpoint we can help the nasty brother. He would shed it off A nasty, cantankerous man does not know what it is to be born of God — "the brother for whom Christ died" carries a great appeal. John is writing to people like ourselves, not to angels in heaven. It is a case of being born either of God or of the devil. When a believer falls into a sin, it is a danger signal. My trouble is not only the sin, but whatever was the matter with me to be in such *a state* as led to that. It is a red light, so that you would say, 'See where you have been'. We get careless, and the devil sees to it that something crops up that leads us into actual sin — a hasty word or something not exactly true. We were not abiding in the One in whom sin is not. These are great moral realities and we have all got to face these exercises.

It is not easy to say the actual date of this epistle, but spiritually it comes after John's gospel. In the gospel you see the One in whom sin is not, and in the epistle the working out of that which is true in Him and in you.

1 JOHN 4 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 4: 7 - 21

CAC Satan little thought when he brought in sin and death that he was providing God with an occasion to show what He really was, which otherwise could not really have been known.

Rem So the fall of man is the opportunity for God to show His love.

CAC It was Augustine who said of the fall, 'O happy fault'. And nothing can possibly happen to defeat God. I suppose there is thus a reason why it should be dwelt upon, because it is man's estate in death and as having committed sins that brings out the love of God. It is the knowledge of that love that is to be manifested in the children of God, not complacent love, not simply love that moves happily when all is complacent, but that moves happily and victoriously in the presence of the most contrary elements. It is very wonderful.

Rem That would help us in regard to one another.

CAC Love is largely obstructed, because we get before us certain things in the brethren that we do not like. There is nothing God hates more than sin and death, but those very things brought out His love, they were opportunity for His love.

Rem "Love ... endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13: 7). Unless love is the motive, there is nothing in it!

CAC Yes, the apostle goes to a great length in saying he might have wonderful things, but if he had not love he was nothing.

Rem "We being still sinners, Christ has died for us" (Romans 5: 8) would apply.

CAC And do you not think we need to keep our souls saturated with the thought? *That* is the kind of love that God would shed abroad in our hearts, active love when everything is contrary.

Rem "Where sin abounded grace has overabounded" (Romans 5: 20).

CAC God loves to be known, and it says, "He that loves not has not known God; for God is love".

Ques Would you say that what you get in Romans is more what you get in the Old Testament, and here it is more as His children?

CAC Yes, but more as those in debt and under sin. He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. It looks at us in that setting, does it not?

Rem Verse 17 says, "Herein has love been perfected with us that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that even as *he* is, *we* also are in the world".

CAC If we in this world are as He is, that settles every question.

Rem The beginning of the verse is, "Herein has love been perfected with us".

CAC It supposes that certain ones are known to us as begotten of God. That is how we look at believers.

Rem The stress seems to be on the person who loves as having been begotten — on the person who is to show the love.

CAC That is, it is not what we are to expect, but what we are to show. J.N.D. said that christianity works by what it brings, not by what it finds, and there is a good deal in that.

Rem So we are to do it, not expect it; we are to love one another.

CAC It supposes a company, "one another", that there are those available to be loved, and happiness consists in loving them.

Ques Is the expression, "Every one that loves" characteristic?

CAC Yes.

Rem That is how we prove we are begotten, by love inactivity;

it is expressed.

CAC It supposes that what God is comes into evidence. No one has seen Him at any time, so unless there is a company on the earth loving one another, there is no testimony as to what God is, for He is invisible. He loves to bring Himself into evidence in His children, and we do not do it by trying to do it, but by dwelling on how God has acted when we were in sin and sins. We should never forget this.

Ques Would the deep sleep of Adam show that there is vindication of the love apart from sin altogether?

CAC I should think that the wonderful scene in Genesis 2 is rather the setting out of divine purpose and counsel. God hastened to show what He had in His mind — Christ and the assembly. He brings in the man and then the woman into evidence. It is more counsel and purpose. It was His sovereignty. It was

not good for man to dwell alone. It was not quite the time to bring out what was in His heart; He was providing for the man and for the human race in furnishing a wife for Adam.

Rem The deep sleep represents death through which Eve was formed.

CAC That is what makes it practical to us. If I am a naughty brother, it is not to prevent you loving me. It comes more to light in Genesis 3. The love of God comes out in the skins; He does not abandon His fallen creatures. It must have been the greatest surprise to Adam and Eve that He should come after them and enquire into the matter that had taken place, and that He should have His own way of clothing them. In those animals you have propitiation; so the very fact that they had sinned showed what He could do for a sinful creature, and the providing of the clothing was far greater than the garden and putting them in it. So God was better known. It has been said that Adam and Eve were far better off outside the garden than in it. Of course they were better off: they knew God in His care for them as fallen creatures under death, and what He would do for them. They were far better off outside and clothed, having the knowledge of God, than before — that is the gospel!

Ques Would you open up propitiation a little? Love here is not connected with sonship, but with propitiation.

CAC It is the wonderful sacrificial work which has come under the eye of God for His complete satisfaction in relation to sins. Every sin calls loudly for judgment. We would not like to think of God as One careless of sin; but He has provided propitiation which meets every question and satisfies, and even glorifies, Him. And so we have a great knowledge of God; we know God better than the angels do. There is no propitiation for fallen angels.

God has brought propitiation into view, and it is through His beloved Son. So I can go to God and speak to Him with perfect rest about all my sins; if I could recount them, those before and those after my conversion, I could finish up by saying that His beloved Son has been sent a propitiation for my sins. That is how God has made Himself known.

Then if a brother has ruffled me, does it not sink into microscopic dimensions? O, let me speak to God about my propitiation. It is not in a doctrinal but in a practical way that it works. "Herein has love been perfected with us" — we should like it to be true, so that the thing is seen in its perfection in the saints. It is seen in perfection in Him in the bosom of the Father; it is His home, the rest of His heart, so that it could not be otherwise than that He should declare God. It is where He lived, is it not? If we loved, it would be very easy for us to overlook tiny things in our brother, for they are very tiny things that ruffle us

and put us out of tune, and make us evil-disposed towards our brother. I am not supposing we are to overlook things that ought to be judged, for John is the very one who tells us there is a sin unto death — that is the other side of the matter altogether.

Ques Why is it, "We also ought to love one another"? It is a kind of obligation.

CAC And I think it is very necessary it should be put in that way; there is a tendency to evasion with us, but it is due, due to God that we should love one another. I suppose He has given us of His Spirit that there might be power to do it.

Ques There is a little difference between giving us His Spirit, and of His Spirit. Would one be a more general fact and the other imply that we have that which is characteristic of His Spirit? "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1: 19).

CAC It is strikingly said that way, "Of his Spirit", almost like God admitting us to a share of His own Spirit; is that the thought?

Rem I suppose this involves the divine economy of the Father and the Son and the witness of the Spirit.

Rem I think that earlier in the chapter it is God, and that here in verse 14 it is the Father, which makes it more striking. "And *we* have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world".

CAC This verse clearly proves it refers to the Son in manhood, because of what the apostles had seen. "*We* have seen, and testify".

Rem He was here as Son before He could be sent.

Ques Do you think that verse 14 bears out what you were saying of God's love.

CAC Yes, it is the whole testimony of the gospel, that the world is in God's view for salvation. The propitiation cannot be limited to the children of God; it has in view the whole world. So that now the christian confession is that Jesus is the Son of God — everything hangs upon that.

Ques Is that a further thought to Jesus Christ come in flesh?

CAC Well, I suppose so; it is the confession of the relation in which Jesus stands to God — He is the Son of God. One who confesses that, God abides in him and he in God. There is no greater light than that — that Jesus is the Son of God.

Rem It is the finishing touch in the education of the man in John 9.

CAC Yes. To walk about in this world prepared at all times to confess that Jesus is the Son of God, well, God abides in such persons and they in Him.

Ques Does it involve the manhood of Christ?

CAC You would not think of taking any impression of God from another; the whole divine light as to God is in Him. The great things that God has said, "This is my beloved Son", "Thou are my beloved Son" — these great statements sum up what God has to say about Him, and God dwells in the one who confesses that truth. All the religious speculations that fill the minds of men melt away in the presence of this great fact, that Jesus is the Son of God. Man's thoughts would leave us in bewildering uncertainty, but when we come back to this marvellous reality, it settles everything; we do not need to argue about anything, knowing this great fact that Jesus is the Son of God.

Rem It is a very crucial moment when it dawns on the *soul*.

CAC To believe that Jesus is the Christ and that He is the Son of God is the great foundation in the soul; my knowledge of God, my blessings and my relations with God, all hang on this Person.

Ques Would you say what it means when it says, "Abides in God, and God in him"?

CAC I should be slow to attempt to define it, but I can see that if Jesus is confessed as the Son of God, the whole light of God that has come out in His Son is in the heart of the believer, and then the believer abides in God as looking for nothing outside the knowledge of God. It is real stability of soul, would you not say?

Rem It was the first note of Paul's preaching.

CAC Yes.

1 JOHN 5 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 5: 1 - 13

CAC I think it would be good to get help as to what it means that "Jesus is the Christ". What is your impression?

Ques Do you think that it means the Anointed to fulfil God's will in the fullest sense?

CAC Yes.

Ques Does it signify that every other man has to disappear out of the sight and thoughts of the believer, so that there is only one Man in view — nothing else at all before the person who believes it, in that way?

CAC That is the evidence that one is born of God.

Rem I thought it could not be reached by any other way or means. It is entirely against all that is natural.

CAC Such a person as Jesus could never be selected to fill any important post in the world.

Rem "I have found David ..., a man after my heart, who shall do all my will" (Acts 13: 22).

CAC Ought we to connect this in our minds with the thought that He was hardly in the position of the Christ until He was anointed? There was the wonderful character of the thirty years previously under the eye of God — time given for the full development of what was there in true humanity, so that God could say, I, have *found* a Man for My delight. It is not merely that it was there, but it had been fully developed during all that time. He was fully delightful to God. It is something to come to in our inmost soul, that that Man is God's selected Man and anointed One, so that it is not only written in the Scripture but is in the faith of the soul. It makes the believer a very distinguished personage, he is marked off from every other person in the world.

Rem The woman of Samaria said "Is not he the Christ?" (John 4: 29).

CAC We all need to go through the exercises of that woman. He knows all about what I am, and along with that we get some sense of what He is. She had got something that was greater in her estimation than all her sinful past, so she goes back to say, "Is not he the Christ?" There is not a trace of her going back to the things that she did.

Rem She said, when Christ is come, He will tell us all things.

CAC He got it out of her as the testimony of what was there, so that the woman was born of God.

The Lord says to Peter, "Who do ye say that I am?", and Peter says, "Thou art the Christ"; that is, the Lord expects us to say it. What do I say about Him? Anyone born of God can say in a spirit of adoration, He is the Christ. And He has no rival, you cannot put any other man anywhere near Him.

Rem It would be a good start for the service of God.

Ques The two thoughts — the Christ and the Son of God — are looked at together, both in Peter's confession and here. Would you say a little as to that? Would the Son of God involve the Lord's manhood here?

CAC Yes, and it is true that He not only has this wonderful official place, for Christ is an official title giving Him pre-eminence, but then He is the Son of God, that is His glory personally. 'Christ' speaks of His glories officially, but 'Son of God' of His glories personally.

Ques Would the woman be the illustration of the first, and the man in John 9 of the second?

CAC I was thinking of that. The woman does not go further than the Christ, and she did that as the result of being born of God; but the Lord loved to make Himself known to the man in chapter 9 as the Son of God. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

Rem There would not be any hankering after the world then. "All that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world".

CAC That is very good. I do not suppose be ever wanted to enter the synagogue again. They had cast him out of it. This is the true bond between the saints, the fact that they are born of God, as evidenced by this confession; that is how we regard one another, every brother and sister.

Rem The second part of the first verse speaks of it.

CAC Yes, because the object of all this is to set up relations between the brethren which will bring about conditions of eternal life. They can be brought about while we are in a scene of desolation and destruction, and are surely what we must long for, and we get these conditions here. I suppose the object of the writer is to make this a precious reality to us — that we have come into eternal life now.

Ques Would you explain what is involved in having the Son? "He that has the Son has life" (verse 12).

Rem I was thinking of verse 12, which might be rendered, 'He that has the Son has *the* life: he that has not the Son of God has not *the* life'. Eternal life is in contrast to a death scene where everything is changing.

CAC Yes.

Ques I can understand that statement, but what is it to have the Son?

Rem Well, does not verse 5 give that? Is it not the appropriation by the Holy Spirit of what that Person is, and what He is to *me*? So it works outs, "He that has the Son has life". It is in contrast to all that is passing and changing here.

CAC Yes, I think that is right.

Rem "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10: 10).

CAC Yes.

Ques Would it be their enjoying it in the company of Christ?

CAC It is the thought of personal possession. It is put that way. It is possible to have personal possession of the Son, a divine Person having come into manhood so that He might be possessed by us, a tangible reality to us, and in possessing the Person we have life.

Rem It is right outside the world, which is really death.

CAC I love to think that all that is in that Person is for my appropriation and possession. He says, "This is my body which is for you"; that is, you are welcome to appropriate it.

Rem "He also who eats me shall live also on account of me" (John 6: 57). Does that come in?

CAC Yes.

Rem It is so easy to get hold of things in an abstract way, mentally, without having touched them in reality.

