

THE RUTHERFORD-TROY DEBATE

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

The debates are past history now – ending last evening. Every night the auditorium was packed, with probably more turned away than got in. The total attendance was approximately 12,000 persons. Except for the great amount of enthusiasm manifested by the audience everything was very orderly, and a good spirit prevailed throughout. Certainly the Lord's favor was with us, and the prayers of the many friends were answered. Many messages of encouragement came from different parts of the country, among them two cablegrams from Europe. The friends are all happy. This morning (Sunday) I spoke to the friends for 30 minutes at The Temple, and this was followed by a testimony meeting for one hour. It would have done your dear heart good to see the joy manifested by the friends, and to hear the many expressions of love for all. If the debates have accomplished no other good, I feel sure they have greatly strengthened the saints here, many testifying that the striking contrast between Truth and error has given them new zeal for service.

I must tell you how the Adversary did not succeed for once. My opponent was well prepared to assault you personally. I judged so from the interviews he had given the press two days before the debate. I said nothing then, but waited my time. About three minutes before we went on the platform for the first night's discussion I called Brother Troy, my opponent, and two of his friends and two of our friends into a side room. You will recall that we had entered into a thousand-dollar obligation, with securities, that we would refrain from personalities. I then said: "Brother Troy, I desire to be absolutely frank with you and therefore I say this to you before we go on the platform. From your interviews

with the press I judge that you intend to assault Pastor Russell from the platform. Of course, you can pursue that course if you wish, but the first time you attempt it I am going to have your bond forfeited."

His reply was, "May I not mention his name?" "No," I said, "not one time. I signed this agreement with you to discuss the Bible, and by that contract I am going to abide, and I shall expect you to do the same." He said, "All right; I am ready." We went on the platform. Not once did he mention your name throughout the four nights, but it was an awfully bitter pill for him to refrain therefrom. Having prepared along that line and being taken down so suddenly he was much disturbed and labored under much stress, as I could observe, during his first argument. I am confident the Lord directed this matter, and thus saved the debate from being an occasion for personal assault upon you.

When the debate closed last night many persons came to me, quite a number saying, "I have been a Baptist for years, but I have had my eyes opened here. You have brought me the light"; and similar expressions.

Quite a large number of cards were turned in on each night. I have not the total here just now. I received a real blessing in the whole matter and am indeed grateful to the Lord that He has been pleased to give me this opportunity to bear witness to His great Plan.

This (Sunday) afternoon at the Shrine Auditorium we had a very good public meeting. The friends say there were about 3500 in attendance, 992 of whom turned in their addresses. This afternoon my subject was, "Babylon Before the Great Court"; and I took occasion to tell the people about the assaults the ministers were making against you personally. Several preachers were in the audience, and I stated that I would be glad to furnish a printed reply to each one of such charges. Sorry we did not have the booklet

ready, but we will get it to many here when it does arrive. I hope that by the time you come the people will be more anxious to hear you than ever before. I think there are still some of the Lord's people in this place.

I must take this occasion to say that the success of the publicity for the debates and meetings following here is due to the untiring and faithful work of our dear Brother Page Noll. He made himself very agreeable to the reporters "covering" the debates, and they were favorable to us in every way they could be. A full report of each day's debate was published by the *Express* and the *Tribune*, and I am advised that about 75,000 extra copies were mailed out each day by the newspaper company to various parts of the world. The paper printed cards and distributed them all over the city, calling the attention of the people to the fact that verbatim copies of the debate would be in certain issues of the paper; and doubtless this sold many papers. Brother Noll had gone after the matter in a systematic manner, and the Lord surely blessed his efforts and his faithfulness. If a copy of the debates comes to your notice you will see that more space is given to my argument than to my opponent's. That is due to the fact that I spoke with much more rapidity than did my opponent. Profiting by your experience at Cincinnati, I crowded in all that I could.

I enclose a clipping from one of the morning papers, wherein you will see that at yesterday's meeting I spoke of the booklet I am getting out answering the slanderous charges against you. Quite a number are anxious to have these pamphlets, and I hope they may be ready soon.

Never before have I realized so fully the blessed privilege the Lord's dear children have of praying for each other. I am sure that the prayers of the dear friends throughout the [R5685 : page 143] world had much to do with the success of these debates. I wish I might express to every one of our brethren my great

appreciation of their fervent prayers on my behalf. Hourly I felt that these were a strength to me. I shall never be able to thank you as I would like for the letter which was signed by yourself and all the Bethel family, assuring me of your united and continued prayers in my behalf. The Lord reward all of you. This is but a reminder of the unity of the body and the sweet relationship we are privileged to enjoy here. How much sweeter it will be in the Kingdom! Brother Woodworth suggested that there must be great interest in Heaven in this debate. The Lord be praised for it all. I am thankful indeed that He was pleased to use me to glorify His dear name in any manner. Brothers Woodworth and MacMillan sat with me on the platform as counsel, and my son was by my side to take anything quickly that I desired and to prepare the copy for me without delay. All rendered valuable service. The Lord arranged it all. There was never a moment after the debate began that we did not have the sympathy of a majority of the great audience; and when the debate concluded, there could be no doubt about the fact that a large majority of the audience was with us.

My room in this hotel looks out facing the main entrance to Trinity Auditorium, and each evening I could see the crowds gather. For more than two hours before the debate began the people were standing at the door waiting to get in. Each evening the gates were closed and locked by 7 o'clock, and after that hundreds were turned away. It is estimated that from 10,000 to 15,000 persons were turned away during the four nights, unable to gain entrance. Over the entrance to the Trinity Auditorium appear these words cut in the stone: "The Gates Shall Never Be Closed"; but they had to close for the four sessions of the debate.

Please express my love to all the dear Bethel family, reserving a large portion for yourself. Please continue to remember me at the Throne of Heavenly Grace.

Yours in the service of the dear Redeemer,

J. F. RUTHERFORD.

*

*

*

[We rejoice greatly that the blessing of the Lord was so richly with our dear Brother Rutherford on the occasion of the debates referred to above. Apparently the Lord guided these debates and blessed the outcome. However, we still feel a prejudice against public debates of religious questions, and have elsewhere expressed our reasons.]

=====