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Contents

THE FOUNDATION AND THE CORNERSTONE
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THE FOUNDATION AND THE CORNERSTONE

Isaiah 28: 16; Psalm 118: 22; 1 Peter 2: 6-8; 1 Corinthians 3: 11-14

E.C.B. I am impressed with the fact that, in two dispensations, God intends to have a foundation and a corner-stone. The first is that in which He has taken up and been working with the nation of Israel, a dispensation which is interrupted by the period in which we are, that is the church period, the period of the activity of the Holy Spirit. The scripture in Isaiah in its immediate context - which is one of judgment - refers to what God might be thought to establish in the day of the prophet, although the scripture, as much of the prophecy of Isaiah, looks on to another day. But in the midst of the chapter God says through the prophet, "Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that trusteth shall not make haste". Then in Psalm 118 - which touches a consummation of the history of Israel - there is a reference to the corner-stone, a scripture which is quoted in three of the gospels. In Mark's gospel Jesus says, "Have ye not even read this scripture...?", chap 12: 10. Those scriptures show that it was God's thought to have in relation to Israel what had a foundation and also the crowning touch of a corner-stone. These things were offered to Israel in the day when Jesus was here. Brethren will recall Mr James Taylor's remark as to how gracious it was of God to offer these builders that stone and they rejected Him. But God intended in relation to Israel to have a foundation and a corner-stone and a day will come when He takes up again His dealings with that nation and He will have what He intended to have.

But we also have the thought brought into the Christian day. In this present time, this period of nearly two thousand years, God still intends to have both a foundation and a corner-stone. It would be an exercise for us to understand what those things are. We are in a time when it is as essential as it ever was - perhaps even more essential - that the foundation should be rightly understood. It is also important that the cornerstone should be rightly understood. Both

these things in the Christian day refer to Christ that God has established things in Christ. Paul says "For other foundation can no man lay beside; that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ", 1 Cor 3: 11. The crown, the corner-stone of all God's operations in the present day is Christ, and it is vital if the testimony with which we are familiar is to be continued, that we and indeed all God's people, should understand that God is doing nothing that does not relate to Christ. God will have Christ.

Peter binds these two dispensations together when he quotes the dispensational scripture from Isaiah 28; yet he says, "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness". That gives character to the present time. Paul, alluding to similar thoughts in Ephesians 2, speaks of the building that is going on: "being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets", but "Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone" (v 20). I wondered whether we might get help together in understanding that God is working, as He always has intended to work, to have a structure here of which Christ is the foundation and Christ the crown. The exercise raised for us by the scripture in 1 Corinthians 3 is what we are putting in between. The blessedness of a structure which speaks to God of Christ I do not think can be over-emphasised, but the Spirit might help us in developing the thought as to the nature of the foundation and what the corner-stone represents because it holds everything together.

J.W.Sen. "To you ... is the preciousness": that brings us in.

E.C.B. Yes, the question is whether we all understand, or whether it has become true to each one of us. Nothing is more important to God in the present day than the continuance of Christ in people here. We are often occupied with other things; history shows us a tendency to think that the principal thing among us is administration. The principal thing among us is the maintenance of what is of Christ testimonially and for the service of God, and then that other things should be consistent with that. What God intends to have in the present day is Christ over again: we may refer that to the assembly, but Christ over again depends on what is produced in each of us.

J.W. Would you say that God graciously gave them the stone to build in? I think it has been said that the builders had a look at it this way and that way and turned it over and they said, No, it is not suitable for our building. Do you think that we should have a good look at the stone and see that it is suitable for the building? Then we would be intelligent as to what God is putting into this building.

E.C.B. Yes. If we take up what you have referred to - that God offered them the stone and they did not find it suitable for their building - we have to ask ourselves, What are we building? The fact that the stone did not fit their building shows that the building was of a different shape from the Stone. What therefore are we building in the present time? I am sure that would be the exercise of all, that there should be that into which Christ will comfortably fit in everything that is being constructed at the present time. I wonder whether the Spirit would revive in us the reality of what it is that God will have Christ here. He is the One who forms the foundation of things and the crown of things for God.

D.D. The scripture in Isaiah says, "Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion": would you say a word on that for us.

E.C.B. That scripture, as a great deal of the prophecy of Isaiah, relates to the earthly people and a day yet to come. God intends to have in that place which He had chosen - "for Jehovah hath chosen Zion" (Ps 132: 13) - what He Himself has determined to put there. In our own day God has something before Him and He intends to have the foundation for what He will build in the present time. Zion has often been referred to as related to God's choice in purpose; we would understand that we are the objects of the work of God because of His purpose. But God has chosen a place where He is going to put His foundation. Abraham as looking for a city that had foundation, but in Isaiah, God has chosen a place where He will put a foundation.

D.D. That is interesting because it seems that God always resorts to His own sovereign purpose. He has that by Him. In the earlier part of the chapter it speaks about the pride of the drunkards of Ephraim.

Do you think that we might pride ourselves in the fact that we have been called into a certain position outwardly? But the vitality of it is in our links with Christ where He is.

E.C.B. That is right. Ephraim in the prophecy of Isaiah refers to the ten tribes which had gone into captivity. Zion represents Judah which was still in Jerusalem. Zion was the centre of the purpose of God and corresponds to what God said, that He would always maintain a light for the house of David. The time would come when, owing to the unfaithfulness of Judah, they too would be taken into captivity. But God retains His thought. What has been said by others is instructive, that Psalm 118 corresponds to Psalm 2. In Psalm 18 God has anointed His king upon Zion, the hill of His holiness, but He offered Israel this stone and they rejected it. Nevertheless God will have a structure in which the stone fits.

D.D. The word is to say rightly "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah". There will be the acceptance of that.

E.C.B. There will. They said that when Jesus was here, but in fact He was being rejected by the very people to whom this Stone was being offered. I think the fact of God having before Him the foundation and the corner-stone shows that He has a purpose which no one can overthrow.

D.W. Peter says, "God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ", Acts 2: 36.

