

OUR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

SOME of the dear friends are "overcharged" in one way and some in another. Some surround themselves with so many cares of this life and are entrapped by the deceitfulness of riches, either already acquired or being sought after, that they have not time for proper spiritual nourishments and exercises. Hence these are spiritually weak and sick and need to go to the Great Physician and to heed the counsels of his word. Others are overcharged in trying to attend to the affairs of others and feeling responsibilities that the Lord has never put upon them. This also is an indication of spiritual weakness, for these dear friends are surely neglecting their own nourishments and exercises, else they would not have so much time to spare in finding fault with others. They need to read, mark and inwardly digest the various spiritual declarations to the effect that the Lord's people should learn not to be busybodies in other men's affairs. St. Paul says, "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies." (2 Thess. 3:11.) And again he says, "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." (I Tim. 5:13.) The Apostle Peter admonishes, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." – I Pet. 4:15.

Nothing in the above, dear friends, is written in any unkind spirit, but with the intention of helping some who are really good and noble at heart, but deficient in their faith in the Lord as the Manager of His own work; hence, sometimes they are given to evil surmisings, if not evil-speaking, in respect to brethren whom they should rather leave in the Lord's care, praying for them and, to the extent that they have actual knowledge and proper

opportunity, doing what may commend itself to their judgment and confidence as their proper duty in the way of expostulation and suggestion; but the matter should surely go no further than this. They should not set themselves as regulators of the affairs of others, and especially not as regulators of the Lord's affairs. Surely the Lord can be trusted to manage His own cause. And surely we have confidence in His wisdom and ability, as well as in His justice and His love. Let us have more faith in the Lord and look rather for His leadings than for how we can steady the ark, unless, indeed, He has specially so set us in the Body of Christ as to put the responsibilities upon us. "God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him." – I Cor. 12:18.

We offer the above suggestions in the warmest of Christian love to some of the dear friends who have chided us for permitting the newspapers to print our likeness and, as they would say, for using worldly means in the propagation of the Gospel message. They write us that they fear that the wide publication of our Sunday discourses by the newspapers, in connection with our removal to Brooklyn, etc., means somehow a lowering of the Divine standards and catering to the world and to the clergy, etc., etc.

Our reply is that they should give themselves no concern in this matter, but leave it in the Lord's hands. He has succeeded in guiding His work and us in the past, and we feel sure will continue successful. A Leaven Purgative or a Faith Tonic would appear to be the proper prescription for this spiritual unrest.

As a matter of fact, dear friends, we are confident that there is no lowering of the Divine standards in our public utterances – oral and printed. We are equally confident that we are very unpopular with the clergy of all denominations and that some of them are our bitter enemies, all of whom seem to do everything in their power to injure us personally and to hinder our service of the

Truth. Neither do we think for a moment that our utterances are popular with worldly editors and the publishers. These are mostly irreligious and publish the discourses merely to interest their readers. We do not even think that our discourses are popular with the public. There is, however, a sprinkling of deeply religious people, and others who have a respect for religion, to whom the Bible has heretofore been a dark, mysterious, sealed book. Some of these are becoming interested in the Divine Plan – some slightly, some deeply interested.

It is our thought that the Lord is opening the way at the present time for a very general circulation of a knowledge of the Divine Plan and that it is under the guidance of Divine providence that the sermons are now being printed in more than a hundred newspapers every week and reaching millions of readers. While maintaining the highest standard of Truth in our utterances we esteem it to be the Lord's will that we present the Truth in as attractive manner as we know how, if, by any means, we might win some, as the Apostle suggests. The use of pictures in public prints has greatly increased of late, and publishers insist that they must make every item of their papers attractive. That is their business, not ours. It is ours to see that the Truth is presented as wisely and as widely as possible. If we would have the co-operation of the newspapers in setting the Gospel before the public we must allow them liberty in respect to illustrations, headings, etc., within reasonable bounds.

Our thought was that the sermons could be published under the caption of *People's Pulpit of Brooklyn Tabernacle* without the name of the author, and several were thus sent out. However, the publishers disapprove this and insist that our personality is a necessary feature to make the discourses attractive to their readers.

