

SOME INTERESTING LETTERS PERSONAL AND CLASS RIGHTS

DEARLY BELOVED PASTOR: –

I have never thought it wise or expedient to write to you before, except on one occasion, and then only to express my love and to inform you that I had taken the Vow. I feel the same reluctance in writing now, lest I unwisely interfere with your time, but feel that it is the proper thing to do.

For a time some of the brethren have been holding in their homes regular meetings which have not been arranged for by the Church. In some cases these meetings are conducted by brethren who are neither Elders nor Deacons. In other cases, certain Deacon brethren in their love and zeal found an opportunity for assisting some beginners, and after a time began holding regular meetings in their interest, confining their meetings to evenings which did not conflict with the regular meetings of the Church.

These matters came before the Church and were discussed, resulting in the following Resolution, which was voted upon and carried:

Resolved – That, while we do not question for one moment the good intentions, love and zeal for the Lord and the brethren, on the part of those who may participate, in our judgment, the holding of regular meetings in _____, apart from those arranged by the Church as a whole, are not to the spiritual benefit of the Church of _____, tending, amongst other things, to prevent amongst the whole body here, that full measure of fellowship which we feel so greatly in need of at the present time.

Personally, I supported the Resolution when it was voted upon. Later, after some misgivings as to whether I had acted wisely, I began giving the matter much prayerful thought, searching through the TOWERS and the Volumes for all the help I could find. Eventually, I came to the conclusion that so far as I was concerned I had made a mistake, and had participated in a Resolution that to my mind has the tendency to interfere with the freedom and liberty of others.

Last night at a regular business session, the matter came up again for discussion, the brethren interested in some of these meetings having addressed a letter to the Church, requesting the Church to appoint a chairman for their meetings. After three hours' discussion the matter remains unsettled. And now I find myself confronted with a serious problem, which is giving me much concern. I find myself taking the opposite view from the other Elders, and standing alone as an Elder in the position I have taken; namely, that the Resolution which we passed was unwise and inexpedient, having a tendency to destroy personal liberty, and being specially injurious to some of our brethren.

The position is taken that the passing of this Resolution does not tend to bondage nor in any way to interfere with the rights of others. But to me it now appears as being in a measure, "an appearance of evil," which I desire to avoid, having in my mind this thought, that the good which might be accomplished by the Resolution from one standpoint, would be more than offset by the injury it might do from another viewpoint.

I have not been and will not be contentious, but I do want **[R5410 : page 62]** to know and to do the Lord's will; and finding myself taking the opposite view from the other Elders and some of the other members of the Class, I feel greatly concerned and ask your advice. Taking into consideration the present and future

interests of the Class, I feel that the matter is now too important to be in doubt about. I am,

Your brother in His blessed service,

J. J. B.

OUR REPLY TO THE FOREGOING

We have endeavored to set forth in *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*, Vol. VI., what we believe to be the Scriptural teaching covering the queries of this letter. Repeating now, and seeking to make the matter applicable to the case in question, we would say:

Each spirit-begotten child of God, by virtue of his anointing, has a right to speak, to preach, to declare his Heavenly Father's Word and Message. The right to preach is not confined to bishops, nor to those upon whom they lay their hands, nor to Elders and Deacons chosen in the Scriptural manner by the stretching forth of the hands of the Ecclesia. There are natural limitations, of course, such as lack of ability, from any cause, to hold the attention of an audience. Except the Apostle's restriction that the sisters are not to do public preaching, there are none.

With this broad view of the Divine commission, the anointing or authorization of the Holy Spirit, we perceive that none has a right to interfere with another. As Jesus said to the Apostle John, "Forbid him not." – Mark 9:39.

However, while none may interfere with or bind his brother, we may give over some of our own liberties. Recognizing that God is a God of order, and that every good work is prospered by order, and following the instructions of our Lord that His followers should assemble themselves together as one body, we realize that in taking our places in the body, we lose some of our own personal independence, liberties, privileges. We are glad to do this, for we

believe it to be the Lord's will, because He instructs us: "Forget not the assembling of yourselves together." So all who thus become associates, or members, in a class of Bible students thereby surrender individual rights. They operate as a Class, deciding which meetings are necessary and which are unnecessary, which of their number would best lead and serve the class, which render other service, etc. **[R5410 : page 63]**

From this viewpoint, it would not be proper for brethren associated in a Class to start new Classes and still consider themselves members of the original Class. For a member of a Class to individually start another Class separate from anything provided for by his Class, would mean to ignore it, to break off his relationship with the older Class and would indicate that he would no longer in any sense of the word recognize himself, either as a servant of that Class, or as a member of it, or as a sharer in its privileges. In reassuming his own personal liberty he laid down his privileges as a member of the Class.

Hence from this standpoint we would say, that the brethren and sisters who participated in the organizing of the new Classes evidently had only the best intentions, and quite probably did not consider at the time the real force and meaning of their action in organizing the Classes.

It would look, too, as though the parent Class and its Elders and Deacons had not fully provided for all the desires and necessities of the Class; otherwise there would have been no incentive or reason for the starting of new Classes aside from their arrangements. A sharp look out by the servants of the Class should always be maintained, to see that the spiritual needs of the interested are supplied; and a sufficient number of Elders and Deacons should be chosen and appointed.

While we sympathize with the sentiments of those who drew up the Resolution, we incline to doubt the wisdom of the movement.

We believe that the better way for all concerned would be for all parties to confess their error. The Class and the Elders might very properly say: "We regret, dear brethren and sisters, that we had not such a grasp of the situation as would have enabled us at the time properly to supply the needs of the Class as respects meetings. We promise to do our duty more faithfully in the future."