E.C.B. Yes; God in His own purpose has put Christ in the place that He intended Him to have. I think that reference has a wider bearing than just to Israel, but the word was immediately to Israel, saying that the stone which you have rejected I have put in the place of supremacy. The cornerstone is that which locks the whole building together and we perhaps need to keep in our minds that the structure which God is concerned with now is that in which Christ is fully represented for Him.

E.M. The fact that Zerubbabel had laid the foundation comes in after the captivity. He was going to "bring forth the head-stone with shoutings: Grace, grace unto it!", Zech 4: 7. The challenge there

was, as you say, what was going to be brought into the building. There was a lack of exercise.

E.C.B. Yes. It is interesting to refer to Zechariah because it shows that, after the captivity, God reverts to the purpose He always had in mind, that the head-stone is going to be brought forth with shoutings, and the people will then acknowledge it in the cry, "Grace, grace unto it!" and will be glad to see it. The question for us is, in the structure with which we are in touch according to God's present working, are we glad to see that Christ is being reproduced?

H.T. It says, "he shall bring forth the head-stone with shoutings". Does the thought of establishment and permanence come into this thought of the stone?

E.C.B. It does. God says in Isaiah 28 that He has put it both as a foundation and as a corner-stone, that is God has the whole structure in His mind from the beginning. He will bring out through Isaiah later in this prophecy that the One who is going to have this place for God is the One who has qualified for it morally by His suffering. He is going to be established as the key to what God had intended to have on the earth. I think the idea of the foundation-stone and the corner-stone both relate to what is on earth, not exactly to what is in heaven, but Israel was on earth and we are on earth at the present time. The scripture in Peter refers to what is here on the earth.

J.R.C. In the gospel the Lord drew attention to the woman who committed everything she had to the treasury. Immediately following that, one of His disciples said, "see what stones and what buildings!" (Mark 13: 1), but morally she was greater than them, and greater than the disciples at that point.

E.C.B. That is right. They did not appreciate that the key to the building was there in their presence, and yet the woman did.

J.R.C. We used to speak a lot about a moral basis, a moral foundation. This is a day when that is essential with every one of us, otherwise departure comes in.

E.C.B. I am sure that is right. In the context in which we are seeking to speak now, a moral structure, basis or foundation is that in us which is consistent with Christ. Do you not think that?

J.R.C. What are we building up? It comes to that. That is Corinthians.

E.C.B. Are we concerned that what we are doing and saying, and especially thinking, is like Christ? Mr Stoney says that most of our sins are in our thoughts. That is where the moral structure of a man comes to light, in his thoughts and his thinking. The pattern of their thinking reveals what kind of man or woman they are morally. The test of everything for God is, will Christ fit into what you are doing? If not, He is not going to change Christ: what He will change is you.

A.M. It refers to a "tried stone". I wondered if that related to the manhood of Jesus and that God is basing everything on that perfection.

E.C.B. The trying of the stone comes in the chapters in Isaiah after 40, for instance chapter 53; and chapter 42: "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!" (v 1). There is the trying of the stone, and in the day to come, in the day of their repentance, Israel will come to it that "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isa 53: 4) and they will then be free in the spirit of the Song of Songs to respond to Him. The trying of the stone in Isaiah comes in the chapters which deal especially with the suffering Christ. Is that not a suffering Messiah that Israel rejected? Had some glittering stone been presented to them, they might have said, This just fits what we are doing, this is just what we want. But it was not so. They said, "Is not this the carpenter", Mark 6: 3. The carpenter did not fit into what the joiners were doing.

J.W.Sen. What do you think is meant when David, after he won the victory in Jerusalem, continued building inwardly?

E.C.B. Is that not what our concern should be? A great test for us is whether what we are inwardly corresponds to what we are outwardly. I was impressed in hearing a brother quote the scripture, "my thought goeth not beyond my word", Ps 17: 3. There is a man of

moral integrity, the two things in me are consistent; I am not pretending to be what I am not.

J.W. Was that seen absolutely in the Lord when He says, "Altogether that which I also say to you", John 8: 25?

E.C.B. Exactly. We have to speak of the reality of our present state, but that should be true of us. The Spirit is not concerned in the present day to produce better Brethren: He is concerned to produce Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ", 1 Cor 3: 11. Paul does not say it is yet going to be laid, but it is laid.

D.D. The whole verse says, "Thou hast proved my heart, thou hast visited me by night; thou hast tried me, thou hast found nothing; my thought goeth not beyond my word".

E.C.B. There is a man of integrity. Would it be too much to encourage the brethren to seek more integrity? Would we have less trouble among us if there were more integrity? It is part of the purifying process that the Spirit is engaged in, that there should be integrity, from bottom to top. In Jesus everything was consistent; in us, we perhaps have to say differently.

T.M. It spoke of a foundation well-founded.

E.C.B. The danger in the epistle to the Hebrews is of reverting to something which God had already superseded. We have to be careful about that. God has before Him that which has its foundation in Christ and which is increasing according to Christ and that Christ can then crown. Somebody said:

'Christ is the End, for Christ was the Beginning,
Christ the Beginning, for the End is Christ'.

That is the structure. We could well be exercised continually as to whether it is Christ who is being reproduced in us. In the scripture in Isaiah God says what He is doing: "Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion", but Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3 puts the exercise on us.

A.B. In Ephesians, "ye have not thus learnt the Christ, if ye have heard him and been instructed in him according as the truth is in

Jesus", chap 4: 20. Mr Darby's footnote there says 'Jesus is personally brought into relief'.

E.C.B. That verse continues with you putting off the old man and putting on the new. God is concerned about both the foundation and the crown. He could have said, I will have a building, or I will build again, but in Isaiah He says that He has put in Zion this foundation and this cornerstone. In us it must relate to the new man.

A.B. I thought that; it goes on, "being renewed in the spirit of your mind".

E.C.B. Yes, our experience of that is the test of our integrity to what God has established in us.

J.W. Do we need to be occupied with the Lord Jesus more? Isaiah certainly brings out some very fine touches. I suppose we can hardly understand "tried ... precious ... sure" apart from the consideration of the Lord Jesus, so great was the Person down here and where He is now. Colossians says: "seek the things which are above, where the Christ is ... have your mind on the things that are above", chap 3: 1.