CAC That is where the prayers of the saints come in. When we have light through ministry we should earnestly pray that we might have it for ourselves, and not merely be content with looking at it. It is for all of us to pursue the exercise in secret, that we want to be personally in possession of the Person whom we are assured is the Christ, the Son of God. Paul had been converted many years, perhaps about thirty, when he said, That I might know Christ (Philippians 3: 10). Do you not know Him, Paul? I want to, he says.

Rem It is outside the realm of memory.

CAC And I have seen that. Speak of Jesus to saints who have lost their memory and see if they do not beam. We were led to sing 174:1 at the beginning of our meeting. Well, it is all there, is it not?

Rem Paul lived in conformity to His death, through the fellowship of His sufferings, and the power of His resurrection.

Ques Would verses 6 - 8 be liberating, so that we could appropriate the Son?

CAC That is, you have in mind the death of Christ, and do we ever understand the death of Christ until we know the Person? We must know that He is the Christ, the Son of God, to be able to estimate the meaning of His death; so faith in Scripture is connected with divine Persons. "I believe God", Paul says. Having got the Person, we approach the thought of His death in an entirely different way; then we begin to understand the water and the blood. And with reference to that, we have a most remarkable statement in the gospel, have we not? "And immediately there came out blood and water. And he who saw it bears witness, and his witness is true, and he knows that he says true that ye also may believe" (John 19: 34, 35). 1 do not know if John or any other writer puts such emphasis on what he is saying, as here in relation to this matter of the water and the blood.

Ques Why does it say, "Not by water only, but by water and blood"?

CAC That is another remarkable emphasis. It is to bring out the great liberating power of His death, as was remarked before, of Jesus the Christ.

Ques Would you distinguish between the blood and the water?

CAC I think the testimony of Scripture would give us the witness of the blood to meet all that is due to God — that is the universal testimony of Scripture. Every claim is met by the blood that cleanses from every sin; every question Godward is met by the blood. But then we also need purification; and water in Scripture is what purifies. Numbers 19 is the Old Testament scripture we should go to, where we get the water for purification of sin. There must be a character of purification that is suitable.

Ques Is it a question of the removal of the man?

CAC Cleansing by blood is better understood than the cleansing by water, generally speaking. Every converted person finds every answer in the blood. It enables God to justify him. But this cleansing of water is not always followed up and understood. It is the question of the blood in the epistle of Romans up to chapter 5. Another question is raised as to what I am in chapter 6 and he brings in the thought of water there, for he brings in baptism, which is the great figure of cleansing by water. We are baptised unto Christ and His death,

and it involves purification for man — the man has to go. Figuratively seen in baptism, the man goes down under out of sight. Where did I go out of sight? Not in my baptism, which is figurative of it. I went out of sight in the death of Christ.

1 JOHN 5 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 5: 6 - 13

Ques In the statement, "This is he that came by water and blood", is the point the grace in which He came, and consequent on death — not incarnation in that way?

CAC No, I think it was how the Lord came into His present position and condition. But He is now in a position and condition which is after death, so that no question in connection with sin, whether for atonement or for moral cleansing, remains unsettled. The Spirit could not give any other testimony than that all those questions connected with what we were in flesh and blood are divinely settled. Is that not the idea?

Ques The witness of the Spirit is really consequent on the place in which He has arrived in that way?

CAC I thought so. I think that would show that the Lord is viewed as having completed the whole work that He came to do. The value of the water and of the blood remains, and the Spirit witnesses. The Spirit could never witness to us that we are still in the flesh, could He?

Ques Do you connect the witness of the Spirit with the gift of the Spirit — on the fact of the Spirit being here? He has come here.

CAC Yes, the Spirit is the truth and the truth is the Spirit, it works either way. So it is important for us not to get out of the witness of the Spirit. We should be full of the Spirit, and are under obligation to be full of the Spirit. If so, we should have the Spirit's thoughts about everything. There is nothing mysterious about being filled with the Spirit! It is normal and so regarded in Ephesians, where it is enjoined on us. Ephesians is the full christian position; whether I know anything about it does not matter, it is part of that position to be filled with the Spirit. It has been verified in the disciples in the early days and it is normal for us. Then we shall get the full gain of the witness of the Spirit.

Ques What is it to be filled with the Spirit?

CAC I am really left in charge of myself — this body and all connected with it. I am under responsibility not to allow anything contrary in my thoughts or feelings to the Spirit. We have a good deal of objective help for this. The thoughts of the Scriptures are of the Spirit, and ministry, if true, is in the power of the Spirit, so that as occupied with it I am filled with the Spirit. How thankful you feel at any moment when there is not a fleshly thought or feeling

moving in your soul — even if it is for a minute. We were then occupied with divine Persons, and the truth. It has come home to me lately in a much more simple way. If I find a fleshly thought in my mind, I should judge it at once; any self-importance is not of the Spirit, but the flesh.

We should take advantage of every occasion that would help us in this. It is a great thing for Christians to converse together of divine things. Then we are probably in the region of the Spirit; or perhaps a brother may correct me. And I think God is very pleased when any one of us pays attention to the epistle to the Ephesians. That is what God has appointed to me and I may take advantage of it.

Rem At one time Ephesians used to be thought too high up for those low down.

CAC If we accept the low-down position, we shall remain there! Paul says, I am not content to do that! Yet even so, God does not leave me there, but someone or some little book perhaps comes along to help me. My flesh will not accept one divine thought; I have come to that conclusion.

Ques Is it a characteristic position as we go about our daily work?

CAC Quite so, your daily work is another order of things, where you are doing the will of God. It may necessitate the application of our minds to what is in hand, spiritual thoughts not then filling our minds. It belongs to responsible work, and you need the Spirit to keep you from slipping away from God's will. The Spirit is life on account of righteousness. Why should I be discontented with God's will for me? If I am filled with the Spirit I do my work to the glory of God. In what kind of spirit am I doing these things of daily drudgery? Is it cheerfully and happily? If I am grumbling and complaining, I am not filled with the Spirit.

The point here is that the Spirit is the truth, the Spirit is indissolubly connected with the truth, and if we have no fleshly motives in it we can be witnesses to the truth.

Someone told Whitfield how well he had preached one day and he replied, 'Yes, the devil told me that before I left the pulpit'. He judged it. I should think that a man like that, so quick to discern the flesh, was filled with the Spirit. Some Christians are so continually walking in the flesh that they do not know when they are doing it. "If, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body" (Romans 8: 13). The Spirit of God would give power to put the deeds of the body to death — to crush its head. I think we have very little idea of the value of the Spirit. "Ye know him" (John 14: 17) the Lord said to His disciples. How do I know Him? Because of His help to me. So with the most

commonplace thing, there is room in it for the features of Christ to come out. We get discontented with things we do not like, and we get right out of the current of the Spirit; but then there is no need for it, thank God! These trying conditions are helpful discipline. If I have to do something I do not like to do, if I avoid it, I miss the discipline. A brother once remarked he did not retire from business, because it was good discipline for him.

We should value all that helps to keep us in the current of the Spirit. I value the Scriptures more and more, and the ministry, on this line. If my thoughts never get out of the current of the Spirit, I am sure my words and actions would not, for they start there.

Ques If we could come together, would that not help?

CAC We all ought to feel that we should not miss an opportunity to come together, though I know we have to take account of illness or duties. Fancy coming for one hour in the region of the Spirit! Well, it is worth while, is it not?

I suppose the point here is that the Spirit is the testimony of the water and the blood in the soul of the believer. He would never give the testimony to a believer that sin is upon him judicially in the sight of God, for every sin has been cleansed by the blood. Then as to the flesh, the water comes in and the sense that we died with Christ — that is the truth.

Ques Would the service of feet-washing enter into this — the use of the water by the saints?

CAC It is very helpful and based on the fact that we are already washed all over. Every action of my flesh was removed in the death of Christ; if it was not I should perish eternally. The feet-washing is application to me in detail; so if soil comes on my feet, it has to be washed away. It is the same character of washing as being washed all over.

My comfort is that there was so much true to the Lord that was not true to the disciples. "Ye are already clean" (John 15: 3) — the Lord looks at us from His own point of view. If the Lord saw me in the flesh, it would deny the value of His own death.

We are almost afraid to go to the Lord, in case He would raise all manner of questions, but He would say to us, I want you to understand what I effected for you in My death — by the water and blood that flowed from My side. It clears you of all you have been going on with, the whole body of sin. It shows how little we know God and know the Lord, or we should be most thankful to move over into God's thoughts.

Ques What is the meaning of the statement, "The three agree in one"?

CAC There is a note in the Darby Translation which explains it. It is certainly true that the Spirit, the water and the blood leave no vestige of what we are according to the flesh. It has often been said that this is how we come to the truth of eternal life, it is a matter of witness. If we keep in the circle of divine witness, it is always to one point, the Spirit setting aside the working of the flesh, the water setting it aside morally, and the blood judicially. It is a matter of divine witness, not experimental here. Then the positive side of the witness is brought in that we might be taken up with the Son of God. The witness would liberate us to be absorbed with another Man, and that the Son of God, and in having the Son, we have life. That is our life; whether I am in it experimentally or not, that is my life. If I only touched it for five minutes, this is my life.

Rem "Ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God" (Colossians 3: 3).

CAC It is a wonderful statement that. "When the Christ is manifested who is our life", is the same thing. I think Colossians goes very much with John. As a matter of actual things, we are not dead, but the Spirit would keep me in consciousness of my life, and that I am in Another. We being dead — we reckon we are dead and alive in Christ Jesus; no person is a Christian without that. I think God intends it to be a spiritual reality — that we are dead and our life hid with the Christ in God. What other life have we got? And it brings you to a point that you may be filled with all the fulness of God. The Ephesian side is that the Father strengthens us with power by His Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in our hearts, being rooted and founded in love, that we may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that we may be filled to all the fulness of God (Ephesians 3: 16 - 19). What a region to live in! Still that does not take us out of the responsible exercises of everyday life, for after that, he tells us we must not steal or tell lies.

Rem I suppose it is in the conditions of everyday life that this life shines out.

CAC Eternal life is for the place where death is. It is contrasted with life in various scriptures, and I suppose eternal life is really a matter of witness. Does this section (verses 6 - 12) not show us we come into eternal life as a matter of divine witness?

Rem So it says, "And this is the witness, that God has given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son".

CAC Yes, you see there is the witness of the Spirit, and of the water and of the blood, and there is the witness of God that He has witnessed concerning His Son, and the believer on the Son of God has the witness in himself. God is bearing witness of His Son, and the witness is that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The whole paragraph is full of the thought of witness.

Rem We get the thought of the Spirit witnessing with our spirit in Romans 8: 16.

CAC It is the believer on the Son of God in having the Spirit who has the witness in himself. It is characteristically in the presence of the Spirit, so all that is to show us we have it in the Son of God, apart from all that we are in the flesh, which we have to leave behind to touch it. And eternal life is in the Spirit; so we reap eternal life from the Spirit. The Person who can give us knowledge of eternal life is the Spirit. When I was a youngster, a brother used to say, Boys, whatever you do, keep on good terms with the Holy Spirit.

1 JOHN 5 (NOTES OF A READING)

1 John 5: 14 - 21

CAC This is the boldness that belongs to the family circle (verse 14); there is freedom in speaking to God and the sense of knowing what His will is, which belongs here to the family circle. This would go along with the knowledge that we have eternal life; we should gather, I think, that eternal life is the portion of children.

Ques Would you say that the boldness is in the realisation of the knowledge of His love in the relationship in which He has placed us to Himself?

CAC Quite so, God having given the knowledge of Himself we know what to ask for, so that we pray from that standpoint. As in the children's place we know His will; it would be so normally in any family, the father's will would be known generally by the children, they would have liberty in speaking to their father; but John supposes that we pass out of the region of sin.

Rem Life was one of His original thoughts for man, and there is confidingness.

CAC And God loves that, He does not take any pleasure in a spirit of bondage to fear. So in this case, we have the petitions. We are still in the place where prayer is needful. It is not needed in heaven but it is here. John's gospel makes it very clear that everything is to be carried on on the principle of dependence. The Lord repeated it again and again to His disciples; so that we have a full resource.

Rem We are often very slow to ask. The woman in John 4 is instructive on that line. "If thou knewest the gift of God ... thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water". Asking is a great thing.

CAC That is confirming; it is just what we have been saying. The Lord instructed her to ask according to God's will. It is instructive. If we ask for living water, we shall get it.

I suppose all the wonderful things brought out in this epistle can very happily and advantageously be turned into prayer. Saints have been helped by praying about eternal life, have they not? It is really one of the most wonderful things that God has ever proposed, that it should be possible for dying men and women in a scene of death to have the enjoyment of that which death cannot touch, and to have it as a matter of life.

Some years ago when the question of eternal life came up, many were stirred up to know the reality of it for themselves. Though they knew it as a term,

they actually knew no more of it than a block of wood! I do not suppose anyone will get the gain of it apart from prayer.

It is a serious thing that there is a sin unto death, for here I suppose it is a believer. "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". But the asking is on the line of life. It shows how much we can do for our brother. It is a wonderful thing that we can get him life, that there is power for me to get him life by prayer. So if we see a brother sinning we are not to give him up but get him life. "And he shall give him life", it says, as if there is no doubt about it.

Rem It is remarkable to think of the Lord as Man asking for life; "He asked life of thee; thou gavest it him, length of days for ever and ever" (Psalm 21: 4).

