

"THINK IT NOT STRANGE."

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which *is to try you*, as tho some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

– 1 Pet. 4:12,13.

NEVER have we known a time when the Great Adversary seemed more energetic in his assaults upon the "harvest" work, than now. Information comes from every quarter of fiery trials, pitfalls and persecutions being operated or prepared against those who have followed the light of present truth, and who have set their faces to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath set us free. It is not best that we should publish all that reaches us, for, while there is much to discourage, there is much also to encourage; which, we thank the Lord, more than counterbalances. We do, however, desire that all should know in a general way, for two reasons, (1) It will help to fortify them for their turn, when it shall come; and (2) it will develop in them sympathetic love: for when one member of the body suffers, all the members are benefited by suffering with it.

We will mention one case here because its narration may serve to point a lesson to some. Brother Bahret's letter states the trouble as follows –

New York.

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: – I must tell you of our experiences. Some time last June Brother W. de Ronden Pos came here from N.Y. City and held a meeting in the evening, speaking on Rom. 8, and I would say that it was a very good and blessed meeting. He expressed at the time his intention of leaving the nominal church and engaging in some other pursuit and said that, if he could, it might be possible that he would come here to live. Of

course, we expressed our desire that we should be glad to have him in our midst, but nothing further was done. Later on he was in the city again for a week's visit and held a few meetings, but my brother and I, being in Germany, were not present and did not know what arrangements had been made till we came back. I was told that he had concluded to come here and take up any occupation he could find, as for instance an agency, or that he buy a place in the suburbs of the city where he could raise [R2264 : page 55] some vegetables and chickens to help to make a living. I was given to understand that he was a man of some means who was not entirely depending on his work. We thought our meetings would be continued in the same way as before, only he taking the lead for the most part of the time.

We intended to assist him with temporal things to the extent of our ability, and when he came here a short time after my return from Europe, I said we ought to make it \$15 per month, and informed our treasurer that I would make up any deficiency.

We had a few good meetings after he came. At that time in one of the Wednesday night meetings he made the proposition that we should *organize*. I made the suggestion that we would better consider everything well before taking action; but then he put the vote that all those in favor of organizing should signify it by rising, and all arose; I did the same rather hesitatingly, altho I had no definite objection to offer, and did not want to vote No. However, I said that we ought to have another meeting before the time set for organization – a week afterward, on Dec. 15th.

We brothers then held a meeting, he being present, but all the time was taken up by speaking on baptism which he thought ought to be enforced, we urging that we should not force anybody or exclude anybody because he cannot just see as we do respecting water baptism, if otherwise they are children of God, believers in Jesus Christ. We supposed he had agreed with us on that point, and so on the evening of Dec. 15th we had a meeting, and after some

words by him, reading the "Confession" which he had formulated, we signed it: I one of the first, because I said I can subscribe to *that* anytime. The confession we subscribed to was a very simple one which acknowledged the Heavenly Father and Jesus his Son our Savior and Master. I think twenty-two subscribed that night, some of them people we had never seen before, who were no more of us than other people of the world. Brother de Ronden Pos spoke then on baptism at some length, saying that *he would not let any go to the Lord's supper if not immersed*, not even his own mother, and tho it should break her heart. Some of our number then asked their names to be erased from the roll, others objected, and then the trouble commenced.

In this same meeting Bro. Pos expressed his position to the effect that he was no more nor less than any other member, and if at any time he had had any aspiration of being "something," he had entirely given it up, and that any of the brethren stood on the same level with him, and therefore he would not put his name down first on the roll of membership, and only signed towards the last. It therefore seemed strange to some that he should take the liberty at the same meeting to declare that *he would not let any come to the Lord's table that were not immersed*, when he knew that the others thought differently.

Before I go any farther now I must give another explanation: the Sunday before this Bro. Pos brought before the meeting his thoughts that the "Lord's Supper" ought to be observed every week. Some agreed and others did not agree with him on this subject.