E.C.B. Yes. I suppose Isaiah did not know of whom he was actually prophesying. He has very choice things to say which we understand as bearing on Jesus Himself. I would like to be sure that we get hold of the thought that God has something before Him and He is going to bring it through. The question is whether we are going to work with God towards His end or whether in any way we have a different end in our own minds. Paul was quite clear what God was doing and about the way to it, about the way it was being worked out and established, but there was only one Object in all that occupied Paul's mind. We could well be concerned ourselves as to whether all that we are doing is concerned with maintaining, especially testimonially, what speaks to God of Christ.

H.T. Is your thought then that the habitation of God in the Spirit is here on earth now?

E.C.B. That is right. Do you not think so?

H.T. I wanted to hear what you had to say about it because you spoke about the building not being in heaven but here upon earth.

E.C.B. It may have a heavenly character but it is here on the earth. The building in Isaiah is on earth; the building in Ephesians is on earth but a heavenly structure, a structure which, you may say, has been designed in heaven. Moses and David and Ezekiel had a view of patterns from heaven but the things were for earth. There are things that are built up for God on the earth which will never be worked out anywhere else. In Genesis 1, God created the earth in order to have a platform on which He could work out things in man which would be here in time, but which He could afterwards translate to heaven.

D.W. When the Lord said to the disciples, "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?", and then, "But ye, who do ye say that I am?" (Matt 16: 13,15), is that testing out the work of each?

E.C.B. Yes. It must have been a very great refreshment, both to Jesus Himself and to His Father, that there were those who could say who He was, consistent with what the Father Himself saw in Jesus.

J.W.Sen. Is the foundation moving on to completion?

E.C.B. You do not put down a foundation unless you are going to complete the building. I recall Mr Evershed saying that people come to your door and offer to renew your windows, your doors, or even your roof, but they never offer to renew your foundations. Nobody can renew the believer's foundations. There is only one foundation for God and that is Jesus Christ. The things established on that foundation must be consistent with Him; hence Paul says, be careful how you build; otherwise a structure may be erected into which the cornerstone will not fit. I think it is open to us at any stage of our history to test whether the corner-stone does fit. We do not have to wait until everything is finished. Do you think that?

J.R.C. I am sure that is right. Therefore, "I know thy works", Rev 3: 15. The Lord takes up with every assembly how they are carrying on. Is that right?

E.C.B. Yes. In that sense He is finding out in every local assembly whether He Himself will fit into it. I suppose that in Revelation 2 and 3 none of those assemblies is viewed as at the completion of its history. The history is not finished, just as the history of our local assemblies is not finished, but the question at any time is, will Christ fit into what there is in the assembly in a place?

J.R.C. Soberly, the Lord Jesus was outside Laodicea. He knew what was happening, but He did not fit in there.

E.C.B. He did not fit in there and yet He sought that someone would open the door.

J.R.C. That is the overcomer.

E.C.B. Yes. I think the Lord in grace is offering Himself to us all the time. We have to guard against the assumption that everything amongst us is always that into which Christ will readily fit, not to make us give up, but to make sure that what is there is suitable for Him.

T.M. He did not fit in Israel at that moment, but it says, "as many as received him, to them gave he the right" (John 1: 12), which would show that there were those into whose way of life He fitted.

E.C.B. In that scripture there were those who had been prepared - not just ready in their minds - so that they might receive Him. Do you not think the Lord is continually offering Himself to us as a test of our state?

T.M. I would say that. It is a question too, whether we are there when He presents Himself. In John 20 Thomas was not there and he missed something. Though he represents the unbelieving Jew, he missed something.

E.C.B. He missed what he would never recover. It is quite serious for us if we abstain, especially from the Supper, otherwise than for conditions which God has allowed. If you miss the Supper on one occasion, you miss something which you will never recover because the Lord does not manifest Himself in the same way every time. We have an obligation to be there. But the Lord is testing us always as

to whether we are so living and something formed that He can fit in at any time. Sometimes the Lord may have to come in in a displacing way. In these chapters in Isaiah He even let a flood through the place in order that the corner-stone might fit and the foundation be washed. Things are going to be re-established on a basis on which this stone can be put in its place and things can be built on it.

J.W.Sen. "He that trusteth shall not make haste" (v 16).

E.C.B. That bears on the fact that he would not be made ashamed. The note says, 'shall not hasten with fear'. John says, "not be put to shame from before him at his coming", 1 John 2: 28.

I thought that Peter put these things in our own day and he does it very attractively. "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness". Peter does not refer to a foundation. The scripture in Isaiah refers to the "sure foundation", but Peter says, "Behold, I lay in Zion a corner-stone, elect precious" - as our brother said, the adjectives that are applied are interesting and affecting - "and he that believes on him shall not be put to shame". I think we can help one another in making Christ more precious. Some of these things we are inclined to take for granted. I ask the young people, How precious is Christ to you? It is very easy for us old men to lift things above the heads of the younger brethren, but the question whether Christ is precious to you is a fitting question whatever age you are. The preaching of the gospel is not intended just to produce people who believe certain doctrines, or who simply acquiesce in what they continually hear in the meeting. It is to establish people, and especially young people, in the preciousness of Christ. This calls for exercise on the part of those who preach. I myself have been exercised lately as to the actual effect of the preaching of the gospel in our rooms. Most of us come to at least fifty preachings every year and that number soon multiplies, but what effect has it had on you? I fear more attention is given to the quality of the preaching and the preacher than to the effect in the company. I, with some exercise, would urge the brethren to consider the effect on them of the preaching of the gospel week by week. It is not intended only to

convert them; it is intended to keep them converted. There is the "washing of water by the word" (Eph 5: 26), and it is a better preaching that leaves you exercised about your state than one in which the gospel has been well presented from Scripture, even well presented articulately, but has little effect on our spirits.

E.M. Peter finishes his second epistle by saying: "but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen", chap 3: 18. He was concerned that there might be growth.

E.C.B. We have that in the hymn: 'gentle, heavenly growth' (No 78). Would you say that the meeting in which you learned most when you were young was the preaching? Young people learn more in the preaching than they do in the readings. Do you think that?