CAC It is remarkable that the Lord should have entered into life in resurrection on the principle of prayer. Think of that blessed One who was perfectly immune to death, coming into a position in which He could ask for life; and He received it in resurrection. Hebrews 5: 7 says He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death, and was heard because of His piety. It is not "from" but "out of" death. It is wonderful to think of the Lord getting life on the principle of prayer, but He is the pattern for everything, it is patterned first in the Lord. He saw the great shadow of death coming upon Him, there was no escape; only, His death was vicarious, but He prays with strong crying and tears, and resurrection is the answer to His own crying and prayers. We can be taken out of death morally by prayer. So if you see me sinning I hope that you will get me life.

The family of God is a circle of life, and everyone in it should be in life. If a man loses his place in the christian circle I regard that very seriously. If he is out of fellowship and dies without being restored he is guilty of a sin unto death. It is very solemn that so many get out of the circle of life and privilege and do not get back. Perhaps that is our fault, we do not pray for them. There is no life really outside christian fellowship, and it is a very solemn thing to get outside it.

I do not think it means some particular sin which people talk about as 'mortal sin'. It is that there is such an amount of self-will in it that there is no restoration in the government of God. It is possible to be so self-willed that in the government of God there is no restoration. All this goes on in God's government in His family. There is not only all the warmth and wealth of divine affection, but the solemn fact of divine government. It is so in any family; without government it would be like a ship without a rudder. "We know that

every one begotten of God does not sin, ... and the wicked one does not touch him".

Rem Verse 18 is the normal state in contrast to those who fall in the wilderness.

CAC It is quite abnormal for a believer to sin. The wicked one has not got anything in those begotten of God. "The ruler of the world comes, and in me he has nothing", the Lord said (John 14: 30). He had not the slightest hold in that blessed One. As begotten of God we have the divine nature, and there is nothing for Satan in that. It shows how important it is that we should go on with what is of God.

Ques The thought of keeping oneself is important, is it not? Jude says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21).

CAC It shows that the element of responsibility enters into things and we are put in charge of ourselves; and I have to be watchful and observant. The world is there with all its attractions, but it only appeals to that in me which does not love God. As children of God we love the Father, and the world has no appeal. I suppose Satan is baffled when he sees that the world does not make the slightest appeal to us. Satan claimed the world and its glory, and I suppose that through man's sin Satan has got a certain power, so that he could propose to give the Lord all of it if He would worship him. But the Lord says, "Thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and him alone shalt thou serve" (Luke 4: 8), showing that as God is kept before us we are not allured by what is in the world. Satan was a usurper. Satan might make a believer rich in order to ruin him. Many have been thus ruined, and by anything that belongs to the world. But if we are really in the love of God, those things do not attract us, and if things come to us in the providence of God we accept them as a responsibility.

Rem The statement that "the whole world lies in the wicked one" is a remarkable statement.

CAC Yes, there should be the consciousness with us that we are of God. All God's children know that they are of God, by the intercourse they have with God. What they get *from God* is the great thing. It is a conscious knowledge. When we have to do with God we are conscious of it; we cannot have to do with God and not know it. If a child could not know his father, it would be a peculiar state of things. If one has once been turned inside out and convicted of sin, he knows no one else but God could have done it; and the consciousness of the love of God came in on top of that conviction, and we know it was God.

So there is a wonderful summing up in verse 20: "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life".

I do not suppose that refers to His coming historically, that He came nineteen centuries ago. But the Son of God has come into our lives; that is, He has come as regards me!

We can look back to a time when the Son of God had not come (He was a stranger to us and far off); and those to whom He has come are conscious that He has come. And He has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. The result of the Son of God coming into the heart really is that we get an understanding of God. It is very wonderful for it to be said, "We are in him that is true", for I suppose that is God Himself; it is a little more than being in Christ, it is being in God.

Rem "God abides in him, and he in God".

Ques Why does it say, "In him that is true"?

CAC Well, I do not know, but I wondered if it conveyed the thought that everything is perfectly genuine in God and nowhere else. There is no deception in any way, you can be sure of everything with God. I am amazed in myself that there is such a lot that is not genuine in ourselves; you are never quite sure when you have got to the bottom!

I think a Christian walking humbly with God would say he knew God better than himself. To the end there will be an element of uncertainty with us; no one of us quite knows what will turn up in ourselves. There is nothing absolutely genuine outside divine Persons, and the more we dwell in divine Persons the more genuine we shall be. So it says, "We are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ", for all that can be known of Him that is true has been set forth in a Man, and so is a substantial verity brought into our range in Him. So that everything is summed up in Him in that "He is the true God and eternal life", and everything else outside Him is a lie. As the One who is true He is known to us; we have a standard by which to detect every idol.

"Children, keep yourselves from idols". It is the last word from father John — for he takes a parental and not an apostolic place here — the last word from father John is to "keep yourselves from idols".

Rem It shows that we are prone to it.

CAC Quite so. Naturally there is always the tendency with us to let anything outside divine Persons influence us. Anything that influences me outside is

likely to become an idol. So our safety is to be kept, ‘Love divine, near Thee’.

2 JOHN (NOTES OF A READING)

2 John 1 - 13

CAC Is any other part of Scripture directly addressed to a sister? This part is apparently addressed to a widow with children for there is no mention of her husband. This would show that it was intended by the Spirit of God especially for the instruction of sisters; that is the special setting of it by the Spirit.

Rem The end of the epistle says, "The children of thine elect sister greet thee".

CAC It seems to be a sister's epistle, and it is noticeable that God expects sisters to give careful attention to doctrine, does it not? We should have thought that the question of doctrine would be brought before elders or brothers, but this shows that sisters have to be very careful about doctrine. Every sister has to be careful what kind of people she receives into her house, and what kind of people she is on friendly terms with.

Ques "Now I beseech thee, lady" (verse 5); is there a dignity connected with it?

CAC Yes, she is one who has a special place in the testimony, showing a sister may, without getting out of her place as a sister, be a pillar of the truth, a bulwark of the truth, and a comfort to everybody. I think sisters should covet to be very helpful in the testimony.

Rem Two whole books in the Old Testament are written in reference to women.

CAC In the assembly the woman is restored to her full place in glory, would you say? Outside the influence of christianity, woman has not much place. She is not thought much of in India, for instance.

Rem Ruth and Rahab are instances.

CAC Women should be thankful for christianity; they have an importance and dignity not found outside. She gets her place in christianity, and she does not anywhere else.

Rem The man is not without the woman in the Lord; it *is* a very great principle.

CAC So it would displease the Lord for brothers to break bread without sisters; the assembly would not have its proper characteristics. Judaism never gave the woman her proper place, she was very much at the mercy of the man under the law. Any man could give a letter of divorce and send her away.

It was hard-heartedness, the Lord said. It is remarkable how much the elder has to say about the truth.

Ques What is the thought of the elect lady?

CAC Well, my impression was that it was used in a moral sense, not merely that she was one of God's elect, but she had such a character that she might be spoken of as a special one. There are two senses in which elect is used; one our sovereign election before the foundation of the world, and the other this choice of us as being acceptable in His sight. I think it was a term of honour. In Colossians 3: 12 you get, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion" etc., and Christ is spoken of as God's Elect, "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isaiah 42: 1). God singled Him out as the object of His delight. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Psalm 89: 19); it is as if His eyes rested on all and He picks out Christ as the One delightful to Himself.

Rem It is a wonderful commendation, "Whom I love in truth, and not I only but also all who have known the truth" — a marvellous commendation.

CAC She must have had an extraordinary place in that all who knew the truth loved her; she had a universal commendation. She hardly needed a letter of commendation if they all loved her!

Rem And her children. He says, "I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children walking in truth". So the elect lady and her children were characteristically alike in that way.

CAC She must have been a peculiar support to the truth; she was identified with the truth. It lies open to each brother and each sister: we can be thoroughly identified with the truth.

Rem The expression "and her children" might go beyond what is natural and refer to those that followed her, as in Proverbs it might be said that her spiritual children will rise up and call her blessed.

CAC I think it could be taken as referring to those that are of that order.

Rem She evidently had not kept the truth to herself.

CAC John does not speak of the truth being in the Scripture, does he? We know that it is so, it is the Scripture of truth, but John speaks of the truth as abiding in the saints.

Ques What is the difference between the truth abiding in us and being "with us to eternity"? Why exactly is it not in us to eternity, but with us?

CAC There could not be any change in the truth, and it will be the portion and joy of saints to eternity.

Ques Does it suggest the continuity of the truth, a wonderful deposit that would be with the saints for eternity? The truth remains a wonderful reality.

Ques Do you bring in the thought of Christ here, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life"?

CAC Yes, He is the truth, and the Spirit is said to be the truth in the last chapter of the first epistle, and of course the truth is about the Father. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless by me" (John 14: 6), so He is the way to the Father, the truth about the Father and the life in which the Father can be enjoyed. The truth takes in the whole divine economy and so goes on for the whole of eternity. The Father, Son and Spirit go on eternally; we shall never have to part with what we know of the Father, the Son or the Spirit.

Rem The Lord could say to Martha, "Mary has chosen the good part, the which shall not be taken from her"

(Luke 10: 42).

CAC She was another elect lady, was she not? It is God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father; all the truth centres there. The Father is the Name of grace. We sang this morning, 'Blest Father, infinite in grace', and He is the Object of worship.

I suppose the precious title, "The Son of the Father", connects the Lord Jesus Christ with all the grace that is in the Father; all is expressed in Him; we need to let what He is flow into our hearts; thus God loves to be worshipped as the Father — that is what He is.

Rem It is the Son who came forth from the Father who makes Him known.

CAC Yes. The Father has a Son, so all that He is in infinite grace is set forth in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of the Father. I suppose that is why God so delighted in Him. It was all such an expression of grace, that He delighted in Him. When He was at the Jordan and took His place there with repentant sinners in lowliness of spirit, it was just then that He said, "This is my beloved Son". How delightful to the Father to have One here who was such a perfect expression of His grace! Nothing can weaken or change what the Father is; it is one of the things that abide for eternity.

Rem It is interesting to contrast the epistles where you have grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, and there it

stops.

CAC Yes, there is a beautiful touch here. And in verse 4, "As we have received commandment from the Father", and again verse 9, "*He* has both the Father and the Son". I think, if I am not mistaken, John uses in his gospel the name of Father about one hundred and twenty times. You do not get it like that in the other gospels; in them the word kingdom is characteristic. John has very little to say about the kingdom, but a great deal to say about the Father.

Rem In Proverbs, "I was a son unto my father"

(Proverbs 4: 3), is very beautiful in its spiritual principle.

CAC And we do not see the true glory of the Son until we see Him in that light. He is the true expression of the Father, and therefore delightful to Him. And we are brought into the circle of the Father and the Son; I suppose that is all included in the truth.

Rem "An only-begotten with a father" (John 1: 14).

CAC Yes, an only-begotten is a unique relationship very like this, "The Son of the Father".

Rem You feel truth is not limited exactly to what is to be known of divine Persons, but it includes the relationship the saints are brought into; so it would complete the divine circle. I wondered if that was contained in the thought of the truth.

CAC Yes, so that the saints are objects of love. It is not only that the Father and the Son are worshipped, but the saints are loved; we do not worship them, we love them. There is a certain circle on earth that stands in relation to the Father and the Son. What about a person standing in relation to the Father and the Son? You could not help loving them! So truth cannot be separated from love, so the commandment comes in, "This is the commandment, according as ye have heard from the beginning, that ye might walk in it". It would not be genuine apart from that, say if I only love the persons I like naturally. It is the Father's commandment. I do not think that any but children will take up the Father's commandment; it is a family matter.

Rem Did not F.E.R. speak of truth as the setting everything in its right relation? If right with God we should be with one another.

CAC The truth is primarily the setting forth of the blessed God, and we are living in a peculiar time when grace and truth are subsisting realities. There was no such thing in the Old Testament; it never subsisted until Christ was here. There was that behind the scenes that faith laid hold of, but it was

behind the scenes. The public attitude of God was in the law, faith laid hold behind the scenes of the mercy and grace of God, but it has now come to light and we are in the time of grace and truth, not exactly in the public ways of God with the world, but as regards the testimony it is a time of unmingled grace. That God is dealing very severely with man in government is evident, but in testimony He is presenting Himself in pure grace.

A man reaps what he sows; that is never relaxed for anybody; but in grace He deals with anybody as they do not deserve. J.N.D. said that if God had come out in grace in Old Testament times, it would have spoilt everything. It pleased God to deal with man on the ground of law, but in the testimony of the gospel God is dealing with man in pure grace, saying, 'It depends now upon what I am'. It is very important that truth should come first, light as to God and what He is as the Father.

Rem I wondered if one would follow the other. The love is incumbent as the result of the truth; love should emanate from the knowledge of the relationship.

CAC Quite so. Seeing the greatness of all this makes it very serious if there are deceivers. He says, "Many deceivers have gone out into the world".

Ques You would associate complete transparency with the truth?

CAC Yes.

Rem Walk seems to be rather stressed in these verses 4 and 6.

Ques I was going to ask what that meant, "walking in truth" (verse 4)?

CAC Does it not suggest that all our movements are to be in the light of the revelation God has made of Himself, is that not to govern all our movements?

Ques Is it anything like the ship that is governed by the Pole Star, to use a simple illustration?

CAC Yes. But it is a very particular thing to have the revelation of the Father and the Son; it affects the way in which the saints move, they move in the light of the revelation. I believe every one of us does move in the light of how we know God. At Corinth, Paul says, there were some who were ignorant of God, so ignorant that they were giving up the truth of the resurrection. All errors of thought, all wrong thought and wrong practice flow from ignorance of God.