Some of the dear friends forget that if it had not been for our use of progressive means in setting forth the Harvest message they

might have remained in darkness respecting the good tidings, unless God had worked a miracle in bringing the matter to their attention in some other way. The lesson for us each and all is this, "Do with thy might what thy hand findeth to do," and give thy brother the same liberty also. Be glad and rejoice if, by any honorable means, the grace of God is made more widely known. Nothing is much more hurtful to a Christian than the souring or ferment of his mind. And where it attacks the heart it becomes fatal. It is the start of a root of bitterness. Let us put all such things away and remember the Master's words to the disciples, "He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

Be assured, dear brethren and sisters, that our move to Brooklyn and the occupation here of larger quarters adapted to the enlarging work means no change of sentiment on our part. We trust that the Lord will find every worker in the Brooklyn Tabernacle and Bethel as earnest and modest and humble and self-sacrificing as ever – and, if possible, more so. Judge not according to outward appearances merely, and think no evil. Should the Lord's blessing continue with the work for a couple of years as now, the Harvest message will, we doubt not, reach the people of small towns and the country through the newspapers as we never were able to do with the tracts and books.

We are not expecting great things, but, temporarily, a considerable degree of prosperity. It will not surprise us if within two or three years a great change shall be permitted by Divine providence, which, to others than ourselves, would seem like a withdrawal of Divine favor from this work; but to us it will mean that the Harvest work is nearing its completion. Let us join hands in the reaping work while it is called day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work.

Personally to be brought prominently before the public attention is distasteful to us; we would much prefer to proceed

with the work quietly, unobserved and unknown, holding up the cross and hiding self behind it. [R4376 : page 120] Moreover we realize that the more we are brought into prominence the more are our enemies stimulated to slander us and to say all manner of evil against us falsely: for this cause also we would, if possible, hide personality, if the interests of the work permitted it. It seems evident, however, that the Lord's time has come to bring the Harvest message to the attention of the public; and it is this conviction that leads us to submit cheerfully, willingly, to the arrangements which Providence seems to be opening, and into which the force of circumstances seems to be pressing us.

It will be remembered that in the close of our Lord's ministry there seemed to be a turn of the tide in favor of that Harvest message, so far as public opinion was concerned; this led the religious rulers and teachers of the people to the more bitter opposition, which eventuated in our Lord's crucifixion. May it not be that with the close of this Age, Present Truth may obtain a degree of public recognition which will serve to draw against it and its servants the ire and the fire of some who occupy prominent places and great influence in religious matters! We do not know, but we should not be surprised if such would be the result.

We take this opportunity to express our appreciation of the interest and zeal shown by our readers in the supporting of newspapers publishing the weekly sermons, and sending words of encouragement to the editors. Permit us to suggest, however, that where more than one copy of the sermon is desired the subscriptions should be scattered amongst the *various papers* publishing the sermons, and that they be encouraged *in proportion to their circulation*. Another suggestion is that you send *all* subscriptions to the "Watch Tower" Office, as this will be much more advantageous to the cause.

Another item: In the interest of the work we have contracted with a Newspaper Syndicate, giving it a general control of the sermons, – to say which newspapers may have them and which may not, the terms, etc. This Syndicate will handle the sermons for profit, nevertheless at a low price. Be assured that Brother Russell makes no profit by the sale of the Gospel. In view of this we advise that our friends hereafter *refrain* from any effort to have the sermons published in any newspaper – contenting themselves with the encouragement [R4377 : page 120] of the papers which are publishing them. The addresses of all the papers publishing these sermons will be sent to us. If your subscriptions be sent to us without specifying which paper you desire we will see that you get the one published nearest to your home, either a daily or weekly, as you may prefer. In most cases we can supply these to you cheaper than you could subscribe for them yourself, because the "Watch Tower" has a clubbing arrangement with many of these.

THE SWEET-BRIER ROSE

Beside my cottage door it grows,
The loveliest, daintiest flower that blows –
A sweet-brier rose.

At dewy morn or twilight's close,
The rarest perfume from it flows, –
This strange, wild rose.

But when the rain-drops on it beat,
Ah, then its odors grow more sweet,
About my feet!

Ofttimes with loving tenderness
Its soft green leaves I gently press

In sweet caress.

A still *more wondrous* fragrance flows,
The more my fingers firmly close,
And *crush* the rose!

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Dear Lord, oh, let my life be so, –
Its perfume when the tempests blow,
The sweeter flow!

And should it be Thy blessed will
With crushing grief my soul to fill,
Press harder still.

And while its dying fragrance flows,
I'll whisper low, "*He loves and knows*
His crushed brier-rose."

G. W. S. Jan. 20, '09.