J.R.C. We will accept that: I think it is right. After all, the preaching touches your conscience and your heart too, but your conscience should be affected. Mr Darby says that growth in relation to divine things is by your conscience, not intellect.

E.C.B. That is very true. But in the preaching of the gospel it is mainly Christ that is presented. God is presented because we are responsible to God, but Christ is presented. In readings many other things are spoken about: but in the gospel the word is direct and is about Christ; it is intended to affect the souls of those who hear, and that they should learn by it. I think that most of the education of our younger brethren takes place in the preaching.

J.W. So it is intended to produce something in keeping with the foundation. Peter's confession in Matthew 16 has been referred to already. The Lord says to him, "thou art Peter" (v 18). I thought there was something there that was in keeping with the foundation.

E.C.B. That is right. The foundation was Christ: Christ the rock and Peter a stone, but it was in keeping with the foundation. Peter is concerned, therefore, that we might keep in our minds that what God is doing, which is presenting Christ, and that he says is, He is "with God chosen, precious. Then he says, "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness", that is, that you enter into God's appreciation of

Christ and that is part of this structure which God is concerned about.

T.M. What an effect the glad tidings of Jesus and the sufferings of Christ had on the Ethiopian eunuch!

E.C.B. Yes. You could take other instances, you could go back in your own history. Could you not point to preachings which had a distinct effect on you? We should be more concerned about the preaching and its quality among us. It is not just to be a routine: it is a privilege to preach and we should be concerned that what is preached is Christ and is consistent both with the foundation and with the corner-stone. You can look at it historically and say, Well, the foundation is Jesus here: the corner-stone is what we shall be with Him. But look at it as you will, you would have to say it is all Christ.

D.D. Paul so spoke that many turned to the Lord: John the baptist's testimony had the same effect. Persons were affected by what he said and the tenor of it.

E.C.B. Yes. The general tenor of the ministry of John the baptist was to turn people away from himself to One who was coming after him. That, of course, was Christ.

J.R.C. Who is Peter speaking to in verse 1 of chapter 2?

E.C.B. To the same people as Paul is speaking to in 2 Corinthians 4: from 'having laid aside all malice' and so on, he goes on to "the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ" (v.4). Do not these things show how easy it is to fall away? Even by accepting for our lives a lower level than the reproduction of Christ; and if you allow it in a small thing, you will find how quickly the next drop comes. Is that not true of you and me?

J.R.C. Christ died for all these things that He might put them away. Therefore they should never be amongst those who love the Lord Jesus in seeking to work out the truth together.

E.C.B. No. Some of these things that are spoken of in the beginning of this chapter are surprising. It says, "malice ... guile ...

hypocrisies ... envyings ... evil speakings" - laying aside these things. Let us ask, Have you never envied anybody? It was envy that led to the crucifixion of Christ (see Matt 27: 18). In the seventh of Romans it was, Thou shalt not lust that found him out, but lusting is still alive because envy is a demonstration of lusting after other things.

J.R.C. That is very searching.

E.C.B. These things are presented to us very simply in Scripture; sometimes we are afraid to talk about these simple things. In Isaiah where it speaks about the eyes and the ears, the seraphim covered their face and their feet; lower down it says, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and blind their eyes", chap 6: 10. One of the principal means of the enemy seducing people is by their eyes, and many things are presented to the eye which are intended only to develop lust in people and that leads into sin. We need to be sure that we are pure in the maintenance of holiness so that we are not diverted by Satan or even by our own lusts, that we are not drawn away from what is consistent with Christ. Let us not make sin appear not-sin by speaking of it in complicated words!

A.M. Self-judgment helps us in this because, when we enter into God's presence, we find there the Man who never sinned. Is that how growth takes place with us?

E.C.B. Yes, that is where judgment takes place. The time of the judgment seat is not, I think, fixed in Scripture but I think a good deal of the principle of it should be now. Paul always sought to be agreeable to the Lord. God has a structure here in which He intends that only Christ shall be maintained. He intended to have it in Israel and in excessive grace presented Christ to them, and they rejected Him. Now He presents Christ to us by the Spirit in order that we may be tested as to whether He will fit into what we ourselves are engaged with.

Ques. You spoke not only about the foundation and the cornerstone but also of the crown. It is the crown of what God has Himself, is it not, the crown of grace, the crown that God delights in?

E.C.B. Yes. The corner-stone is that with which God intends to complete what He is building now and that can only be Christ. We may speak doctrinally about things and the reality of them is in testing our own moral integrity. One might extend that and say that there will not be moral integrity in a local company unless there is moral integrity in the persons who make it up. Christian life is simple and things are not to be passed over by talking in refined language about them.

T.M. "If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because 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: 15,16. All through his epistle he speaks very plainly.

E.C.B. That is right. When Jesus was here you could say He was here "of the Father". He was in no way marked by the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes and certainly not by the pride of life. These things are inconsistent with what God is doing. I would like us to ask ourselves, Is what I am something into which Christ would fit as crown on the part of God, or would I still have to be trimmed up? What do you think?

G.C. In the first verse of chapter 2 it goes on to say "as new born babes". Do you think in that character of things there is something which is pure, undefiled and simple?

E.C.B. I can only help in regard to that by saying what the scripture says. New born babes are viewed, here and elsewhere, as persons who are not yet defiled by sin. We know that in principle sin is in them: they are viewed as persons in whom it is not yet manifested. What Peter is saying is, just as babes desire milk, so you should desire the pure mental milk of the word. That means that we do not take the Scriptures and mix them up with other things in order to evade the moral power which they have on our own spirits.

J.W. This first verse does not suggest that we do not have these things, but we lay them aside. There would be something definite about that in our own exercise, do you think?

E.C.B. Yes, and that is what the writer of the epistle to Hebrews speaks about as "laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us", chap 12: 1. These things are to be laid aside so that we "may grow up to salvation, if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good". Then he says, "To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men" - that is Psalm 118 - "but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. Because it is contained in the scripture: Behold, I lay in Zion, a cornerstone, elect, precious" and so on. God is going to have that.