SEARCHED AND SUPPORTED

Revelation 1: 1 - 20

The Lord is presented here as in the midst of the assemblies, taking account of everything. Nothing escapes His notice; He searches out and withers up everything that is not of God; but then He becomes the source of strength. John fell at His feet as dead, but He laid His right hand upon him, and said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one" (verse 17). It is good to be searched by the Lord, for then He is known as strength. He brings to nothing all that is of man in the flesh, that He may be everything for faith.

Christ is everything in christianity, but in the actual history of the assembly many things have come in which are not Christ. There would be no defect to point out if the wrong man had not come in, and death comes upon that man. When Christ appears as the sun shining in its power all that is of the flesh withers up. "The sun has risen with its burning heat, and has withered the grass, and its flower has fallen, and the comeliness of its look has perished" (James 1: 11). So in a coming day when the Sun of righteousness arises, *the Lord alone* shall be exalted. That is just the lesson for us. We have to do with One in whose presence all that is of the flesh is withered up. Then we cease from man, and the Lord is to us light and grace and strength; He maintains us according to God's will in the kingdom and priesthood.

The Lord searches out and exposes everything that is inconsistent with our place as a kingdom or as a priesthood (verse 6), but it is that He may work in us what is according to God, and be strength for us in the position where grace has set us. It is all grace in the truest sense, for the things exposed will not do for God, and the exposure comes in that we may judge them and be in accord with God. The Lord is well able to maintain us for God; when He puts His right hand upon us we are empowered to be here for God's service.

There is a suggestion of distance in all this (verses 12 - 16). The Lord stands in priestly dignity in the midst of the assemblies to take account of everything. He is girt about the breasts with a golden girdle; His affections are not flowing out freely, they are restrained, for He is estimating everything according to divine glory and holiness. Many events that transpire amongst saints are simply the Lord putting His finger upon things which He cannot countenance. Many things pass with us that do not pass with Him. Under His searching gaze we may have to fall at His feet as dead, but then His right hand is put upon us, and we know Him, the living One, as the source of strength. "Fear not", is His word, "I am the first and the last". He has been the First with us if we are Christians at all, and He means to be the Last. He will set everything aside but

Himself. He has to bring us to our bearings, but it is that He may give us the blessed sense of nearness, and empower us for the service of God. We are only capable of serving God as empowered by this blessed Person. In His presence we learn what we are, but we also learn what He is, and what it is to be maintained in His power. It is thus we become overcomers.

The thought of "right hand" (verse 17) is power. It is like the Lord saying to Paul, "My grace suffices thee; for my power is perfected in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12: 9). Paul had to be brought to nothingness in himself, and then Christ became the source of grace and strength for him. To hold to this is to be maintained in "first love". The Ephesians had got away from this; they were zealous and faithful, but they had got away from the Tree of life. They were going on with good things externally, but they had forsaken the living Spring. This was the first step to Laodicea, to being rich and increased with goods, having need of nothing, and the Lord outside! None would like to be in that state, but are we not often on the road that leads to it?

Before the failure of the assemblies is dwelt upon, the corrective is supplied. The experience of John (verse 17) gives the divine corrective of all defection, and it is an experience which should be maintained with us. In learning our own nothingness and the all-sufficiency of Christ we come into a circle outside all the failure of man. This is what the assembly was called to, and the assembly's portion is held out to us still. Ephesus might have enjoyed the tree of life, but the overcomer gets it. The true portion of the assembly according to divine love is open to the overcomer.

The word of God and the priesthood of Christ are suggested in this chapter. John was so searched that he fell at the Lord's feet as dead, but on the other hand he got divine support. Peter felt his weakness (Matthew 14: 30, 31), but then he proved the Lord's support. So also wrestling Jacob got nothing, but when he was subdued he became Israel, and as a prince with God he prevailed. The subdued man has divine power.

To have to do with the Lord is very encouraging, though it may be humbling and exercising. It brings about true circumcision, so that we worship by the Spirit of God, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3: 3). We cannot be near God without these exercises. We are not right in the kingdom or in the priesthood if we do not in some measure (feeble it may be with the best) learn these lessons.

There is nothing to fear in the searchings of God. They lead to holding the Head, to the apprehension and appreciation of the One in whom everything is held for God, and who is the source of everything for us. The more we know the love and pleasure of God, the more we shall welcome His searchings.

The great thing is to keep Christ's word, and not deny His name. His word is the revelation of the Father, and His name is the name of One in whom all the Father's thoughts are established. Keeping His word and not denying His name depend on our apprehension of Him as "the holy, the true" (Revelation 3: 7). The Father's name is a holy name. If all that God is has come out, there must be holiness. Holiness and truth go together. "Holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12: 14).

The Lord takes account of things according to the full height of God's thoughts. The tendency with us is to drop down to the level of what is current, and to measure things by a human standard, forgetting that God never gives up nor departs from His own thoughts. The calling is maintained at its full height in Christ Himself, and He would maintain us at the height of the calling.

THE EPISTLE TO PERGAMOS: THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING AN "EAR"

Revelation 2: 12 - 17

To know what it means to have an "ear" we must look at Jesus in His holy, lowly path here. He ever had an "ear". He was ever attentive to the Father's voice, to the word of God. The spirit of obedience is the practical expression of love (John 14: 21). It is striking that "ears hast thou prepared me" (Psalm 40: 6) should be translated by the Spirit into "thou hast prepared me a body" (Hebrews 10: 5). It shows that the characteristic member of man's body viewed as in relation to God is his *ear*. We might think the hand or the foot or the eye were more important, but God values man's ear.

One who has an ear does not shrink from the "two-edged sword" — the penetrating and dividing power of that sword lays bare secret sources of weakness and departure, and brings them under judgment before they carry the heart away — and this is welcomed by the one who desires to be influenced only by the Lord. There is no doubt that "the throne of Satan" is very much in evidence here; that is, his influence. But *we* have come under the influence of another throne, and the two-edged sword helps us in our allegiance to that throne by exposing to us all that in ourselves which would answer to Satan's throne, so that we may judge it and thus be delivered from its power. All this is needful if we are to be like Antipas, a faithful witness, and to be morally, as he was indeed actually, in the fellowship of Christ's death. This would preserve us from the ensnaring associations into which Balaam would seduce us, and we shall hate what Christ hates and thus be free from the Nicolaitanes. The reward to the overcomer is peculiarly sweet in Pergamos. The "hidden manna" and the "white stone" seem both to convey the idea of what is hidden from public view and known in secret with the Lord by the faithful soul. It is an intensely individual enjoyment of Christ and appropriation of Him in the secret soul history, and a proving of His sufficiency and grace in relation to one's own personal exercises, which forms a special and peculiar link between each saint who has it and Christ, a confidential knowledge and intimacy with which no other intermeddles. And in the "white stone" there is a peculiar token of the Lord's approbation — a distinction conferred by Him not for display but to be the cherished portion and joy in secret of the one who receives it.

REVELATION 3 (NOTES OF A READING)

Revelation 3: 7 - 13

CAC I have thought that the epistle to Philadelphia answers, in a way, to David blessing his house. I refer to 1 Chronicles 16: 43. David had spread a tent for the ark and brought it in, and had established praise and testimony in connection with it, and then he returned to bless his house. I think his house speaks of his kindred, and of a circle in accord with him, and the Lord addresses Philadelphia very much in that character — as being in accord with Himself. He speaks as having the key of David, and I think it is our privilege to be in the position of David's house at the present moment.

David came in when all the order of the dispensation, as set up at the beginning, had broken down. The tabernacle was still in existence in the high place at Gibeon, but there was no ark there. For the sin of His people, God had forsaken the tabernacle at Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men (Psalm 78: 60). The tabernacle represented the official system as set up at the beginning, and it was much in the same position as christendom today. God's lovingkindness is not withdrawn from it yet, just as before the tabernacle there was still the witness that "his lovingkindness endureth for ever", but Christ has not His place there. The present moment is thus peculiar, and it answers very much to the time of David. Christianity as set up in this world has lost its glory, it no longer gives Christ His place, and the time to build the temple, the world to come, has not yet arrived. Now David does a peculiar thing; he does not restore the ark to its place in the tabernacle, but he spreads a tent for it in the city of David. Zion speaks of sovereign mercy. I think that is very much what God is doing in these days — spreading a tent for the ark.

Rem Forming a company who appreciate Christ.

CAC Yes. There was nothing pretentious about the tent that David spread. It had not the official place either of the tabernacle or the temple; its only glory was that the ark was there. Now God is working in sovereign mercy that there may be a company appreciating Christ and giving Him His place.

Everything that is precious centres in Christ. He is the Ark of God, and the Ark of the covenant of Jehovah. An ark is for the security and preservation of what it contains: Noah was preserved in an ark and so was Moses. Christ is the Ark of God; everything that is precious to God, and for God's glory in man, is preserved inviolate in Him. Then He is also the Ark of the covenant of Jehovah: all God's thoughts of grace — all that in which God has engaged Himself to man in the way of blessing — are established and preserved in Him.

Now the character of God's work today is very much in keeping with David spreading a tent for the ark; He is gathering His saints together in the appreciation of Christ, so that there may be a place for Christ in their affections.

David appointed singers and priests with trumpets before the ark — there was praise and testimony — but everything very different from the official order at Gibeon. It was just a simple tent that he spread. The work of God today is that people may appreciate Christ and be formed in accord with Christ, and with such there will be singing and sound of trumpet — praise and testimony.

David blessing his house changes the figure; it suggests a circle in accord with David, and I think in Philadelphia we have in view a company that is in accord with Christ.

Ques Is not the key of David the treasurer's key?

Rem I thought so in Isaiah 22.

CAC It is the key of the house of David. It opens up the place where all the blessing of God is found (1 Chronicles 17: 27). In that sense it is the key of God's treasury.

Isaiah 22: 15 - 25 is a most interesting scripture in connection with Philadelphia. There is a man (Shebna) who is the shame of his lord's house. That is man in the flesh. God rolls him up like a ball and throws him away — a most striking figure — and then brings in Eliakim, type of Christ, and everything hangs upon Him. All the glory of His Father's house hangs upon Him. We have often been told that the Bible gives the history of two men — one is the man of sin and shame, and the other the One who is holy and true. It is a question for each one of us, whether we are going on with the man who is a shame to his lord's house, or with the One who sustains all the glory of God's house and who gives access to the treasury of God. All blessing is established in Christ, and is known and enjoyed in the circle that is in accord with Christ. The glory of His Father's house is connected with "vessels" filled and sustained by Christ. Every vessel of divine blessing is filled out of the fulness of Christ and sustained by Him. There are small vessels and large, but all sustained by Him and filled with Him.

Rem It is very exclusive of everything but Christ, and it gives the character of true testimony — the mind of Christ formed in saints and expressed by them.

CAC We were all once on the line of Shebna. Whatever influence you bring to bear on man in the flesh, however you instruct him, he remains a shame to his lord's house.

Rem He is making a sepulchre.

CAC Yes, that is all he can do; he is under death, and he must go. "Rolling thee up completely, he will roll thee as a ball into a wide country; there shalt thou die, and there shall be the chariots of thy glory, O shame of thy lord's house!" Then Eliakim comes in, and all that is blessed comes with him and hangs on him. In Philadelphia, it seems to me, we get a condition of things sustained by Christ, a company in accord with Him. I cannot think of anything more blessed than to be daily learning more of the perfections of Christ and delighting in Him, and thus being formed for His testimony here. In that testimony, everything takes character from Christ, from Him who is the holy, the true. Under His influence we escape from the domination of sin, and get away from all that is false so we come to what is holy and genuine. I wish we all had more desire for it.

Rem It is most important to learn Christ. "*Ye* have not thus learnt the Christ" (Ephesians 4: 20). There is a great lack of learning Christ today. We learn a great deal from men and adopt their thoughts and ways. A great part of our lives has been spent in adopting the views of men — we get caught by the inventions, fashions and opinions of men — but when you begin to learn Christ you have to unlearn all that, and to see that a great part of your life has been a failure. God means us to *consider* His Christ, those of us who are young as well as the old. God giving Christ was the greatest favour He could show to the world. He brought an entirely new and unknown principle of life amongst men. In men there is inherent selfishness but Christ is the greatest possible contrast to that. Now the Spirit is given to make us like Christ.

Christ was either the greatest mistake that ever was in the world or quite the reverse. Now we have to learn Christ; to copy other men, and adopt their thoughts, is the greatest mistake of our lives.

CAC How blessed to have become the subjects of a divine work that has given us to appreciate Him! "Thou hast a little power", means that they had been strengthened in their affections to appreciate Christ.

Rem To appreciate holiness and truth as seen in Him.

CAC There is a certain void in every heart that has not found holiness and truth. Man has a spirit which came from God, and which cannot really be satisfied with material things, but, as fallen, he has come under the power of many lusts. But when God works, the desire for what is holy and true is awakened, and the answer to that desire is found in Christ.

Ques Would the spirit of a natural man be according to God?

CAC No, because he is a fallen creature; but he has a spirit which came from God, and which has constituted him such a creature that he cannot be really happy without God. If he is not in right relation with God, he is like a wandering star; he has a spirit and a conscience, and he cannot really do without God.

Rem Men may try hard to be self-sufficient, but they cannot succeed.

Rem The new man is after God created in righteousness and holiness of the truth, and can appreciate what is in Christ.