The next Sunday we observed Lord's Supper and Brother Pos read Rom. 14 and stated that the Lord showed him through the very circumstances what to do in the case of the unimmersed (for, as I said before, there were some who subscribed whom we really did not know, as they only attended a few times at previous meetings and a few not at all; but they were of the denomination called "Disciples;"

they had been immersed, but were yet to all appearances only nominal Christians); he said to enforce this rule would let in some people who, altho immersed, were yet of the world, while others who were much more in harmony with us would be excluded, and so he readmitted these and rejected the others for the time: but later on he let them in again; and these are the ones who are now his chief standbys. Things went along with ups and downs, till about the first week in January; by that time we saw the necessity of having some system, and it was proposed that some elders be elected, which we found Scriptural and your advice in the Nov. 15, '95, WATCH TOWER. Meantime I wrote you a letter that I thought he had much ability to preach, and it would be a pity if he could not make full use of it, and suggested to you the plan that he be employed in part by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. It seemed rather strange when I heard from you that you had heard very little of him of late, as I thought you were in steady correspondence; but still I thought I would let him know that I had written to you and that you considered it favorably, but would like to hear from himself. I intended to speak to him on a Sunday afternoon, after the meeting, and was only waiting till he should be through speaking to somebody else, when all at once he commenced to denounce the doctrines of MILLENNIAL DAWN as from the pit; and he said, may the Lord forgive those people who say the Lord has come. I said then, "Brother, be careful what you are saying: do not say hastily that a thing is from the devil." He said then, "I do say it's from the devil, and a good many have stumbled over these doctrines," and he denounced them even more.

We were all shocked, at least I was; but I did not want to write anything to you about it then, as I hoped that when I would get opportunity to speak to him about it and explain, he would see his error. But matters went from bad to worse.

Two weeks ago we had a meeting appointed for the election of elders. It was only a meeting of the brothers, as Bro. Pos said (and

we partly agreed with him) that in the ruling of the church the women should be silent according to Paul's teaching. He said that the women are so easily deceived that it is not safe to let them vote, for they are much more apt to choose according to personal liking than qualification. The question came up, How should elders or overseers be chosen? I suggested that their qualifications be made plain, as we read in Timothy and Titus, and then let each one choose according to his best judgment. Bro. Pos objected to that and thought that he as the pastor [R2265 : page 55] should have the right to choose or nominate those whom he thinks would work best in harmony with him; we could then agree with his choice or, if not, he would make another choice. The suggestion was then made that *so far as we knew it was not generally understood that he was the pastor.*

Well, he said, if we have no pastor and if I heretofore have only been pastor *pro tem.*, the first thing we have to do is to choose a pastor; and if I am not [R2265 : page 56] your pastor I will not take the leading of another meeting. Why, we said, we only want to do what the Bible authorizes us to do; if it authorizes us to elect a pastor in that sense, we will do so; but we will first satisfy ourselves about the matter.

We asked him to lead the meeting meanwhile as before. This he agreed to do, but said, In the election of a pastor it's different: the sisters have then just as much to say as the brothers, because they are just as much concerned. We answered that whatever way we should find the Bible to teach we would do, but that we were not ready to act on that night. He said, I know the sisters will be satisfied with whatever you say; and what would *the people* (the public) say, if they thought you had a pastor, and it turns out now that you have not? We said, we did not care what the world might say. Then, when he saw that we would not act on that night, he said, "I came here *by the holy spirit, organized the church, gathered the flock, and am therefore the shepherd (pastor), and I DECLARE MYSELF AS SUCH, whether you will have me or not.*"

We said, if we find that to be the Scriptural way, we will accept it, otherwise not; and as it was getting late, the meeting was adjourned till a week later on Monday. On Sunday following he preached a sermon on Nehemiah (putting himself entirely in his place), and showed others trying any way and every way to destroy his work but he victorious at last because the Lord is on his side.

On Monday he went away to a convention of the "Disciples," where he was till Wednesday afternoon. Monday night the meeting was held, two Elders being chosen, Bro. Knauss and myself; but the proposition was then made that as we thought there was better talent in our midst to teach and lead the meetings an assistant minister or Deacon be chosen and Bro. Pos was chosen. A committee was appointed to inform the Brother of the results of our meeting. Bro. Knauss, Bro. Doughty and myself were appointed and we went to his house and told him. He then said, "I cannot accept that. I *came here an ordained Elder* and evangelist, and I am your first elder, and I will call a meeting of the church and let all know of it; and they can say then if they stand by me or not. Besides, a brother of the Disciples is coming here in a week or two, and we are going to put up in this city a wooden structure seating a couple hundred people; and if you will not stand by me you can hold your meetings as before."