What brought these thoughts to my mind was this, that God introduced these thoughts in relation to an earthly people. He maintains them in relation to a people who are characteristically heavenly. They must, therefore, represent something that God intended to have and still intends to have in every dispensation. We are not responsible for Israel, but we are responsible for ourselves, and therefore there is an obligation on us to be sure that what we are building is consistent with what God has in mind from the point of view of His own purpose. Hence Paul says to the Corinthians, Watch what you build. Paul might even say to us, You hold in faith that Christ is the foundation; you hold in faith that Christ is the corner-stone; what are you going to put in between? I think 1 Corinthians 3 might be looked at like that. It is not intended that the corner-stone will, as it were, be floating loose somewhere: it will be part of a structure of which you form part.

D.D. Even when He, the corner-stone, had been rejected, Peter's word was, "Repent therefore and be converted, for the blotting out of your sins, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and he may send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you", Acts 3: 18,19.

E.C.B. Yes, that is almost like God offering them the corner-stone a second time, is it not? Peter there is still occupied with the earthly kingdom. When he writes his epistle the kingdom is in heaven - "reserved in the heavens for you", 1 Pet 1: 4. Whether it was Peter's experience of Israel rejecting what he had presented in that

preaching in the Acts, or whether it was light from God, what he now understands is that the kingdom and the inheritance are heavenly; we are intended to come into that.

D.D. They had actually rejected Him according to flesh but God in His grace gives Him back in resurrection. Is that right?

E.C.B. Yes; you could say that God gave them a second chance, but they rejected the second chance as they had rejected the first. The issue for us is in this: that God is not going to offer anything more than Christ. He has only Christ for the whole of the Christian dispensation and for eternity. People in the present time have before them either eternity with Christ and like Christ, or banishment from the presence of God. There is no outlook of an earthly state for people who reject the gospel. God is going to re-establish things in Israel and He will have His house established in them, but He will have a house now that speaks to Him of Christ: 'In that which ever speaks to Him of Thee' Mr Coates says. (Hymn 293)

J.W.Sen. Who sees what I am building?

E.C.B. God will tell you. The check on your building is: when Christ is presented to you does it fit with you or do you have to have it re-shaped, or do you have to say, No, I cannot fit that in?

R.S. "Living stones" is us, is it not? I was thinking of how the Lord Jesus took account of the poor widow: "but she of her destitution has cast in all that she had, the whole of her living", Mark 12: 44. That is unreserved committal that the Lord Himself takes account of. And in all we do or say, there is to be nothing covetous in our minds. Is that the spirit?

E.C.B. That is it. That scripture in relation to the woman was referred to earlier. The disciples go on to say, "Seest thou these great buildings?". But if you speak in absolute terms, how far short we fall! Can we speak in other than absolute terms? Can we say in serving, ministering or whatever amongst the brethren, or even in conversation with each other, You can be 75% a Christian? We can only speak in absolute terms, can we not?

J.R.C. The bearing of the judgment-seat of Christ is very much an essential matter with us, do you not think, because we can delude ourselves?

E.C.B. Do you not think it bears on the present?

J.R.C. The bearing of it is current.

E.C.B. It comes to me more and more that the bearing of the judgment-seat of Christ is now.

J.R.C. That would be right, and therefore "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness" is the positive result of everything being cleared.

E.C.B. That is so. Therefore, in regard to what was asked, we are tested, are we not, every Lord's Day morning by the Supper? We speak about Christ coming in. Did He come in to me? And what did He find? When He found me on my feet repeating to Him things that I had read in ministry, was that reality? Or when Christ came in did He fit into me so that something fresh in relation to Himself and formed by Himself came out in expression to Him? The Song of Songs takes us over that ground. At first you can maintain the exterior, you can say the right things and so on, and as you go on through that book you find that you are searched; but ultimately you can say, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine", chap 6: 3. I think that is union with Christ.

J.R.C. What manner of persons ought we to be?

E.C.B. Quite so: "in holy conversation and godliness", 2 Pet 3: 11. What sort of persons ought we to be?

J.R.C. Especially how we speak to one another, do you not think?

E.C.B. And the way we refer to one another too. We tend to speak with excessive familiarity about one another. I do not want to go back to Victorian orthodoxy, but it is possible for familiarity to have in it the tones of contempt as a proverb says. We need to have very great respect for one another in relation to the work of God.

J.R.C. Someone said, you will never love the brethren unless you respect them.

E.C.B. You will not, nor will there be anything in the nature of unity except in a company where there is mutual respect. I just suggest these things because it seems to me that, if God has had something in mind both in relation to His earthly people and in relation to a heavenly people, it would help us to be able to get into God's thoughts in that respect - God has many other thoughts - and be concerned as to whether what God has in view, which the scriptures point us to, is what we are engaged with in our own day.

Key to initials

A.Buchan, Peterhead; E.C.Burr, London; G.Coull, Aberdeen; J.R.Cumming, Edinburgh; D.Duthie, Aberdeen; A.Mair, Cullen; E.Mair, Cullen; T.Mair, Cullen; A.Strachan, Peterhead; H.Taylor, Aberdeen; D.Webster, Fraserburgh; J.Webster, Fraserburgh; J.Webster, sen., Fraserburgh

UNITY

Eric Burr

John 10: 14-17, 29, 30; 17: 11, 20-23

The verses read will show that I would like to say a word about unity not by taking up conditions among us and proposing remedies for specific things but in relation to the depth of unity of which Jesus speaks in these chapters.

We would all be concerned, I am sure, that there should be unity among the people of God. One of the most sorrowful aspects of the present day is that we are surrounded by believers and yet are unable to work out with them the unity which is in the divine thought. This should be a concern to us and we might be more before the Lord in relation to it. We need our view broad as to what divine interests on the earth are. Mr Darby spoke of his 'old song': our feet in the narrow path but our heart as wide as God's. One may think of that expression in relation to humanity in general, but especially in relation to the people of God, for, as I say we are surrounded by believers with whom sadly at the present time we do not have the experience of oneness. Yet that is the divine thought.

