

[R456 : page 5]

WHAT IS DUTY.

Fairview, Pa.

DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST: – I presume you have but little time to read letters of a personal character. I will, therefore, beg pardon for this intrusion and ask your attention for a few moments. First of all, many thanks for the TOWER. Personally, you are unknown to me, yet known as I see you in your words – asking our Lord daily to guide your pen and lead you by His Spirit into all truth.

About two years ago I was lead to seek earnestly for a higher type of Christian life. I sought, through study of His Word, asking for the teachings of the Holy Spirit. I was not disappointed. When the "Food" was distributed in Erie, I found a copy which had been thrown aside, and, I bless God, it met the exact wants of my soul. The book harmonized with views held for years, but held under proscription. Yet I have still maintained my Church relations.

This brings me to the point: Shall those whom God thus enlightens, and brings out of the bondage of creeds and confessions, remain in these cold, lifeless organizations? While in the [R457 : page 5] Church we must study its peace and harmony – here is the rub; if these advance views are touched, a ripple is started which runs through the body, and Bro. A. is disturbed and Sister B. is disquieted. Finally it gets to the preacher's ears; he thinks he sees the wolf coming, so he takes his gun (discipline of his Church) and starts out to quiet the restless one. All this can be borne, but what is duty? Shall we remain and drop down to their level; for as sure as face answereth to face in water, just so sure "like priest like people."

But, says one, The Church is a mighty power for good in the world, stand by her. Yes, but consider God's dealings with the Jews – the charge of Moses and Joshua – that the perpetuity of the Jewish

nation was conditioned upon its devotion to God. They forsook Him and He abandoned them. Other cases might be cited from His Word, but space forbids. Evidences of national decay were apparent for years with the Jews; and in the Church now, certainly if anything is visible it is spiritual dearth – decay – a pale, sickly light shed from a lamp obscured by creeds and catechisms, devoid of spirit and power. It is a fact that the Church is falling off in membership, to say nothing of spirituality. If I were to say she has a name to live and is dead, would it be too strong? Now, shall the man or woman whose heart God has aroused to leave past experiences, and press forward after new attainments in the divine life, be entangled and tied to this dead body in hope of awakening it to life? Or shall he step out into the liberty of a son of God? Please give me your opinion, and may the Spirit direct your words.

Yours in Christ, _____.

Many letters of similar import to the above have come to us recently. In replying to this brother publicly we answer all.

First, we would say, that we would never have any feel that their correspondence is an intrusion. Though time will not permit prompt replies, and some must remain unanswered personally, every letter is carefully read in order that we may know the necessities of our fellow-travelers in this difficult way, and, by the grace of God, be enabled to reach a helping hand where most needed. The assurance, also, of your prayers and sympathies, and that the truth is building you up and making you free, as well as the many suggestions and queries received, which send us to dig deeper into the wonderful mine of truth – all working together – tend to strengthen and cheer us and to edify the Church. Therefore, let us hear from you, but let love and patience have their perfect work.

In answer to the above question we would say: To all who realize the Babylon (confusion) condition of the nominal Church,

give earnest heed to the words of our glorified Lord, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18:4.)

Rev. 3:15-17 is an exact pen picture of this last phase of the Gospel Church. Their lukewarm condition is the most undesirable, because most dangerous. If the mass of the nominal church were "hot" – full of warm and loving devotion to God – she would be a delight to the Lord and a power in the world. Or, if she were "cold" – making no pretensions whatever to be exponents of his truth – she would not dishonor and misrepresent him. But, alas! she is lukewarm, and therefore she is spued out of his mouth.