Those who started the new Classes would, we think, do well to say: "We regret, dear brethren and sisters, that we did not take a broad enough view of the subject and put in a request for the meeting, to the intent that the need might have been supplied through appointments by the Class."

With such apologies and resignations, we believe the entire matter will adjust itself and everybody feel relieved of a tension, and quite probably the results will not be far different from what they are now, except that the new meetings will be under the appointment of the original Class.

CLOSE OF THE ANTITYPICAL ATONEMENT DAY

DEAR PASTOR RUSSELL: –

Loving greetings in the dear Redeemer. Our prayers are daily offered for you, dear Brother, both on your own personal account and as the Lord's servant in this, the time of the Harvest.

We have read with deep interest the various articles which have appeared in THE WATCH TOWER, especially those of recent date, re 1914 as the end of the Harvest, or more strictly speaking, the end of the Times of the Gentiles. We have seen nothing in these articles which justifies the statement of some of the friends that "Pastor Russell has changed his views respecting what may be expected in October, 1914." On the contrary, if we have read the articles aright, and we believe we have, your views are still the same. We think,

however, that these articles express the greatest moderation towards any who may desire to think otherwise.

To come to the point, or the reason for intruding this letter upon your valuable time, may we offer the following for your consideration?

Recently, when thinking over Amos 8:9, we were impressed with the thought that the Lord Jesus as Lord of the Harvest holds in His own power the closing of the present noon-day favors and privileges which are ours; and further, that the Lord Jesus Himself will close the present Harvest work suddenly. This thought stimulates us to greater zeal.

The thought later came into mind that as our Lord's earthly career was marked at its close by an eclipse in the physical heavens, the sun being darkened, perhaps the Lord might mark the close of Harvest privileges by a similar eclipse. I attach hereto a sheet taken from a 1914 Almanac. Please note No. III., "A Total Eclipse of the Sun, August 21st, beginning at sunrise, visible to the northeast portion of the United States and Canada. Visible also to North Atlantic Ocean, Europe, Asia and Africa" – practically the entire world.

Reference to the little "Morning Resolution" card shows that following this day there are just forty days left to the close of September. If the above surmise be true, how fitting it is that the last forty days of the Age should be the testing time of the Feet Members of the Body of Christ under the fiery trials already promised! Such a fact would again demonstrate that our God is an exact Timekeeper *to a day*.

Excluding the above speculation, the year 1914 presents some extremely interesting chronological data, as follows:

I. STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, VOL. 2, page 60, paragraph 3, points out that the fourteenth of Nisan rarely falls on a *Friday*. This date, marking the Passover celebration of the Jews and the Memorial of Christ's death among Christians, falls on Friday, April 10th, this year. This enables Christians of practically all denominations to celebrate the same event on the same day, likewise the friends in Present Truth.

II. The Jewish New Year does not come about October 1st, as is generally the case. The attached Calendar sheet shows that it begins with sunset, September 20th. Ten days later is the marked off period, or day, for the annual Atonement Day of the Jews. How fitting it would be for God to have marked the close of the great Atonement Day of this Age with the anniversary of the typical Atonement Day!

Ever praying the Lord's rich blessing upon you, and that the end of the way may be crowned with an abundant entrance into His everlasting Kingdom, I am,

Yours in the service of our dear Redeemer,

_____.

HOPE BUILT ON JESUS' BLOOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

OUR DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD: –

A number of the brothers and sisters of the Winnipeg Ecclesia have expressed their desire to write you, and as each gave expression to the thought, we decided that one letter would suffice, knowing that we are all partakers of the same grace and baptized with the same spirit; therefore our thoughts in this are one.

The circumstances which have given rise to this desire have been many, but chief among them has been our appreciation of the

"meat in due season," on which we have been feasting through the columns of THE WATCH TOWERS and DAWNS. Truly can we say that we thank God upon every remembrance of you, always making mention of you in our prayers to the Throne of Heavenly Grace. The fact that the realization of our glorious hope is now fast approaching, yea even at the door, has caused one and all to look to the source from which our first light came, and to earnestly look for and appreciate more. Our hearts therefore are brimming over with love and affection for you, also with humble gratitude to our Heavenly Father for the way in which he has used you and ourselves in this most wonderful Harvest Work.

The time features, which have been the general trend in the last issues of THE TOWER, remain the same to us. With great distinctness do they point out to us that each must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. We most heartily coincide with your viewpoint in the matter that if it is His will we should be required to wait a little while longer, we will still glorify Him for the privilege of witnessing to the world the fact that our hope is not built upon the close proximity of the consummation, but rather upon Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Our Beloved Brother, we have taken as our slogan the few words you gave us – "Let brotherly love continue" – and we one and all find in it, not the word of man only, but verily the Word of God, whom we all adore. Using it as a touchstone to all of our diseases it works as if by magic.

Were we to write innumerable letters we could not express all we wish to say, so we hope and trust that from these few words you may receive a little comfort and assurance that your short sojourn with us last Summer has borne much fruit, and should it be our Father's will that we may not be permitted to see your dear face again this side of the veil, we know we shall see you at the Great Assembly of the Firstborns in the Kingdom.

Leaving you with that peace which is the heritage of our Master, and in which we all rejoice, bound by that blest tie,

Your co-laborers in His Service,

SIGNED BY EIGHT BROTHERS AND TWO SISTERS.

page 63

I.B.S.A. BEREAN BIBLE STUDIES FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH.

QUESTIONS FROM MANUAL ON SECOND SERIES, "STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES."

Week beginning March 1.....	Questions 1 to 8
" " " 8.....	" 9 to 16
" " " 15.....	" 17 to 24
" " " 22.....	" 25 to 31
" " " 29.....	" 32 to 40

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