John's presentation of this is not quite the same as Paul's. Paul's unity is according to one body and by the one Spirit, and it is clear from the frequency with which he uses the expression 'one Spirit' that unity amongst the people of God rests in Paul's mind on what is corporate, that is, there is an entity here formed in the power of the Spirit, corporately one, which one can look at and see as a united entity. Hence Paul dwells a great deal on the assembly, an entity which he sees as corresponding to what Jesus said to him when He appeared to him in Acts 9: "why dost thou persecute me?" (v 4). Paul always had in mind unity as expressed in a corporate entity. That is not to say that he did not have in mind unity as bearing on individuals, but the trend of his thoughts is that there is unity in a corporate entity, which is the church.

John's view of oneness is not expressed in quite the same way. While Jesus speaks in the verses which I read in chapter 10 of "one flock, one shepherd", and while it has been taught that John's 'flock' is very much the same thought as Paul's 'body', it seems to me that John has very much more in mind unity amongst the individuals who form the company. You may well say that that is part and parcel of Paul's view of unity and so it is, but it would exercise us if we looked at things from John's point of view and understood that the unity is of individuals - even the individuals available to us - but countless others who, as Jesus speaks in John's gospel, form a oneness. The distinction may appear to be small, but if things are presented to us as bearing upon us individually, they are calculated to have more effect. There is well developed amongst us absorption in what is collective or corporate, perhaps a little to the expense of what is individual; but unless what is individual is reinforced among us, what is collective will eventually fail. I speak, of course, with no derogation from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, but the work of God here at the present time is found and expressed in individuals who then make up a company. I draw on these scriptures in John because they suggest to me that the idea of oneness of which Jesus speaks has a depth which it requires peculiar power from the Spirit to enter into.

John begins very simply. The doctrinal aspects of the first part of John 10 I for the moment take for granted. We have moved together over many years and there are aspects of the Scripture which are more or less common coin to everybody. It would be generally understood - and the young people as they grow up would understand - that when Jesus speaks in this chapter, He begins with what corresponds to the nation of Israel to whom in particular He had come. As was quoted in the reading, "He came to his own, and his own received him not", John 1: 11. But as Jesus develops what He is saying He speaks of "other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring", implying that there would be those outside the Jewish fold whom He would bring into the flock, "and there shall be one flock, one shepherd". In fact Jesus hardly refers to the flock

until He refers to the other sheep as well. In the early part of the chapter He referred to the sheep and the fold, but now He refers to the flock, and that is in the light of the fact that He would have others than those of the Jewish nation. The flock as He thus speaks - "and there shall be one flock, one shepherd" - corresponds with the second chapter of Ephesians in which the middle wall of partition is broken down and there is then a united company presented and available to the Father, especially for the worship of the Father. Here Jesus brings before His disciples that there shall be one flock. That is a thought that should lay hold of us profoundly, but securely, that Jesus is not just speaking of a number of individuals - although He is speaking of individuals - nor quite speaking of a corporate entity, but He is speaking of the collectivity of the individuals whom He is going to secure. His point is that there should be one flock. He does not imply that there had previously been two shepherds and in future there would be one but that there should be one Shepherd over them (that expression comes in the Old Testament in relation to Israel - that there should be one shepherd over them when the sticks are united into one again (see Ezek 37: 24)) - one flock, one Shepherd, and all the sheep, therefore, have the experience, under His guidance and His leading, of being connected with and united to Him. The first thing that Jesus would have us arrive at is that there is one flock and one Shepherd.

I need not speak of how difficult it is and how unsuited to the idea of a flock it would be if that flock were to be divided. It has often been pointed out that John's sheep are not lost and they do not go astray: therefore the flock cannot be looked at otherwise than as complete and held together under the power of one Shepherd. It is to be learned from this too, that it is the Shepherd who holds the flock together. The flock does not hold itself together, although there is power amongst the people of God as having the Spirit, and especially, according to Paul's teaching, to hold themselves together in the power of one Spirit. In John's presentation they are held together by their attachment to the one Shepherd. Jesus thus

introduces us all to the idea of unity amongst those who belong to Him.

He goes on in this chapter, however, to speak further about the sheep. The people did not understand what He was saying and He speaks about laying down His life and laying it down of Himself, and the Jews raise their contentious questions; but He goes on to say, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them life eternal; and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand" (v 28). He goes on to speak about the Father, and it is especially in relation to unity, oneness, in connection with the Father that I would like to speak; and as I speak I seek to explore these scriptures. Things come to us as we speak to the brethren in the presence of the activity of the Spirit of God which deepen our understanding even as we proceed in relation to the scriptures that we may have before us.

He says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them life eternal" - I will not dwell at the present time on what eternal life is - "and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father. I and the Father are one". It seems to me that Jesus is leading the disciples - I suppose especially - but leading those who in our own day are in the current of His thoughts, into the vital truth of the unity between Himself and the Father. That is an aspect of unity which, it seems to me, the scriptures in John 17 show that we may be drawn into - unity of the highest level. The sheep are led into eternal life, but they are led into the knowledge of the unity between the Father and the Son. It is something very profound that there was a Man here whom they spoke of as the carpenter - "Is not this the carpenter...?", Mark 6: 3, who cast out demons and was recognised as doing that, but when He spoke about Himself as coming from the Father and bound up with the Father, produced strong reactions against Him as the very thought was rejected that there could be One here as a man who was totally bound up with God Himself, known as the Father. The Lord is leading the sheep in

that direction of that knowledge, leading them to understand the integrity of His relationship with the Father Himself and the blessed fulness of the fact that, if He and the Father are one, then Jesus is the perfect expression of what the Father is. There is in that a manifestation of a oneness which we need the Holy Spirit to penetrate into at all, One here in the person of a Man who could speak of Himself as being one with the Father, and God the Father being perfectly presented in Him here in manhood as Jesus.