I then asked for the privilege of leading the meeting for that evening. I should have liked to speak on our duty in this present time of the "harvest," whether it is our principle duty to *reap* or to sow more seed. I had hoped that perhaps I could have made some things plain: but he said, "I must first present a few things to the people, and if they then want to listen to you they can do so." In the meeting he first brought up the subject, saying that some seem to think that he had so far only been pastor *pro tem.*, and that he wanted to know his position, and whether this church had a pastor or not, and therefore he made it the first business of Sunday afternoon that the church declare its position.

After he got through I wanted to say a few words, but he would not let me, saying, This is not a business meeting, we are come together for edification, and started to read from the Scriptures. I said, I will wait till after the meeting is over, and any that would like to hear a few words of explanation could stay. After the meeting he said that he advised every one to go right home and pray. They should do so if only to please him, and if they considered his judgment better than anybody's else. I said, All those that are satisfied with a one sided presentation of a case have, of course, privilege to go home, the others are invited to stay. Some went and some stayed. Before that the suggestion was made, by Brother Knauss, that this matter should not be brought up on Sunday, but ought to be settled on another day, but he insisted on having it on Sunday; and as I now see it, his object was to get a big crowd there whereby the others would be scared. But it only worked to his own disadvantage. To avoid trouble as much as possible, we wrote out in few words that we were not willing to be joined to a denomination, as his plans were, and as he had caused to be published in the newspapers, using some of the names without consent. I handed him the papers with the signatures Saturday night and informed him that we did this in order to simplify matters, and that it had been agreed by the brethren that on Sunday afternoon we would better only have a Bible study and prayer meeting. He then said that as all his friends were coming there, he would present his case first and then give me ten or fifteen minutes to state our side; and then he would preach, and we could do what we liked after that.

So Sunday afternoon came, and quite a few strangers were present. He took his seat amongst the rest, and when the time had finally arrived he said, As long as nobody occupies the chair I think we better elect a chairman. I said then, that I, as the appointed Elder of the church take the liberty to occupy the chair, and I did. We sang a hymn and had prayer, then I stated the case as nearly as I could, also announcing the meetings for the week; and said that as Bro. Pos

had expressed his intention to preach, we give him the opportunity to do so, or if he had any statements to make, he might make them.

He said that he could not preach under the circumstances and that it was not true that he wanted us to join another denomination, but that the question was *whether we would fellowship with brethren that stand on the same foundation as we do.*

Now as to Brother Draper's coming here I would say, We will be only too glad to have him here any time, but whether he can change the result is very doubtful, only it might strengthen those that are left. We were greatly helped by his former visit, and I am sure it gave us courage to stand through this fiery trial.

Yours in Christian love,

C. F. BAHRET.

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We congratulate the dear friends who have stood this shaking, that they so loved the liberty wherewith Christ makes free, that they were unwilling to be led back again to Babylonian bondage and darkness, by a self appointed pastor or shepherd – even tho he at first came to them as a messenger of the light of present truth!

These dear friends might have been saved some of **[R2265 : page 57]** this trial had they taken heed sooner to the Scriptural advice we laid before them in the WATCH TOWER of Nov. 15, '95, respecting Order in the Church: the proper course for preserving their liberties in Christ from those who would "lord it over God's heritage," who would undertake to appoint themselves pastors, superior to the choice of the church; and who would attempt to dictate their own views and to determine whom *they* would let and whom *they* would hinder from partaking of the Lord's supper, etc. Their neglect on this point left them open to *confusion* when their

liberties were attacked. We congratulate them, however, and praise the Lord for his deliverance of them.

The friends erred in their supposition that a pastor is a deacon. Deacons were chosen in the early Church to look after the more secular interests of the Church, while the Elders were all pastors or overseers, who looked after the spiritual interests of the Church. If one were chosen as pastor-in-chief and others as his associates and assistants and advisers, we cannot see that this would have been contrary to any Bible instruction. But they were quite right in *not choosing*, and in supposing that God would not have them choose any one who either directly or indirectly sought to *grasp* the position, and to browbeat and override the Lord's *Church*.

