

## **INTERESTING LETTERS**

### **QUESTIONS RESPECTING CLASS DISCIPLINE**

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

Some of us desire your further advice on two points:

(1) What attitude should we take toward brethren who hold little meetings not authorized or appointed by the Class with which they are connected?

(2) We note your recommendation concerning testimony meetings and their helpfulness in character-development. What should we do in a case where Elders oppose such meetings, but where the Class desire to have them?

### **THE EDITOR'S REPLY**

We think it rather unwise for a brother claiming to be a member of the Class to entirely ignore that Class in the matter of holding meetings. For him to inaugurate meetings, advertise them, hold them during the regular hours of the meetings of the Class, etc., would seem to be in the nature of ignoring the Class; and to hold meetings at the same hour might be considered an opposition. However, even though all this were done, it would not constitute a cause of offense or of excommunication. The Class should rejoice to know that the Gospel of the Kingdom is being preached, even though it were preached in a strifeful and contentious manner, as St. Paul suggests. (Phil. 1:15-18.) A Class would have no more right to think or speak evil of such a brother and of his effort than to think or speak evil of any Christian minister of any denomination and of his effort.

If, however, a brother were invited to give a little talk in a private or a semi-public manner to a few, not as a regular Class, nor as an

opposition meeting, nor at a conflicting hour, there would seem to be no ground whatever for reproof. On the contrary, we should all commend his love and zeal and, thanking the Lord for the brother's privileges, seek as good for ourselves.

We are to keep strictly in mind that the Lord has not given any of us a right to supervise His work nor to forbid another to preach the Gospel. The disciples of old did this on one occasion and Jesus rebuked them, saying, "Forbid him not; for there is no man that shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me." (Mark 9:38-40.) Again He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20.) He did not say that the two or three must be authorized, commissioned, or in any manner privileged of men. Hence, whatever there is of co-operation in the Church should be merely of love, of wisdom, of estimation of the Divine will and the oneness of the Church.

We are surprised to learn that there are any in opposition to the weekly testimony meetings which we have so strongly urged. In our experience this class of meeting is one of the most spiritually helpful. In many places if it were necessary to have but *one* meeting, the Classes undoubtedly would hold on to the weekly testimony meeting as the best and most helpful of all. We commend Wednesday night as being a most suitable occasion for this kind of meeting. We have already recommended that the weekly topic be the *Manna* text of the preceding Thursday. Observing this rule, the Lord's people all over the world can study and think much along the same lines and, looking for experiences in the same direction, obtain corresponding blessings.

We recommend a trial of this method to all of the Classes everywhere. They will have plenty to testify about if once they acquire the habit of looking for the Lord's providences in the affairs of life, noting experiences and lessons and comparing them with the instructions of the Divine Word. Those who are following this course

are often surprised to note how much more every day is worth to them than formerly.

With many, life is a business routine or a dream. As New Creatures we desire to have every day full of Christian experiences and intelligent thought directed and moulded by the Divine Word. This blessed condition is attained largely by the method we have indicated. Our growth in grace depends not so much on the number of chapters or verses which we read, as upon the exercise of our minds, hearts and wills in connection with what we already know and what we daily learn of the will of God.

It is not for the *Elders*, but for the *Class* to determine what meetings it wishes to hold. When the Class decides, the Elders, of course, still have their privilege of resigning. Indeed, it would certainly be advantageous, both for the Elder and the Class, to have such Elders resign as desire *to rule* the Lord's household, instead of desiring to *serve it*.

However, our experience teaches that frequently supposed *oppositions* are merely *misunderstandings*. We advise a careful study afresh of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, Vol. VI. Indeed, we remind the dear friends how leaky are all our memories, and of the wisdom, therefore, of the course being followed by a great many – the reading of the entire six volumes of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES every year – twelve pages or more every day. Those who are following this course report great blessing and give evidence of great clearness in the Truth.

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DEAREST BROTHER RUSSELL: –

Inclosed find report for the week. The work goes forward gloriously and with greatly increasing momentum. The week has been chock full of the hardest kind of work, and the blessing and presence of the Lord never seemed half so bountiful. But the necessity for rapid and continuous work can hardly be exaggerated. It seems to me, with some exceptions, one day at most places is what is required.

There are *some things*, however, that *make us very sad*. It is to see some substituting *petty whims* of their own for the Lord's precious Truth and "*the spirit of a Sound Mind.*" In some instances these are *surmising evil*, making efforts to prop themselves up and appear wise. In some instances their efforts to hold on to responsibilities in the church for which they are poorly suited lead them to not only discard the help of some superior fellow-members of the Body, but to speak evil of them.

That *there is a separation now rapidly going on is plain as day*. It is so distinct and extensive as to *be alarming*. Surely it does behoove everyone of the consecrated to be on guard as never before. The temptations to neglect bodily discipline and indulge the human desires are so subtle and powerful as to prove destructive before they are realized.

In much love to yourself and all the dear ones at Bethel and everywhere, I am faithfully yours in the Master's Service,

O. L. SULLIVAN.

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DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and from Jesus Christ our Lord be unto you!

We were delighted to see and hear you again both at Glasgow and at London. I think the London Convention has proven a great blessing to the Church in Nottingham. Two-thirds of our number attended and we have had such an impetus given to us that we are now able to have public meetings at any time.

I am sure you will be delighted to know that at our meeting last Monday it was agreed to take larger premises, and although the expenses will be heavy, yet the friends have decided to sacrifice more than ever, in order that a good witness may be given in this place.

Dear Brother, it is a great joy to me that at last such an awakening is come, for a short time ago I almost felt like despairing of arousing interest. You, however, under the Lord's guidance, were permitted to do so, and it is a great cause for thankfulness.

The suggestion that "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" be said every morning has been carried out by quite a number of the friends and it has had a good effect, hence they are desirous of doing more.

Certainly we have not done as much as we might have done in the past, but now we trust there will be a good witness given.

Dear Brother, you are *always* remembered in every prayer of ours that our dear, loving Heavenly Father may grant you more and more of His Spirit, so that you may continue to give us "meat in due season"; and as for myself I feel day by day that it is a great and mighty privilege given me to bear witness to the Truth.

Certainly I get more tired in this work than I did in my scholastic work, but that is all the more to rejoice in, and from my heart I praise God for the privilege!

Many, many thanks, dear Brother, for the "Poems of Dawn" sent from the British Branch. The more we think of your loving

consideration for all of us the more we love you and desire to follow you, as you follow the Master.

Quite a number of times have I been told I have great zeal, but it is for a man and not for God. This is because I have said, "Let us see what Brother Russell says upon the matter."

We should be delighted, dear Brother, if you could give us a visit in Nottingham again the next time you visit this country.

Several have joined us since your last visit, and we praise God for it; two are most earnest members.

And now, dear Brother, our prayer is that the peace of God which passeth all human understanding may rest and *abide* upon you. Love from us both.

Yours in our dear Redeemer,

J. AND C. HODSON. – England.

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