The question therefore for us is whether we have consciously been led by Jesus Himself as the Good Shepherd into the knowledge of His relationships with the Father so that we may enter into something of the depth of the revelation of God which has come out as a result of the incarnation. These things are very deep, but it may be that the understanding of eternal life is connected with the knowledge of the unity between the Father and the Son in that there is a unity which can never be intruded upon. I do not speak at the present time of the period on the cross when He was forsaken by God, at the end of which He commended His spirit to the Father, because we know the purpose of those particular three hours of His life on earth, but, that apart, there was a Man here who was so bound up with the Father that He could say, "I and the Father are one". And when one of His disciples asks Him in the blessed simplicity of relationships with Himself which comes out in chapter 14 "Lord, shew us the Father and it suffices us" (v 8) He says, "Am I so long a time with you, and thou hast not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father" (v 9). There is therefore presented to us in the Person of Jesus and in His teaching, His ministry, and in what He was as manifested amongst His own, that perfect representation of the Father such that, if you looked at Him, you would see the Father. I think that you cannot get a closer experience of unity than that. To have seen Him and know you were seeing Another - the perfect expression of the Father in Jesus - seems to me to be the highest experience of unity that there can be.

The question is whether our own standards of unity reach to that level, or whether we do not characteristically seek to arrive at

unity by a process of adjustment of this and that and taking up this and that, rather than approaching it in John's way and seeing that there has been a perfect revelation of unity into which we may be drawn. That seems to me to be the nature of the teaching of Jesus, of His speaking to the Father in chapter 17.

These things, as I say, are profound. How much one wishes - at least I wish for myself - that one could enter more deeply into some of the simpler expressions in the Bible. There are some things which are on the surface readily to be entered into and understood, for instance once you have had the consciousness that you were a sinner "that Christ died for our sins, according to the scripture", 1 Cor 15: 3. You can understand perhaps that He was buried; the Scriptures tell you that. In 1 Corinthians 15 there is no elaboration of that. "And that He was raised the third day, according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve". Then He appeared to a number, and then, Paul says, "he appeared to me also". You can perhaps understand these things because of the simplicity with which they are presented in the scripture itself. But there are other things presented in very simple language which are the most profound things that have ever been said. "I and the Father are one", has on its surface an extreme simplicity: underneath it has the most profound depths, that God has been revealed in the Person of a Man.

Now Jesus speaking to the Father in John 17 says, "And I am no longer in the world" - that is, He is leaving the world according to chapter 13 and going to the Father - "And I am no longer in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee". Then He says, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one as we". The maintenance of unity amongst the disciples immediately, but amongst ourselves (those who believe on Him through their word) is committed by Jesus to the Father. That is something very blessed. It is not something in John 17 that is arrived at administratively. It is not even something which on the face of the scripture is arrived at by the operations of the Holy Spirit. It is arrived at by the direct care of the Father, that He would

keep them in His own name: "Keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one as we". It would be clear that the objective in the mind of Jesus in this chapter is that His people should be one here as long as they are here. His intention in relation to His own is that there should be unity. But in this verse He commits the maintenance of that unity to the Father. He says, "keep them". The structure of that verse is not altogether easy to understand. If it said, 'Keep them whom thou hast given me in thy name', that would be more easily understood. But "keep them in thy name which thou hast given me" - as if it is the Father's name which has been given to Jesus - is not as easily understood as if the verse was the other way round. Nevertheless Jesus commits the unity of His own to the Father. I find that very blessed because we all have access to the Father. The underlying truth of the verse in Ephesians 2 - "For through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father" (v 18) - is the unity of the people of God, both Jew and Gentile who have been formed into one body by the power of the Holy Spirit and have access to the Father by the same means. But the Father, in keeping the people that He had given to Jesus, is to keep them all the time that the Lord is absent.

The question for us is how far we apprehend that the Father is watching over us and caring for us and keeping us for that very purpose. We are accustomed to turning to the Father for our support and provision and maintenance, generally being looked after in the circumstances in which we are in the world; and we turn to the Father if we have some special need and know that the Father Himself cares about us. But one aspect of the Father's service is to keep the people that He had given to Jesus in unity. I ask whether we have experienced the Father doing that with us. We can make the most precious truths doctrinal but what is vital and what will matter in the end is the experience of them. Doctrine codifies experience, but what is most important for the maintenance of Christian life is the experience of Christian life: it is not maintained by doctrine. Doctrine can have a certain deadness. It has often been said that it is like the banks of the river, but the river flows on;

the banks are still there, the doctrine is still there, but the river flows on. What I would like to be in myself and what I think all the saints would like to be in is the flow of the river, kept, of course, in its right channels by right doctrine, but if meetings are purely about doctrine they can very quickly become intellectual and be exposed to the operations of the mind of man. Have we the experience of the Father keeping us in Christ's name? Have we the experience of the Father keeping us in order that we may be maintained as one? That is one of the principal things which Jesus in this chapter asked the Father to do.

These things suggest to me that there is opportunity for us, if at any time we feel that unity is lacking between you and me, between the saints who make up the local company, between the people of God more widely, to pray to the Father that He would exercise His keeping power amongst us or on me or on you, in order that unity may be maintained. Even in recent times, have our prayers not been more for correctness in administration than for the Father's operations to keep the saints in unity together? Would it not be better to be kept in unity by the Father's working upon me than by administration? I would rather be the subject of the Father's work than of a care meeting. I would rather be kept as the result of the prayers of my brethren in the unity which Jesus speaks of here, they having prayed to the Father for the maintenance of that unity, than by having an extra care meeting or an extra meeting of assembly character - although sometimes they are needed - but kept in the power of unity because someone had prayed to the Father that He would keep them whom He had given to Jesus in His own name that they may be one.

As we go on in the chapter we have, "that they may be one as we". That goes back to what we were speaking about in chapter 10: "that they may be one as we": "I and the Father are one". I wonder how frequent, how rare, is the experience among us of that quality of unity which existed between the Father and the Son in manhood. Is it common? Is it known? Is it known in every locality? Is it known between every brother and brother and sister and sister, between

brother and sister in right relationships? Divine standards are maintained in the knowledge of divine Persons and in the maintenance of what that knowledge brings amongst us and brings us into. We speak about being spiritual, and there is the need for much more spirituality in handling relationships among the brethren than is commonly the case. One appreciates how much administration is needed, but it is subsidiary to the maintenance of the texture of Christian life in the Christian company.