Too frequently the real idea of church meetings "*for edification*" is lost sight of under the popular desire for *preaching* – through a spirit of conformity to Babylon. Ability as a public speaker should never be despised or ignored, but it should be sought and appreciated only as it is unto edification. The more preaching, the worse if it be along wrong lines.

We commend also the moderation with which the matters were held straight – only that there was too much moderation at first. They were misled on the subject of the "Lord's Supper." They should have asked, *Where* in the Scriptures is it suggested that morning and noon meals are "suppers" or by what manner of twisting is the word supper to be distorted out of all meaning and sense. The word in the Greek signifies "An evening meal" and not otherwise. Why did they not inquire respecting the commemoration of his death on a day (Sunday) specially set apart to commemorate our Lord's *release from death*? Why did they not point out that the "breaking of bread" practiced by the early Church was no more "the Lord's Supper," commemorative of his death, than was the "breaking of bread" at Emmaus? (Luke 24:30; Matt. 14:19.) They should also have asked why the "cup," the wine, emblematic of our Lord's shed blood, is not

mentioned in connection with any account of the "breaking of bread" if these were memorials of the Last Supper – while it is given full importance in the [R2266 : page 57] narrative of the Last Supper in 1 Cor. 11:23-34.

It was a mistake for the brothers to elect the Elders without the concurrence of the sisters; "all are one in Christ Jesus." The limitations respecting *public* speaking should not be stretched. Our views of the Scripture presentation on this subject are given fully in the WATCH TOWER of July, 1893. The election should be held over again, when all who usually meet with you and who trust in the *ransom* and who profess full consecration to the Lord, should be invited to express, not *their* choice: but their judgment respecting the Lord's choice as gauged by the declarations of Scripture.

We rejoice, too, that the brethren rejected the water baptism test as to fellowship; and that they fully declared their desire to fellowship all who love and serve our Lord irrespective of the lengths and depths of their knowledge: for those who love the Lord will seek to know more and more of him through his Word.

We may be asked here, What is the difference between the profession of the "Disciple Denomination" and our position as Bible Christians, so we will here state the differences briefly.

(1) If the "Disciples" would live up to their professions they would be with *us* in short order. Their professions are quite right – the Bible as the only rule and guide respecting the one Lord, one faith and one baptism, and respecting our duty to God and man, – with full freedom from ecclesiasticism.

We endorse all this and live up to it; but do the "Disciples?" Surely not! Attempt to go amongst them to present the "harvest" message of present truth, and see how *much* of an unwritten creed they have and how tightly it binds them. Indeed, while professing in their formal statements that they are the most *liberal* of the sects of

Babylon they are (unwittingly) the most narrow and most exclusive. We will prove this statement in our second proposition.

(2) They make a test of *water immersion*; and by declaring that it is for the *remission of sins* they assent to the proposition that all the Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Reformed and United Presbyterians, Protestant Methodists and all others who have not been immersed in water, with a certain formula of words, are *all sinners* – strangers from God and aliens and foreigners as respects his grace and truth in Christ. Could any narrower creed than this one be found? If so let us know of it! Yes, we think of just one that is narrower, namely that of the Christadelphians. But then the Christadelphians consign others to *destruction* while the Disciples send the sinners to a hopeless eternal torment; – nor will they give an opportunity to show from the Bible the fallacy of this view. If we are incorrect we will be pleased [R2266 : page 58] to receive official notification to this effect, and will see that the truth is presented to them forthwith.

"A DOUBLE MINDED MAN IS UNSTABLE."

We first knew of Rev. de Ronden Pos in California, when he sent us the following letter which we published in our issue of Feb. 1, '92.

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: – I must write to tell you how exceedingly interested I have been in MILLENNIAL DAWN VOL. III., which I spied out in a book store in Los Angeles. I enclose 50 cents, for which I would like you to send me, at once, VOLS. I. and II. of the series. I would also much like a sample or two of your paper – ZION'S WATCH TOWER – for if it is what I expect it to be, after DAWN VOL. III., I shall at once become a subscriber. VOL. III. is already circulating among my friends.