CAC Take the moral qualities of Christ which come out here: holiness, truth, patience, love! What blessed qualities! And everything perfectly genuine — nothing spurious or unreal — He is *true*! It is a wonderful thing to be in accord with Christ; people who are so are in the testimony.

Rem Michal was not in accord with David; she despised him in her heart.

CAC She represents those who are outwardly in relation to Christ without being at all in spiritual accord with Him.

Rem Michal could not bear the thought that on this great day, David should not appear in his royal robes. The glory of man has often a great place with us, but all that is according to man's thoughts has to be displaced if we are to come into accord with Christ.

CAC There is an opened door — a wonderful opportunity — before us; I think we ought to be greatly encouraged.

Ques An opened door into what?

CAC It was said that the key was the treasurer's key; it gives access to God's treasured store of spiritual wealth and blessedness. The door has been opened in all the value of redemption; it is the One who wrought redemption and revealed the love of God who has opened the door for us to enter into the wealth which God has prepared for those who love Him. Are we not encouraged to avail ourselves of that opened door? We have the most magnificent opportunity ever set before a creature. David returned to bless his house — to put them in accord with himself. Christ would have us in complete accord with Himself, this will set us up in divine riches so that we shall be competent for testimony. You must be spiritually wealthy before you can build your tower of testimony (Luke 14: 28).

Rem You may have access to all the wealth of God. People may try to shut the door, but they cannot. Poor humble folk are getting a knowledge of Christ

that surprises everybody around them. The clerical system is angry; they would like that all access to the treasury should be through them.

CAC That is Shebna — the man God throws away — it is he who acts in the synagogue of Satan.

Rem There must be intensely individual exercise. It is as you gather up Christ in your affections there is a living link formed with Him; then the individuals are drawn together. We cannot be drawn to Christ without being also drawn to one another. "Thou ... hast kept my word", suggests guarding what is infinitely precious. The word of Christ is precious, and it is guarded by those who love Him.

CAC Doorkeepers were appointed for the ark. Great care is needed, for there are many ready to creep in unawares and throw some blot of dishonour upon the Ark. It is only sanctified men who can keep the Ark. Eleazar had been sanctified to keep the ark, but his brother Uzzah had not, and he put out his hand, with solemn results. If we are not sanctified we may do something like that.

His word and His name cover a great deal. I thought that His word would cover everything on the revelation side, while His name would cover all that was found of perfect response to the revelation in a blessed anointed Man. He came out to make God known, and all that could be revealed has been revealed. But then, on the other side there has been a perfect answer to it all in a Man. You keep the revelation in your affections, and you do not deny His name - you have to be true to all that He was on man's side. If He were here in Person we should not have to speak of His name, but in His absence His name takes the place of His Person. His name is here — found here in testimony in those who do not deny it.

His new name refers to what is connected with Him in resurrection. The nail in a sure place has been removed — even Christ after the flesh has gone in death. The Shepherd was smitten and the sheep scattered. All that was of God in Israel was gathered to Christ and hung upon Him, but His rejection and death came in, and as after the flesh everything fell to the ground. It was a terrible experience for the disciples, but it was necessary that they might learn His new name — that everything might be gathered up in a new way and on a new ground, where it might be eternally secured for God. The nail in a sure place removed is Christ after the flesh. It is one of the most striking testimonies given in the Old Testament to the fact that Christ must suffer and die. Everything connected even with Christ after the flesh must break down that all might be taken up in connection with Him risen and glorified: the same blessed Person but in a new condition.

Rem The disciples realised it.

CAC Yes, they felt it much. It was a terrible day for them when Christ died, but how blessed when they saw Him again in resurrection, and found Him alive for evermore to sustain everything for God without any possibility of breakdown.

Ques Are we in danger of hanging upon Christ on the wrong side of death?

CAC There is no such Person now as Christ after the flesh, but if people connect Christ with the world as it is, and think to improve the world, and there is a good deal of that kind of thing, they will find that everything on that line breaks down. The testimony of God is not on that line. The moment Christ was risen, everything was on a new footing.

The overcomer is set up morally now as a pillar so that he stands firmly in testimony for Christ amid all the pretensions of a religious world that is full of the name and activities of the wrong man.

Ques Why is there a word to the overcomer?

CAC The word to the overcomer gives it all a bearing on the individual conscience. We must never allow our personal exercises to diminish even though we might be surrounded by most devoted and spiritual Christians.

Philadelphia is a beautiful name — it suggests a company bound together in brotherly love. If you get a company in accord with Christ because Christ is formed in them, that company must be bound together in love. *Brethren* do not divide; it is because people are not truly *brethren* that they divide; there is something else at work rather than divine love. If *brethren* could not agree about some matter of truth or discipline, they would say, 'We do not see alike on this matter, but we *must* see alike, and we will pray until we do see alike'.

Everything for God hangs upon Christ, and if nothing had place with us but His word and His name, we should be wonderfully bound together. If our coming together today has the effect of bringing us in that direction it will be a blessed thing.

REVELATION 3 (NOTES OF A READING)

Revelation 3: 7 - 13

CAC It is very important for us to take account of the position in which we are through divine grace as being here on earth for Christ, and what comes out in the seven assemblies is that the Lord is taking account of how we fill the position. It is an important consideration. There are two great sides of the truth: what Christ is for us, that is the gospel; then what we are for Christ, that is the assembly. These cover the whole ministry: the ministry of the gospel and the ministry of the assembly. In that connection it is interesting to take up the gospel of Matthew. It is largely made up of miracles and parables. The miracles are what Christ is for us, but the parables are what we are to Christ.

Rem The parables are the secrets of the family.

CAC It is a matter we ought to be very much exercised about. The result of accepting the gospel is that there is something here for God, and when we come to that side of things the Lord exercises discrimination. He acts on the principle of selection. This comes out clearly in these addresses to the seven assemblies. He marks out what is pleasing to Him.

Ques Do you connect our responsibility with the parables?

CAC Yes, it has to do with God's work in us. You get it in the first parable in Matthew — the sower. There is something in man for God. All the miracles show what God is for man.

Ques Is it the same in all the gospels as to the thought of the difference in the miracles and the parables?

CAC The gospels differ. There are not many parables in Mark, because it is the presentation of God's holy Servant. In Luke there are the parables of grace: the creditor, the good Samaritan, the great supper, and chapter 15 with the sheep and the silver and the son. Grace is unfolded there. But you also get quite a different set of parables in Luke, and they treat of how grace affects men. The grace parables in Luke correspond to the miracles in Matthew. If people are not clear on the miracle side it is no use talking to them of the parable side, for you cannot bear to hear the parables till you know the miracles. People preach the gospel from the parables in Matthew! It is quite a mistake. The parables are put in that form because they are not for outsiders. You are not supposed to have anything to say to the parable till you know the miracle. All the parables in Matthew have to do with the assembly because they are on the ground of there being something in man for God. The gospel

is what there is in God for man. All that fallen and needy man wants is found in Jesus. The miracles are not just accounts of what happened, they are pictures and shadows of the wonderful deliverances God effects in souls.

Ques What do you mean by not preaching the gospel from the parables?

CAC Some people are so clever they can preach the gospel from anything! But really the parables in Matthew are God looking for results in men. You get in the parables the principle of selection: the good fishes, the treasure, the beautiful pearl, the many called and the few chosen. The Lord is entitled to select, and He selects what pleases Him. Here in these addresses to the seven assemblies He is doing this. You see in the parables the way man takes up the gospel, the use he makes of it. It is not the gospel itself, but the use or misuse of it comes out, the different kinds of ground that receive the seed. The parables in Luke do really unfold the gospel wonderfully. It is grace and it is teaching.

Ques What is the effect of the Lord selecting?

CAC It awakens exercise. What estimate is the Lord forming of us? How have we been affected by the preaching of Christ? Are we in accord with Him? That comes out in Philadelphia.

Rem It is a triumph for God to have such a company down here.

CAC The Lord delights in a company in accord with Himself. It seems to me like David blessing his house. He had brought up the ark with great rejoicings and then he blesses his house — that is the circle that is in accord with David. It is a great thing to be David's house in that way, and come under his approval and blessing.

Rem It is a pleasure to the Lord to have what He can commend.

CAC And it ought to move all our hearts. The supreme desire of each heart must be, 'I would like to be in accord with Him'. It is a wonderful thing to be in accord with Him. Michal was not. She represents the feelings of the natural man. It is pretty much the state of christendom at the present day. What God is working at is to put us in accord with Christ. A greater favour He could not show us. Think of what David did for the ark. He pitched a tent for it. He did not build a temple for it, and he did not take it back to the tabernacle. It had not been in the tabernacle for many a year, but he did not take it there. He spread a tent for it, nothing grand and nothing official. All that was official was still connected with the tabernacle. I think that is a picture of the present state of things. Christianity was set up at first by God in all its grandeur and all its order. Through man's unfaithfulness it failed. The system goes on but there is

no ark there — Christ has not His place there. It is very solemn. And now in these last days, God has been spreading a tent for His ark; that is Philadelphia. There is nothing official connected with the tent. David spread the tent and provided singers and priests, not sacrificial priests, that would have been official, but priests to blow with the trumpets. He wants a few hearts to give Christ His right place and then you get singing and testimony. It is neither the tabernacle, which is past, nor the temple, which is future, but it is something in between. Christ has His place, and there is singing and the sounding of the trumpets, so that a true testimony may be given to Christ at the end. He has not had His place for long centuries.

Rem Zion is a wonderful spot!

CAC Zion is the place of sovereign mercy. What is it but mercy that has given us an appreciation of Christ? God has taken great pains to show that we are not better than others. He lets things come in to prove it: first of all to you yourself — that is the most important. You have to know that you are often less faithful than those with less light, but yet God has ministered Christ to us, and produced in our hearts an affection to Him. It is fine how He is presented here. "The holy, the true". True is 'genuine'. We must take character from Christ if we appreciate Him. I like to look round and see a company that has taken character from Him, real and genuine, with no outward show where there is nothing to correspond within; not with all the sails flying where there is no ballast.

Rem David was true.

CAC David was a remarkable type of Christ, "a man after my heart, who shall do all my will" (Acts 13: 22), and he has a house in accord with him; that is Philadelphia.

Ques Why has the Lord the key of David here?

CAC Oh, I think it is to give admission to David's house. What comes out if we follow the type is that it comes into David's heart to build a house for God. 'No', God says, 'It is not the time for that. I will build thy house' — and all the blessing of God is found in David's house, and Eliakim has the key (Isaiah 22: 20 - 22). Christ has the key to let us in to all the blessing of the house, and it is found with those who are in accord with Christ.

Rem David had a wonderful sense of the blessedness of God.

CAC Well, that is the position of things now. The temple is not set up yet. All the blessing is with David's house. What do you think of Christ? That is the great test today,

and the Lord has opened the door. Go back to Isaiah and you will see. He can give admission to all the blessing of God. It is a great thing to have such a door before us. Perhaps we have not entered much into it yet, but everything of value to God subsists in Christ. He is the ark of the covenant and He sustains the saints according to God. Everything now hangs on Christ, the "small vessels" as well as the great! If we get hold of that, it will take us away from ourselves. I do not want any contribution from man in the flesh, I am so completely set up in what I have in Christ. I am independent of every other person. "Thou ... hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name". Christ is everything to them, and they have taken character from Him, and have come under His selection as altogether suitable to His love. That is what I covet for myself. He would crown us. The idea of a crown is that you have come into the full splendour and blessedness of what has been established in Christ, and through Christ.

Rem It marks out the company as distinct from mere profession.

CAC Yes. We ought to understand there is a select company.

Ques All this is expressed in a company, but how is it learnt?

CAC It must be learnt individually, but then you could not have a proper setting forth of what is connected with His word and His name but in a company. One alone would not be equal to it.

Ques When will it be known "that I have loved thee"?

CAC I think that in the future the Lord will make all those who are like Michal know how He values the company that appreciated Him. The synagogue of Satan is the great centre of opposition and enmity. Where you get man in the flesh taking up christianity you get in result the synagogue of Satan. It is a time of suffering now, and no one will inflict more suffering than the synagogue of Satan. The Lord will vindicate His own, but all we want now is to know that we are agreeable to Him. We may have great opposition and suffering — what is to sustain us? That He approves.

Rem We are slow to see the peculiar blessedness of the moment.

CAC It is a wonderful thing to be there in connection with God's thoughts. All are centred in one Person, and we are to be in accord with Him, and if so we are in discord with all the world.

Ques. What is "my name"?

CAC That covers all He is as Man. There has been a Man in perfect accord with God. He is not here now, but His name is, and that is where the test

comes in. They had not denied His name. Nothing was allowed inconsistent with God's blessed anointed Man. Is our first question, 'Is this according to Him?' All the forces of earth and hell are against that Name, and that Name is to be kept unsullied in the hearts and ways of the company that is in accord with Him. There is nothing that says 'No' to that Name in this company. What an exercise that means! You are carrying that Name now, and your ways must be in accord with it. Eleazar was sanctified to keep the ark. Depend on it, Uzzah was never sanctified. A sanctified man has come under the influence of the Holy and the True, and that will put an impress on his whole moral being. The Christian is thoroughly genuine because he is in the spirit of self-judgment as to the flesh. I do not want to be just an outside Christian! Then you come out not denying His name, and keeping it in all its truth and all it means. You maintain it in a position that costs you something. Do not expect an easy time! It will be hard, but what of that? Once I had to face a certain matter, the decision as to which cost me something (I mention this specially in connection with the young here tonight). And I opened the Book and my eye fell on those words, "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly" (John 12: 3, Authorised Version). The Lord likes costly gifts from those He loves. So often we want to take the cheapest course. Would you not like to take the costly course? If He were here and we met Him would we think anything too much to give Him? He likes costly things.