Some tell us they cannot understand how the organizations formed by such good men as Wesley, Calvin, Luther, Knox and others can be properly considered parts of Babylon. "Were these not earnest and devoted followers of the Master?" Yes, we reply, we esteem all those our brethren who fearlessly stemmed the tide of popular opinion and braved persecution on every hand for the truth's sake. We believe they received and walked in the light due in their day. And so far as we are able to judge, the Reformers as well as many in humbler stations, whose names have not come down to us, were overcomers – part of the "little flock" whose names are written in heaven. But in the vast organizations who now call themselves their followers, how much do we find of their spirit of sacrifice, of love of truth, of humility and separation from the world? Alas, it takes little discernment to see that only a form of godliness remains.

We call attention to this fact as foretold in our Lord's Revelation to John (Chaps 2 and 3.) Notice, that to every stage of the Church except the last, the Master has some word of commendation, but in this – the Laodicean stage – he finds nothing to commend. Do they point to their mighty works? Yes, says the Lord, "I know thy works;" nevertheless, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." They say

they are "rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," and know not that they are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." She is counseled to "buy" (at the expense of reputation and worldly interests) "gold tried in the fire" (divine treasure) "and white raiment," (justification by an intelligent faith in Christ as the Redeemer) and to anoint her eyes with eyesalve (the spirit of humility and teachableness) that she may see. And he says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock:" (I am present) "If any man" (in this great system so completely joined to the world and overcome by "the abundance of her delicacies") "hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me."

Notice, that this is an individual matter now. It is not the church nominal which is to be fed; they are not hungry. But it is the individual Christians of the true Church, the eyes of whose understanding have been opened by the eyesalve. Such only hear – recognize the knock which indicates the Master's presence. Such only open to him, and such only he feeds.

Though, as a system, the nominal Church is cast out as was her type, the Jewish Church, in the harvest of their age (Matt. 23:38), here as there our Lord recognizes the true wheat which he has permitted to grow together with the tares until now. (Matt. 13:30.) And just as surely as we are in the harvest, so surely is separation now due and is taking place. The command, "Come out of her," was not given until after the announcement, "Babylon is fallen."

Look again at Babylon. As you suggest, if you remain there you must submit to its fetters. Your very presence binds your influence to its systems. You dare not declare the whole counsel of God, lest it condemn them and call you out from among them. But this is just what he would have us do – "Declare the whole counsel of God," and "come out from among them and be separate." (2 Cor. 6:14-18.)

When our Lord says, "Come out of her, my people," who are we, that we should enter our protest, and say, It is expedient for the good of others that we should stay in? We cannot stay in after we have heard the Master's voice calling us out, without partaking of her sins – specially that one of rejecting His truth. It is not enough that we come out in spirit, while personally we remain there, giving it our influence and support. Obedience to his command, both in spirit and in letter, is well pleasing in his sight. And not only so, but prompt obedience. We note our Brother Paul's noble example in this respect: "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, but went," etc.

It would be useless, indeed, to attempt to prop an institution which God has doomed to destruction. And just as surely as we now see the marked evidences of her spiritual dearth and decay, so surely shall Babylon fall into utter ruin. Let us rather trust the Lord's judgment as to expediency, and boldly step out into "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

"Trusting him we cannot stray,
We can never, never lose our way."

You were right in answering we belong to the Church of Christ. His espoused virgin Church should own no other name than his.

One brother says, I don't exactly see how you can get along and accomplish good without organization. Why, our dear friends, we have the most complete organization, in perfect working order. It is fully under the direction of our present Lord and Head. (See article, "The Ecclesia" in October issue.) And it is accomplishing grand results. Saints are being cheered, strengthened and inspired with new zeal in running the heavenly race and in proclaiming the good tidings; thousands of Christians are searching the Word of God as never before. Helps to Bible study are in increasing demand. Many infidels are looking with astonishment at the book they so long discarded and saying, After all it must be true. And already the light

is beginning to shine out on the world, and many are saying, This God of love shall have our love and service in return.

Let us not be afraid to step out on God's plan. It is sure of success. Work in harmony with him, though [R457 : page 6] you may not see the end from the beginning. The end will be glorious.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour:
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

Your sister in patient waiting,

MRS. C. T. R.