Yours in the waiting for Christ's Kingdom,

W. DE RONDEN POS,
Pastor First Baptist Church.

Next we heard from the gentleman from the neighborhood of Kentucky, still later at Washington, D.C.; afterward he wrote us from Montreal, Canada, that he was pastor of an Episcopal church there, and subsequently he was officiating as pastor of a Reformed Episcopal church in Baltimore, Md. We were glad to hear that the gentleman had *finally* concluded to stand *free with us*, in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free from sectarianism and its bondage. We *hoped* much from his association with the friends, yet *feared* that they were expecting too much from one who had for years shown so great a weakness for "Babylon and its corn-crib" – tho we gave no hint of our fears to any.

In view of this our knowledge of the gentleman's past affiliations it caused quite a smile when we read as above of his heroic determination that *he would allow no unimmersed person to come to the communion table*. We wonder where his courageous soul stood for the years he preached for and pastored the Episcopalian and Reformed Episcopalian sheep and sprinkled their infants, and in due form and ceremony administered "sacraments" to them. According to his present "*faith*" those "sheep" were not "sheep" at all, but were yet in their sins – not having been *baptized for the remission of sins*. He received their dollars regularly, we suppose, for Episcopalians are counted good payers; but did he fulfil his trust and tell them his belief that they were all condemned sinners? Did he point them to *water* as the way to eternal life? or did he deceive them and receive their money under false pretence? Of course, we could not say so! we cannot judge the hearts of such people! possibly his conscience slept all those years, or possibly he has no conscience.

At all events we are confident that the truth has met with *a valuable loss*. We expect the opposition of such people and prefer it

to their hypocritical and blatant pomposity. We have no reason to believe that the knowledge of the deep things of God, including the *parousia*, is intended for such. God is choosing the worldly-foolish and weak and insignificant *honest* "overcomers" of the world to be his joint-heirs and is passing by the "trimmers," "men-pleasers," mammon-worshipers. "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight!" And beloved fellow "sheep," let us remember that those who resist the Adversary's encroachments and allurements and wiles and attacks, from any quarter, will be the stronger therefor, and be the more closely bounden together in love and sympathy and the more firmly established in the letter and spirit of the "perfect law of liberty."

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A letter from another brother at the same place says: –

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: – "Praise the Lord, O my soul. While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto his name while I have any being."

To these words, dear Brother, I can also give utterance at this time with my whole heart. I am sure I cannot find words to express my thankfulness to the Lord, for his powerful hand by which he has been leading us in the weeks gone by. I am glad that the Lord stood by us to enable us to stand for the truth; and it is my prayer that it may be also true of us, that we came out of the fire purified and more refined, so that these experiences may have been among the all things which will work together for good, to those who love the Lord. I think it has brought more forcibly to us than ever before the Psalmist's words, "Put not your trust in princes nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." Truly, we are living in a time when we must put our trust in God and his Word, if we wish to stand; we are living in a time when deceptions are coming to us which are so strong that they would almost deceive the very elect. But thank God that is not possible because we have the sure word of prophecy that shineth

into the dark places and will establish our footing, if we take heed to it.

I consider it a great privilege to write these few lines to you at this time, for I know that you are in sympathy with us in these afflictions which have come upon us. Yes, and we are told in God's Word that we should share our sorrows as well as our joys, "weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those that do rejoice."

When I last wrote you I had no idea that we were standing before such a sifting time and therefore did not mention anything; everything seemed to be in harmony, altho I mentioned in my letter that Bro. de Ronden Pos had some very peculiar ideas on some things. Yet, we all thought that, as he had just come out of the nominal system, it could hardly be otherwise, and that, as he would look further into the Word, with the desire to follow the Lamb, he would lose these ideas, and be brought into the full light, and stand with us, free in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. But we have since discovered that, altho he had laid [R2266 : page 59] his hands to the plow, was sincere at the time, yet he looked back and desired to go back into bondage and draw others with him.

Hoping that you will remember us in your prayers that we may at all times prove faithful towards our Heavenly Master (it has given me great comfort to read the article in the last TOWER, "To Whom Shall We Go?" – I think it just fitted our case),

I remain as ever in Christ, Your brother

FREDERICK KNAUSS.