Ques Is there time to say a little on the overcomer?

CAC The fact that the overcomer comes in here proves that however excellent the company, your own personal exercise must never diminish. You can never relax your own personal vigilance even in Philadelphia. This word to the overcomer wakes up every conscience, and so we are kept in exercise. When the temple is built you will be compensated; now you have to do with the tent pitched for the ark, and have to suffer for it. You have to fight, but you get compensation even now. It is very fine — the compensation is that you carry His name. He makes us descriptive of God and of Himself. That is His reward, and it appeals to our affections. We belong to a company that is to be for the pleasure of Christ.

REVELATION 3 (NOTES OF A READING)

Revelation 3: 14 - 22

CAC In connection with these addresses to the assemblies, it is important to notice the character in which the Lord presents Himself to each. I have thought that in each case the overcomer is the one who apprehends Christ in that character, so that the Lord provides in Himself the remedy for every form of defection. He presents Himself in such a way as to make each one who apprehends Him an overcomer. We often think of overcoming as some effort, or task, on our part; it is not exactly that; the one who *apprehends* Christ is the one who overcomes. To apprehend Christ as the One who is the Holy, the True, He who has the key of David, who opens, and no man shuts, and who shuts and no man opens, would constitute one an overcomer in Philadelphia. It is very simple: if I want to be an overcomer I must pray much that I may apprehend Christ. This involves conflict, because there are always things present at work to move saints' hearts away from Christ inwardly; and to resist them, refusing to be moved away from Christ in your heart and soul, means conflict. The Lord appeals to both the affections and the mind, the intelligence of His saints. It is good to see that there has always been in Christ the preservative power to make His saints overcomers.

It is particularly important to see the character in which the Lord presents Himself to Laodicea. We have no doubt reached Laodicea historically; it is the closing phase of the church's history.

Rem He does not speak to Laodicea of His coming.

CAC It is not likely He would to an assembly He was just going to spue out of His mouth! Philadelphia has the proper characteristics of the whole assembly; Laodicea has *not one*, and looked at as an assembly it is what the Lord will wholly reject.

Rem Yet there are real ones among them.

CAC Scripture does not say so; it does not say there are any who will open the door. Laodicea represents a state of things without Christ, and without the Spirit; if we wish to be preserved from its dangers, we must pay attention to how the Lord is presented in verse 14, "The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God". The Spirit of God is calling especial attention to those three characteristics at the present time; and it is the lack of so apprehending Christ which has brought about the Laodicean state. As the Amen, He is the confirmation of every divine thought; that is a great preservative for saints; it shuts out all thought of development. God has

said 'Amen' in Christ; He has established and confirmed every thought in Christ. You cannot advance on that. Christendom is full of thoughts of development, but there is *finality* in Christ, and there is no going beyond God's final word. We have been hearing lately of the importance of the Colossian epistle in view of this address to Laodicea. The Spirit of God drops a striking hint at the end of that epistle. He charges that it be read in Laodicea. The Lord had provided the corrective; that epistle might have preserved them. Colossians gives God's Amen — *Christ* — and Christ as the Beginning of the creation of God. "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him" (Colossians 2: 9, 10); that is the teaching of Colossians and that is finality; there is nothing beyond. Everything brought in, in addition to Christ, denies that He is "the Amen". If you bring in the teaching of men, philosophy, the elements of the world, it is as much as to say there is more that can be said after Christ; that you need Christ, but many other things as well. They were giving up the fact that Christ was the Amen, and the Beginning of the creation of God.

Then He is the faithful and true Witness; everything that God is witnessing to is in a risen and glorified Man. It is not what He was when on earth, but what He is *now*. If the Lord is not apprehended by us as the faithful and true Witness, we shall be all adrift — that is the state of christendom in its last phase — complete ignorance and confusion about everything, because a risen and glorified Man is not known as the faithful and true Witness, the Witness of the complete setting aside of man in the flesh. It is wonderful that His presence in heaven is the witness of all that was involved in His death. Few know Him as the Witness, many live in His bounty without knowing Him as the Witness. His death means the closing up of the history of man in the flesh for ever. Christendom will not have that, and the refusal of it leads them into Laodiceanism. They are doing their best to set up the man God has set aside in Christ's death. To meet that, we must see what His death witnesses. John speaks of three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; they bear witness to Christ having come and man in the flesh being set aside in His death.

Ques He is the Beginning of the creation of God: is that of new creation?

CAC Whatever God created, Christ was the beginning of it. God always begins with Christ: in the creation of the world, God began with *Him*. We see that in Proverbs 8. He was the wisdom of God for the old creation. The Laodiceans were not beginning with Christ. If you do not begin with Christ, you do not begin with God, and then you have nothing; if you do begin with Him you have only one thing to do and that is to go on with Him.

Rem This is a most solemn indictment: "Neither cold nor hot, ... lukewarm, ... thou art the wretched and the miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked".

CAC Yes, because there is so much true substance there, that makes it very solemn; they might have been very rich. It is very solemn that people may have just enough of God to make them nauseous. The Lord wishes they were either totally ignorant of God or really warmed in His love. How lovely it is that He presents Himself as the universal Provider. "Buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be made manifest; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see".

Rem "As many as I love", that is a very strong expression.

CAC It is the same kind of love that the Lord had for Jerusalem when He wept over it. The Lord can supply everything, whatever the lack. It is a terrible position to be destitute when there is no supply; but there is a full supply even for Laodicea. We should take care to avail ourselves of it. A saint may have to feel, 'I am in a very Laodicean state, neither cold nor hot. I have been posing as a nice Christian and I have found out what a wretched miserable creature I am'. Well, there is a full supply for what such a heart needs.

Rem The shame of nakedness is often spoken of in connection with Israel.

CAC If I am not manifesting *Christ*, I am manifesting *myself*, and if that is so, it is the shame of my nakedness. If what man is as fallen comes into view, it is the shame of my nakedness. If what *Christ* is comes into view, it is glory and praise. Paul was very exercised that he should not be found naked (2 Corinthians 5: 3).

All this rebuke is that there may be repentance and a door opened for Christ. The Lord has been rebuking and disciplining in a very serious way the last few years. His hand has been felt throughout christendom, and it is all that they may open to Him. The Lord is still acting in love towards the christian profession in spite of its nauseous state. He is knocking and standing at the door. His attitude towards the whole christian profession is one of love. He is calling attention to Himself, that is the true explanation of the Lord's supper, perhaps the greatest spiritual event in the history of christendom. I know none other so important. People preach a great deal about the Lord's coming; but the Supper brings Christ into the affections of the saints, and there could not possibly be the revival of affection without a looking for His coming. People often preach His coming in order to revive affections: that is working the wrong way round; the only result has been that christendom is full of people who believe in the pre-millennial advent of the Lord but who are not really

looking for Him in affection. The Lord Himself must be brought before people, and nothing does that so much as the Supper. The Supper is the appeal of *affection* to *affection*. Satan makes it a sacrament: many break bread from obedience, but it is only affection that makes you eat the Supper: thousands break bread without eating the Supper. The Supper is the knock of a Person who loves us infinitely, and if we really entered into that, none of us could be Laodicean.

Ques. What is supping?

CAC Personal intimacy. It is a comfort to see that the very best things in Scripture are individual. The very greatest thing in Scripture we get in John 14: 23, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him", and that is individual. The individual lover gets that privilege. In that way the Lord has provided for the most difficult day that could possibly arise. But that never isolates me, because it is the *lover* who gets the presence of the Father and the Son, and he proves himself a *lover* by obedience; and the obedient one loves his brethren, so he cannot be isolated. What a wonderful association verse 21 gives us! "To sit with me" suggests a great deal. He sits with His Father, and the overcomer is to sit with Him in His throne. It is a great thing to have an ear!

GOLD, WHITE GARMENTS AND EYE-SALVE

Revelation 3: 18

One has a measure of confidence that this is a word in season, being addressed by the Lord to the assembly in its closing phase, and I believe it brings out in few words the characteristics of those who are in the testimony, and who are qualified for personal intimacy with the Lord. It is to be noted that the Lord's counsel to buy of Him gold and white raiment and eye-salve comes before His appeal to open the door to Him. There could be no possibility of mutuality of intercourse between any saint and the Lord save as the saint was furnished with what the Lord had supplied. No one would open the door to Him except as having acquired gold and white garments and eye-salve from Him, because His supping with the saint, and the saint with Him, implies that there is no sense of distance or disparity. The saint has what the Lord can enjoy, and the Lord makes the saint welcome to enjoy His own blessed portion. This could not be if every moral question had not been divinely settled, and these questions are all settled by obtaining from Him what He alone can supply.

Gold as a symbol in Scripture represents the best that God can give; it speaks of that which has the highest value. It is the first metal mentioned in Scripture and also the last. Before sin came in, the land of Havilah was spoken of, "where the gold is", and we are told that "the gold of that land is good". I have no doubt it was a prophetic intimation that God intended to have a place on earth where He would be known. The assembly was in His mind as a land where the gold is — that which makes truly rich. Then when God would have a sanctuary to dwell in, He provided that gold should be the most prominent thing in it. There were two things wholly of gold, the mercy-seat and the candlestick, and it was from above the mercy-seat that God spoke with the mediator of all that He would communicate to men. The Lord in speaking of gold purified by fire would have in mind what had been suggested symbolically and typically in the Old Testament. He would refer to God as He can be known after taking up the question of sin, and providing for His own glory in connection with it. It is God as He can be known by those who have come under sin; it is only as knowing Him thus that sinful creatures like ourselves could know Him at all.

When the Lord counsels to "buy" of Him, He suggests that He can supply the things mentioned. It is not intended to convey that we can pay for them by giving equivalent value, which we should have to do if He used the word "buy" in a commercial sense. Turning from the world and the flesh may be necessary

if we are to have divine wealth, but it cannot be considered a price in return for which we get God's precious things. Obtaining from divine Persons must always be on the principle of "without money and without price". But buying from the faithful and true Witness means that these precious things may be obtained by a personal transaction with Jesus.

"Gold" suggests divine wealth possessed as substance (see Proverbs 8: 21). This raises the question as to how far we are truly rich as being possessed in a definite way of that knowledge of God which was expressed in the Lord Jesus here as full of grace and truth. He now lives to impart it to those whose hearts are moved to have personal dealings with Him. Every word and act of the Lord when here was really a speaking from above the Mercy-seat, for it was all founded upon His death. Not one gracious word that the Lord spoke, and not one gracious act that He did, could have been said or done if He had not come to bear the judgment of sin on the cross. Those who heard the words did not know this at the time, but He knew it. All that God is as symbolised by the gold came near to men on the ground that sin would be absolutely judged in the death of Christ. The gold has been purified in the furnace of Calvary. We read of "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat" (Romans 3: 24, 25). That was written after the redemption was accomplished, but the grace of it was set forth in Jesus when He was here. The way in which God would be known by those who were under sin and death was set forth in Jesus.

So that the gospels are the most wondrous part of Scripture, and what is set forth there will be our wonder and praise throughout eternity. It is all really gold purified by fire, and as we come into personal contact with the Lord, He causes it to become divine wealth in our souls. We know what the Lord is at the right hand of God by what He was here, but now God has glorified Him so that His pleasure in what He was here may be universally made known. We only read the gospels aright as we read them in the light that we are reading about One who is now glorified at the right hand of God. God has covered the gospel record with divine and permanent radiance by glorifying the blessed One who was here in humiliation. The glorifying of Jesus brought into evidence what was there before, just as the glorifying of God adds nothing to Him, but brings into evidence what He is. We read of "the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God"; God was imaged in Him when He was here, but now He is glorified so that the radiancy may shine forth, like the sun, for all, though there may be many blinded to it by the god of this world. In proposing to impart to us "gold", the Lord is making available for us that which is surpassing in its excellence.

There is another side of things which is the necessary counterpart to the knowledge of God, and that is that He also secures that believers have a place before Him which fits them perfectly for His presence. The place that is secured for us by the grace and calling of God is seen in the same blessed Person in whom God is made known to us. And we might say that there is only one Man who fully knows our place with God according to His calling, and that is Christ Himself. On our side we know in part; we await the time when we shall see face to face, but on His side there is perfect knowledge of the place that is assigned to us in the thought of God. He knows it perfectly because it is fully expressed in Him. In the Person of Christ we see Man beyond sin, beyond death, beyond Satan's power, holy and without blame before God in love, accepted in the glorious place of sonship. And all is founded on the fact that He has borne the full judgment of everything that had come in on our side that was contrary to it. Our place with God is seen radiant in Christ, and we may say that in it we also see "gold purified by fire". As seen in Him it cannot be made more perfect, or added to in any way. On our side there is the possibility of increased apprehension, so that in that sense, spiritual wealth can increase.