Lower down in the chapter Jesus says, "And I do not demand for these only, but also for those who believe on me through their word; that they may be all one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us...", v 20, 21. I would like to understand that better: "that they also may be one in us." I do not think the explanation of those words of Jesus can be arrived at by administration. If there was ministry that would help us into it, few things would be more welcome. But what is it to be "one in us"? One may perhaps refer to the opening of the first epistle to the Thessalonians: "the assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ", and you have some suggestion there that the Thessalonians would know what it was to be "one in us". It suggests to me the idea of "the bundle of the living", that there is the Father, and Jesus and you and me and the people of God and local companies all bound up with that living bond round them, and all held together "that they also may be one in us."

We have some apprehension, I think, of what it is to be in Christ or in the Lord or in Christ Jesus. We have perhaps less understanding of what it is to be in God the Father. What about "one in us"? That is to say, the bond between the Father and the Son embraces yourself and myself and our local companies and the people of God generally, all bound up together in an unbreakable intimacy and power which is going to be a testimony to the world. Have we sought to maintain unity in other ways? There is no room for opinions in this: there is no room for trying to persuade people to think about unity this way or that way. That may come into Paul's ministry but we are quite justified in looking at the ministry that the

Lord has given through one servant as distinct from what He has given through another, united though these ministries will be in the end because they all stem from Christ. But John's presentation is that we are bound up with the Father and the Son in the intimacy in which they are bound together and that is intended to be the bond in which we stand together. We may ask ourselves, is that our experience? We would feel very much more than we often do the departure of anybody from the current experience of those bonds. I am not saying that the bonds would not be there. There must be discipline, but the expression, the feeling, that you could no longer extend the right hand of fellowship to somebody to whom you had once extended it is intended to be very deep in our spirits. They have not lost their place in Christ, they have not lost eternal salvation, but what they have lost is some present experience of this bundle of the living in which there are the Father and the Son and there are the people of God, looked at individually, all bound up in the bundle of the living, "that they also may be one in us."

I believe this is very deep indeed, that there should be people standing in this bond before the Father, entering into the unity between Himself and His Son and those whom He has given to Him, "that they also may be one in us." It lifts the idea of unity amongst us far above what we touch in care meetings, necessary though they are. It takes the question of our unity into the level of the service of God, where the unity of the people of God is primarily experienced. One would long for unity of opinion in administrative matters. It is sorrowful that hardly any matter has to arise but there may be nearly as many opinions about it as there are brethren involved in it, but the real idea of Christian unity is found in the service of God, and it is in that that you get the saints being "one in us". If that is touched, the service of God proceeds in a much more living and powerful way, not just in the recitation of things that have been said for years but in something that is springing freshly from the experience of what our relations with divine Persons themselves are.

He says, "that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The world will never understand that

there are people who are one in the Father and the Son, but what the world can see is the united state of a company, held in the power of divine bonds which are unbreakable. Our experience over many years has been such that the testimony to the world is much more that Christian companies can break up than it is that Christian companies cohere. We should feel the sorrow of that, beloved. The world can mock and says, Well, you people never get on together for five minutes. These things are a condemnation of what may be the assertion of personal opinions over the present power of our bonds with divine Persons.

It says, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one." And if that glory has been given to each, then they cannot but be one. "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one." In this chapter there is only one standard of unity and it does not rest on opinion. It rests on our relationships with the beloved Son of the Father and with the Father Himself. And He says, "I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one..." Is that process going on among us? Sorrows come: they come into localities and we feel them. Some such sorrows spring from personal opinions and from personal offence, things like that. Should a believer be offended by what someone else says? Who has ever exhausted forgiving somebody fourhundred-and-ninety times in a day? Have you ever tried it? It is a tragedy that division comes into places on account of opinions and on account of personal offence and things which touch sensibilities which belong to the first man when what is in the divine mind is that the standard of unity is our bond with the Father and the Son. And they will be "perfected into one".

The service tomorrow morning, if the Lord leaves us here, will be contributory to that perfecting. It will be taking us further into the experience of being "perfected into one". Will the experience of unity with divine Persons be advanced again? That is the prime occasion on which unity amongst the people of God is deepened. Readings may help: care meetings may help: 'assembly meetings' may be

necessary, and I do underline that sometimes assembly meetings are necessary. They are not to be shirked: they may be necessary. But the unity and its perfecting takes place, I think, as the Lord manifests Himself amongst His own and draws us to Himself and into the bond between Himself and the Father and we become deepened in these things. "And that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Think how blessed that is. Is that experienced, beloved? Is that just scripture? Is it just something that we have in print between leather covers? Is that all it is? Or have we the actual experience ourselves, leaving aside the question of testimony to the world, that the Father loves us as He loved Christ? The end of this chapter is "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them" and there you have the clue to that unity between the Father and the Son and the people of God, all bound up and set out in the reality of relationships into which we are drawn and which are probably too profound for us to describe. They come into the soul, the reality of this experience, that I am bound up with all the people of God because I am bound up with the Father and the Son. What depth there is in that! What fulness! What blessedness! Paul says to the Galatians, "What then was your blessedness?", chap 4: 15. Beloved, could we say what then was our blessedness. Well, last Lord's Day morning we had it, did we not? Tomorrow morning, if we are left here, we shall experience again the reality of our blessedness, to be drawn and held in the power of relationships with the Father and the Son - it is remarkable that the Spirit is not referred to in this chapter - but in relationships with the Father and the Son, and we are drawn to that and held in it and we are beyond doctrine in it. What we are in is the experience of something which we can hardly describe but which we know when we feel it, and by that process we are being "perfected into one."

I venture to urge the brethren to pursue unity with one another and in their localities from this point of view. If you feel there is any element of disunity, ask the Father, get back to the Father, that He would keep you in His name which He had given to Christ that you

may be one as He and the Son are one. There is more power of unity in our entreating the Father to hold us in it than there is in our seeking by painful steps to arrive at unity with one another. Unity in this sense comes down from above and enfolds us all because it comes down from where the Son is now with the Father and where everything is in divine rest and in divine perfection.

I have touched on things that are deeper than I myself can speak about, but there is spiritual power in a company which is able to enter more fully, even into what is said, because the Spirit works and suggests things to our minds and things are therefore deepened in us and we can go away from a meeting and perhaps even without deliberately doing it become conscious after a little while that we are pursuing things from a different point of view from which we pursued them before. May the Lord help us!

FRASERBURGH

11 June 1994