I have no doubt that in the apostles there was increase; I doubt whether Paul could have written the epistle to the Ephesians when he wrote the epistle to the Galatians. His personal enrichment in the knowledge of God increased, so that his choicest ministry came out in the prison epistles at the end of his days. Of course what he wrote, whether early or late, was by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but there is a great difference between the character of inspiration as known in Old Testament times, and its character as known in the writers of the New Testament. In Old Testament times, God inspired men to write what they themselves did not understand, so that when they had written it they had to enquire and search diligently as to what it signified. But the New Testament writers knew all the precious things which they wrote about, they wrote about them as things well known to themselves. We find in the epistles how the personal exercises, and even the personal infirmities, of the writers come out in a touching and affecting way. And no doubt there was increase by the Spirit of God in those blessed men of God. If we have "gold", we might well be concerned that it should increase.

Then there are also "white garments", which bring in the answer to another exercise. If one has become conscious that the shame of one's nakedness has often been made manifest, there will surely be a desire to be "clothed". The exposure of what the flesh is becomes a real grief to one born again, and eventually we learn that help as to this must come from outside ourselves. The Lord puts the whole truth of deliverance in a very simple form when He

says, "I counsel thee to buy of me ... white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be made manifest". He says, "Buy of me"; the whole secret lies in having to do with Him. There was perhaps a time when we thought we could get deliverance by studying the books that are written about it; we thought it was a question of apprehending doctrine; but we had to learn that a living Person is needed. The man in Romans 7 is brought to a point when he says, "Who shall deliver me ... ?" He can then get the value of what is stated at the beginning of the chapter, "So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ, to be to another, who has been raised up from among the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God". It is in being to Another that we are freed.

If I bring forth fruit to God, there is something appearing that is not the flesh, and it is the result of being to Another. "Buy of me" is the same thing put in another way. When young believers are tempted, and the devil seeks to make the flesh manifest in them, if they turn at once to the Lord they will come out in white garments. That is to say, they will manifest the moral characteristics of Christ. No doubt something of Christ comes out in every believer who has the Spirit, but we ought not to be content without being completely "clothed". The Lord Jesus is able to set us up as completely invested with "white garments". What a "shame" it is if the flesh comes out in us; at such times we discredit the testimony. We learn what the "white garments" are by learning Christ. Referring to how the Gentiles walk in Ephesians 4, Paul says, "But ye have not thus learnt the Christ". He is the perfect contrast to all that comes out in the natural man, and His moral features are now to be our clothing.

I fear that many of us are like the young man in the garden of whom it says, "And a certain young man followed him with a linen cloth cast about his naked body" (Mark 14: 51). He was not really "clothed", and therefore when there was a likelihood of his having to suffer by being in company with Jesus he just slipped off the linen cloth and ran away naked. But the divine thought comes out in the young man seen clothed in a white robe on the right of the sepulchre in Mark 16. He had deliberately taken up his place as identified with Christ's burial here, for he was sitting in the sepulchre. But he was "on the right"; he is figuratively seen as in power that is equal to the demands of such a position. The sepulchre itself was now the witness of divine power, for the One who had been put in it was now risen. In the same gospel we read of the kingdom of God coming in power on the holy mount, and it is said of Jesus that "his garments became shining, exceeding white as snow, such as fuller on earth could not whiten them". I think we may say that it is His own garments that He proposes to furnish us with in Revelation 3: 18. Being instructed in

Him involves our having put off the old man and having put on the new. Such come out in a new garment, and it is not loosely cast about them, for it becomes, we might say, part of themselves.

Thus we are clothed for the testimony; the white garments appear on us outwardly. Is it not a great proposal that the shame of our nakedness should not become manifest? I believe the apprehension of the calling involves exercise as to this; it produces the feeling, I must now be morally suitable; I cannot go on with the flesh or carry the marks of the world; I must come out distinctly as one in relation to God. A person in white garments would always be distinctive; there is a suggestion of what is suitable to heaven in it. When the Lord says of some in Sardis, "They shall walk with me in white", it evidently conveys the thought of suitability to Him as He is now in heaven. What could be more attractive? But the "white garments" are to be on us here while we are still in a defiled and defiling scene. What a triumph for God that His people should come out thus as a result of their having dealings with Christ His beloved Son!

Then there is "eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see". It seems to suggest an intelligent exercise, that we know how to use the eye-salve when we get it. The Spirit in this particular character is indispensable in the last days, when the profession generally is marked by spiritual blindness. If we want to escape the innumerable pitfalls and snares and bypaths, it is essential that we be able to see. The saint who loves the Lord's counsel will assuredly be exercised to have the Spirit in this particular way. How can we move intelligently here as governed by divine light, whether personally or assemblywise, if our eyes are not anointed? Earnestness and devotedness are not sufficient; we need spiritual vision. The assembly, as such, is a company of persons with clear vision; that is, as it is written, they are "intelligent persons" (1 Corinthians 10: 15). Characteristically they have got the eye-salve, and know how to apply it. There is the thought in it of a healing application. God does not set the mind aside; He retains it as an organ of perception and communication; but it needs to be brought through intelligent exercise under the healing of the Spirit so that we no longer think of things, or reason about things, on the line of the natural mind, but on the line of a mind that has come under divine healing so that it can think intelligently and spiritually.

In the assembly it is most important to act intelligently. I ought to be able to give account of why I do certain things, why I give out a certain hymn, or anything else that I do. Spiritual vision enters into the matter. Then the whole range of Scripture requires spiritual vision if we are to understand it aright. Think of the Lord's parables, and of the marvellous wealth of the types which

has been brought out so fully in recent times. I believe that clear vision as to these things is the result of obtaining eye-salve from the Lord. Would we not all like to have it so that we might see much more of what is in the Scriptures than we have ever seen yet? The Lord would not have us to be altogether dependent on what others can see for us, though valuing greatly the help we get in this way. Why should we not see something for ourselves?

Then we need to be able to see our way in regard to our pathway in times which are said to be difficult. We are in the midst of Laodicean lukewarmness: many do not care about the difference between light and darkness, between truth and error, between God's way and man's way. It is manifest that the majority of people do not care for what has true value, and we are all in danger of getting into that state if we do not heed the Lord's counsel. We are part of the christian profession, and we are all liable to the dangers which are abroad, so that it is most important to have eye-salve, and to anoint our eyes with it. We must understand how to bring our minds under the control of the Spirit, as recognising the Spirit as the only source of capacity to see, and then we shall get divine light. There is no finality to this; we shall constantly need increased capacity to discern spiritual things as they are more and more unfolded in ministry. Of what avail is spiritual ministry if we have not spiritual capacity to discern its import? There is much in Scripture that the mass of believers have never seen. What do believers generally know about Paul's prison epistles? They speak of things which can only be really seen in the vision imparted by the Holy Spirit.

THE MILLENNIUM

Revelation 19: 11 - 21; Revelation 20: 1 - 6

This passage shows that the second advent of our Lord will introduce *the millennium* and also furnishes proof that *before* the Lord comes thus publicly, He will have taken us from the earth. For before He comes forth in this majestic character, the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven. The church — as the bride, the Lamb's wife — is in heaven *before* the public advent of the Lord; afterwards the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. This is the attire of the bride, as is explained in verse 8: "The fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints". The moment that Christ is manifested in glory to the world, we shall be manifested with Him: "When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall *ye* also be manifested with him in glory" (Colossians 3: 4).

After the warrior judgment of Revelation 19: 15 - 21, the sessional judgment of those then living upon the earth will take place, described in Matthew 25: 31 - 46.

In order to understand this scene it is necessary to recite briefly the events which will take place after the church is taken out of the world. As soon as the church is caught up, God will resume His dealings with His ancient and earthly people — the Jews. They will be convinced of the fact that the despised and rejected Nazarene was indeed the Messiah of the prophetic word, and a number of them will repent deeply of their individual and national rejection of Him. They will learn from the Scriptures that Christ, who suffered here on earth, is coming again to reign. Then this remnant of repentant Jews will go forth to the benighted millions of heathendom preaching the gospel of the coming kingdom. Christendom — those nations and people by whom the grace of God has been rejected — will be given up to strong delusion (spiritism, etc.), that they may all be judged because they received not the love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2: 10 - 12). But to countless millions who have never heard the gospel of the grace of God, the gospel of the kingdom will be carried; the same gospel which John the baptist preached: "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh".

All the heathen nations will hear this gospel of the kingdom in the interval between the rapture of the church and the appearing of Christ to judge and reign over the earth. And then when He comes, as Matthew 25 tells us, all the nations will be gathered before Him, and their weal or woe will depend on how they have received these Jewish evangelists of the kingdom, whom the Lord calls "my brethren", as indeed they were and are, after the flesh. Those who

have received their testimony and befriended them will be called to inherit the glory of that earthly kingdom which God has had in prospect from the foundation of the world. Those nations and people who had refused the message, and would not receive the messengers, will then be consigned to everlasting fire. From Joel 3 we learn that this judgment will take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and Zechariah 14 informs us that the Lord will stand upon the mount of Olives, and the mount will open out until a very great valley shall be formed, and there He will "enter into judgment with" the nations.

The whole earth will be purged by judgment, and thus prepared for the millennium. When the judgments of God are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness (Isaiah 26: 9). The ten tribes of Israel, long lost, will be found and brought back to Canaan by the Lord, according to Jeremiah 23: 5 - 8: "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, when I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, who shall reign as king and act wisely, and shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell in safety: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness. Therefore behold, days are coming, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, As Jehovah liveth, who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, As Jehovah liveth, who brought up and who led back the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them. And they shall dwell in their own land". (See also chapter 16: 14, 15.)

Satan will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (Revelation 20: 1 - 3). The obstinately wicked will be cut off, and the remainder will humble themselves before Christ and own Him as King. *Then* the wondrous prophecy of Isaiah 11: 6 - 9 will have its fulfilment: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatted beast together, and a little child shall lead them ... . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea". *Then* there shall be peace on earth, for the Lord "shall judge among the nations, ... and they shall forge their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-knives: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2: 4).

In that happy time, all kings shall fall down before the King of kings; all nations shall serve Him. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth, and the whole earth will be filled with His glory. He will reign in glory where He died in shame.

And, remember, He will not reign alone. We shall *reign* with Him. "If we endure, we shall also reign together" (2 Timothy 2: 12). We "shall reign over the earth" (Revelation 5: 10). "They lived and reigned with the Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20: 4). Thus we shall be to the praise of His glory in the dispensation of the fulness of times, when the counsels and purposes of God the Father, carried into effect by the Son on the ground of redemption, will be displayed in the millennial "age to come".

Then, when the thousand years are expired, Satan will be loosed out of his prison, and permitted to go forth for a short season in the world (Revelation 20: 7). He will deceive many. A number even as the sand of the sea will prefer the leadership of Satan to the rule of Christ, just as men are doing now. He will gather them together to fight against the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but it will be to their own destruction. The fire of God will come down upon them and devour them (Revelation 20: 9), and then will come *the end of the world*.

The great white throne will be set up; the wicked, unconverted dead will be raised. The sea will give up its dead; and death and hell will yield up their prisoners to stand at the bar of the last grand assize. Those who have been for ages awaiting their final sentence will be brought forth to hear the words of doom which will appoint their everlasting portion in the lake of fire. "The heavens will pass away with a rushing noise, and the elements, burning with heat, shall be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it shall be burnt up" (2 Peter 3: 10).

Then in Revelation 21 we read of *a new heaven and a new earth*, into which the new Jerusalem, the glorified church, will descend. No trace of sin will ever be found in that new creation: righteousness will dwell there, and God will be all in all. The wisdom of God rejoiced, by anticipation, in the habitable part of His earth, and found its delights with the sons of men (Proverbs 8: 31). In eternity this will have its complete fulfilment in a scene where everything is based upon redemption, and where no failure can ever come. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God. And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall not exist any more, nor grief, nor cry, nor distress shall exist any more, for the former things have passed away"

(Revelation 21: 3, 4).

Christians, this is our destiny — to be part of the display of the glory of God, and this in the blissful company of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, and to whom we owe everything, *for ever and ever*!

ANSWER TO AN ENQUIRY

Revelation 20: 4 - 6

It has been noticed, I suppose by all who paid any attention to the Revelation, that there is no mention historically of the rapture or the resurrection of the dead at that time. We know from other scriptures that the living saints will be caught up, and that the dead in Christ will be raised. But the Revelation gives no account of either of these great events.

There is no specific mention of saints of the assembly or of Old Testament saints in Revelation 20: 4 - 6. Certain persons are seen sitting on thrones. Those beheaded on account of the word of God, and those who had not done homage to the beast, are specially mentioned. It is easy to see the reason for this — that saints killed in tribulation times should know that they would live and reign with Christ a thousand years. It is for their special comfort that this is said. Others, as we know, will reign with Christ, but they have special mention, I believe, on account of their special sufferings. Then we are told, "The rest of the dead did not live till the thousand years had been completed". And it is added, "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy he who has part in the first resurrection" (Revelation 20: 5, 6). It is clearly the first resurrection in contrast with that of the rest of the dead. I learn from this scripture that the first resurrection is a resurrection of blessed and holy persons, and that all who will reign with Christ will have part in it. It does not say that all who have part in it will be raised at exactly the same moment. We know that some saints have already been raised; we also know that saints of the assembly will be raised when the Lord descends from heaven with a shout; and we know from the very scripture before us that saints who die or are killed in tribulation times will be raised to reign with Christ. But all have their part in the first resurrection, for it covers all the blessed and holy dead. It must be borne in mind that we could not prove from Revelation 20: 4 - 6 that the saints of the assembly will have part in the first resurrection. They are not mentioned. The special object of the Spirit of God was to show that dead saints of the tribulation period would have part in the first resurrection. This would not at all be affected by the fact that the mass of dead saints had been raised, as I believe they will have been, a certain short period before. The assumption that all who have part in the first resurrection must necessarily be raised at exactly the same moment is not at all established by the Scripture. What it does establish is that all who reign with Christ will do so as having had part in the first resurrection.

As to the "last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15: 52), Scripture makes it quite clear that there will be a trumpet which will sound after the trumpet spoken of in that verse. When "all the tribes of the land ... see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24: 30), they will most unquestionably see the saints coming with Him. This is a matter of revelation, and the Scripture cannot be broken. "When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory" (Colossians 3: 4). "The Lord has come amidst his holy myriads" (Jude 14). "And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee" (Zechariah 14: 5). It is clear that if the saints come with Him, as they undoubtedly do, the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15 has already sounded to raise them and to give them their place on high with Him. Then, following upon His coming, "He shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect ... from the one extremity of the heavens to the other extremity of them" (Matthew 24: 31). It is clear that His sending His angels with sound of trumpet is subsequent to His being seen coming on the clouds of heaven, having His raised and changed saints with Him according to the unmistakable testimony of the above scriptures. Your contention that "the last trumpet" must be literally the last seems to be conclusive, but when it is examined in the light of Scripture it is found to be without force. This shows the importance of humbly learning not only what words mean, but how the Holy Spirit is pleased to use them.

I have no doubt that "the great trumpet" (Isaiah 27: 13) which will be blown for the gathering of Israel will be after "the last trumpet" of 1 Corinthians 15. It corresponds with "a great sound of trumpet" in Matthew 21: 31 which is for the gathering of the elect of the Son of man for earthly blessing after the heavenly saints have been manifested with Him at His coming on the clouds of heaven. Scripture is explicit, as we have already seen, that they will come with Him.

THE DISPLAY OF GOD'S COMPLETED WORK

Revelation 21: 9 - 27

CAC Everyone must feel the exceeding blessedness of what is before us in this chapter. It is the display of the accomplished result of the work of God in His saints. We can hardly contemplate anything more precious or more calculated to affect our hearts. It is the perfect contrast of what was seen in chapter 17, where John was called to contemplate the harlot — the city where every corruption is found, where there is absolutely nothing of God. Here we see the blessed contrast. There, it is a desert: the scene is appropriate to the subject contemplated. Here it is a city where everything is of God and becomes the source of every blessing to men; it is where all the goodness of God is administered to men.

Rem John is called to a new position to view it.

CAC Yes, to a great and high mountain. You cannot contemplate this without being elevated; it cannot be contemplated on the level of the world. Each one of us must seek to get up to this spiritual elevation — the elevation of spirit above everything that is of men.

Ques Why is John chosen to be let into the secret of all this?

CAC I suppose John is the one of "the twelve" who abides to the end; as the Lord said, "If I will that he abide until I come" (John 21: 22). John was left here to see the complete breakdown of all that had been set up by Paul: to see 2 Timothy days, and to give us all this after 2 Timothy days had come in. He was a 'reserve man', as someone has said.

It is a great thing that the light of the future should shine on us now — not going back to the beginning and getting exercised about that, but occupied with the future. The point is to see the place the assembly has in that administration of glory: "Having the glory of God" (verse 10). The assembly is being formed for it now, and it raises the question as to how far we are formed now. The Lord brings us together as we are now to give us light and direction for our exercises, so that we may pray along the line the Lord gives us.

Ques Is this the answer to Ephesians 5: 27, "That *he* might present the assembly to himself glorious"?

CAC I think it is the answer to the prayer in Ephesians 3: 19, that the saints might "be filled even to all fulness of God". The apostle speaks of the assembly as the shrine of the divine glory: "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ

Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen" (verse 21). Here we see the answer to it; we see the assembly filled with the glory of God; formed by the divine nature — a competent vessel to set forth the glory, and to administer all that is of God.

AMH Is it that the response is equal to the revelation? "The holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God".

CAC I think you get that inside the city. Here, the prominent thought is the administration of it: all that is of God set forth in light and blessing.

Ques So that as the Lord brought in all the fulness of the Godhead — it was pleased to dwell in Him — now there is in preparation a vessel for the maintenance of that and for the final outshining of all that has been revealed?

CAC Yes. There is everything there that is necessary for the setting forth of God. It was all seen in Jesus. It is wonderful that it should be set forth in a vessel formed according to that. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily; now it is set forth in a vessel that maintains that, so that it shines forth. It is there in life, so that it is a luminous vessel; the light of God is there.

AMH "The bride, the Lamb's wife". Is the wife connected more with the line which you spoke of, she being exercised in His interests here, on the line of Proverbs 31?

CAC Yes.

Ques Is it the true Isaac here — Rebecca became his wife, and he was comforted after his mother's death?

CAC That is a little the side of what she would be for him as in verse 2, "Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", in all the heavenly character which suits her for Him; but here it is as in the reference to Proverbs 31, that her husband may be known in the gates. The gates are a very characteristic feature of the city, and the administration makes her husband known. What is emphasised here is that God is known; the whole light of the city is the light in which God is known; God known in the light of redemption — "The lamp thereof is the Lamb" (verse 23) — very beautiful is that!

It is the holy city, not the great city. Babylon was called "the great". The heavenly city is never called great; it is holy.

Rem Every abomination must be excluded.

CAC The wall has an important place: it suggests the exclusion of what is not of God; it is preservative, it preserves the administration, so that nothing

unsuitable enters, "Nothing common, nor that maketh an abomination and a lie, shall at all enter into it; but those only who are written in the book of life of the Lamb" (verse 27). I think every corrupting influence is summed up in that verse. "Nothing common", I suppose that would suggest things which are the product of the mind of man.

Ques What is the thought in the twelve apostles, and the twelve tribes?

CAC That suggests all the outgoings of the city are first towards the twelve tribes; they are the first to get the gain of the city. It is a great mediatorial system. Then the nations get the blessing through Israel.

What makes it so interesting to me is to see the full result of God's work. The wall is salvation, of course; it is preservative — there is no opening for the inroads of the enemy. The point is that everything is excluded which is not of God — all the workings of the mind of man. Things were "common" at Corinth, the mind of man was working there; "common" is in contrast to what is of the Spirit.

Then, every element of idolatry — "abomination" — is shut out; that is, everything that does not give God His place; and, thirdly, everything "that maketh ... a lie": that is in contrast to Christ as the truth. Every element of evil is excluded by the wall.

The thing is to take up the exercise of these things now, so that the formative work may be going on in us, and that we may be in keeping with these things now.

It is very interesting that it is the wall of the city that has foundations, why is that?

AMH Does it suggest divine authority, on which the wall is based?

CAC Quite so, and does it not give the wall a kingdom character?

AMH Do you connect it with Corinthians?

CAC Yes, all the great moral principles are laid down in Romans and Corinthians, and we have to see to it that these foundations are truly laid in our souls.

AMH Is it collective; what the saints together have to maintain?

CAC There is no idea in Scripture of taking things up as isolated individuals. Even Romans reminds us that we are "one body in Christ". The exhortations in Romans 12 are mostly collective in nature.

AMH Is it not striking that it is so in that epistle, showing that the individual path can only be taken up in the light of "one another"?

CAC In the most individual scripture you find that you cannot get away from the thought of "one another". "If any one love me" — you cannot find anything much more individual than that — "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (John 14: 23). Yet in that same section you have the commandment to "love one another", you have a divine bond at once.

AMH Do these precious stones set out the principles governing the kingdom of God?

CAC Yes, I should think so. It all came out in Christ; but if it is to come out in men, it could not possibly come out in one. The light is broken up and each precious stone shines not by its own light, but reflects its own portion of the light. You can see it a little in the writings of the apostles: Matthew's presentation of Christ is not like John's, and so on with others. You see the different character of the light as it comes out in each one; the blessed light of God, which shone perfectly in Christ, is all-coloured, and you must have a company if it is to be dispersed. Twelve is the administration number.

Ques What is the thought of measure?

CAC Everything is up to the measure and in perfect adjustment. We hardly touch anything but what we get it a bit out of square; a good deal of our exercise is connected with getting things square; the truth of God is very great, and we so easily go to one extreme or another. It is a very great exercise, the measuring; and the one with the golden reed is a most important personage. In result, everything is in perfect adjustment. It is a *golden* reed — all comes up to the divine measure. The measuring should be a great exercise with us; we look at it in reading chapter 11.

AMH It is "a man's measure", and it adds, "that is, the angel's" (verse 17). It is no ordinary man.

CAC Well, the question is, is there something that God can take account of? There is a real product of divine work on the earth now, and so far as that is so, you have the city now, though not complete nor in display. But its principles and characteristics are here now. It is a great thing to have it before our souls and to be exercised as to its having its effect upon us.

AMH Should we not seek to take account of the saints in this way — there are different precious stones, jasper, sardius, and so on?

CAC Yes, saints are not all alike; there is great diversity. Precious stones do not create light, they are not self-luminous; it is really the light of God that is there.

Ques Would it save you from seeking to be like someone else?

CAC Yes. There is a tendency with us to take our measure from the saints we know. The great thing is to be more with God, in the company of Christ. The twelve were diverse naturally and they were diverse spiritually; yet the Lord could set them all together in unity like the twelve stones in the breastplate; each came under His influence. It is thus that we get our right place in relation to Him and to the testimony.

Ques "Each one of the gates, respectively, was of one pearl" (verse 21). What does this mean?

CAC It seems to suggest that the outgoings of the city are characterised by what the assembly is to Christ. The pearl suggests what is attractive to Him. He was the Merchant who sold all that He had to buy the one pearl of great value (Matthew 13: 46). Each several gate is of one pearl. It may be that the consciousness of the beauty of the assembly and its preciousness to Christ will be conveyed in the administration. He says of those of the synagogue of Satan, "I will cause that they shall come and shall do homage before thy feet, and shall know that I have loved thee" (Revelation 3: 9). If enemies are made to know it, much more so the saints. The witness in the outgoings of the city is what the assembly is to Christ and its unity, which is the product of divine work.

The street — "Pure gold, as transparent glass" — is where all movement is.

AMH Transparency in all movement must be a wonderful thing.

CAC There is no element of alloy, no element of suspicion or distrust. Our minds are made very suspicious; we do not know what people are after, nor their motives. But what a wonderful thought; here is a city, clear as crystal, and the street like transparent glass: the motives of every one are obvious. One would like to get on that line. We can see it in Paul. There is no possibility of questioning his motives, though his enemies did; there is perfect transparency.

AMH It is pure gold, like transparent glass. That supposes self-judgment and also a divine work, does it not? We cannot be transparent naturally.

CAC There is no element of alloy. There is a bit of gold with each of us, but we must see to it that we judge every element of alloy; then there will be no attempt to cover things up; or to appear more favourable than we are; in this

way suspicion and distrust would die a natural death. God's thought is that we should partake of His holiness. He says of Jerusalem, "I will turn my hand upon thee, and will thoroughly purge away thy dross, and take away all thine alloy" (Isaiah 1: 25). There is a lot of "dross" and "alloy" about us, and it has to be purged away. God will put His people through the fire that the pure gold may remain. It is beautiful to see, as one sometimes does, at the end of a saint's course, the freedom from alloy, the soul in the pure light of God, nothing covered up that was unsuited to God. But it is nice to see it before the end. It is very wonderful to see in a saint the accomplishment of the work of God — to see one who under divine teaching and discipline has learned to judge everything that is of himself, and to cherish nothing but what is of God and of Christ. A wonderful sight that! — but it is what should be before us as a cherished desire and exercise.

AMH Is there a thought of this in "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (verse 9)? He is the One who suffered here for the will of God. She is privileged to share in His sufferings and is thus suited to be the wife of the suffering One, the Lamb's wife. Then all that has been suffered for is to be displayed. So we may count it a privilege in the present moment to suffer; for all is going to be told out to the glory of God in the future.

CAC You cannot get pure gold without the refining process. It is in the path of suffering you get the refining. He says, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48: 10).

AMH That makes suffering acceptable even if we are unable to say as the apostle, "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults ..." (2 Corinthians 12: 10).

CAC The Spirit in Hebrews 12 encourages saints on that line — not to faint under discipline.

AMH The Lord says to Laodicea, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire" (Revelation 3: 18). They were not prepared to suffer.

CAC They were not ready to pay the price for the gold.

AMH "I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty is its temple" (verse 22).

CAC I suppose that is nearness to God, so that the thought of approach drops. If there had been a temple, there would have been the thought of approach. "Temple" suggests a kind of distance.

"The glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (verse 23). The glory of God is diffused through the whole city, but it is concentrated in the Lamb. It will be blessed for the nations when they walk in the light of it.

It is God known in the light of redemption — in the light of suffering love. God delights that that light should shine upon men. It is the way in which the glory of God has become known to us — the suffering love of One who could go into the place of death, sacrificing everything for the glory of God. That is the light of the city. There is not only administration but response — the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour unto it. Think of the world here responsive to that bright world above.

AMH "I will hear, saith Jehovah, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the new wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jizreel" (Hosea 2: 21, 22). You come back to the glory of God.

CAC Well, it is a worthy result of what God has been working for, the coming here of the Lamb accomplishing redemption, the gift of the Holy Spirit and His work in the saints — the worthy result seen in accomplished bliss, and men on the earth brought into glad response to it all. What a vindication of God in His blessed ways! He will not allow present things to terminate until He has brought in all this.

The sight of it wakens desire and exercise, because it is the work of God that is presented in the city, and we want it to be promoted in us.