

## INTERESTING LETTERS

### "AS UNORTHODOX AS THE SAVIOR HIMSELF"

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

As I years ago had my name struck off the membership roll of Christ Church (Anglican), Chatham, Ontario, because I no longer believed its teachings and thought it not honest to be longer identified with that body, so, now, I desire my name to be enrolled as a joyful follower in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ – "in the Lamb's Book of Life."

From the time of severing my old connection up to a few months ago I was in darkness. I knew that in the Lord's good time and in His own good way all would be well with His world; but all of the alleged churches with their God-dishonoring and antagonistic doctrines repelled me. A well-known preacher of Macleod, Alta., sneeringly suggested that I would better start a church of my own so as to have one to suit me. I told him I did not think that would be necessary, but that if I ever found any body of Christians whose belief I could hold in my heart and soul, and not only with my lips, I would assuredly apply for membership in that body even though they were as "unorthodox" as the Savior Himself. And here I am!

Since receiving a copy of THE WATCH TOWER with "Where Are the Dead," etc., in February last, I have read five and a half of your six books of SCRIPTURE STUDIES, then – with them at hand – I read the Bible through in a new and marvelously clearer light for which, after God, I thank you. Many of your *Bible Students Monthlies* also I have read – and, as you may imagine, very little else. Beyond the merest scanning of the daily paper, I

have no time from my belated study of God's Word to devote to other reading.

In this world's goods I am a poor man, but I am richer with the glorious knowledge of God's Word that has come to me than I ever hoped to be rich. As I told an acquaintance recently, I would not if I could trade the knowledge of the Truth that I have received in the past few months for all the money in the world. And, as the dear man had recently buried his wife, I passed on to him "Where Are the Dead?"

My wife, I regret to say, is not a believer. I would not class her as an "unbeliever," but she is stronger for the so-called orthodox and accepted faith than for a personal faith based upon a personal searching of the Scriptures. The friction, however, will undoubtedly work out for the best. Her health is poor, and I spend every possible moment at home, but studying the Word of Truth.

Several of the brethren here I know, and though there is no doubt that my "godfathers and my godmothers" did their best for me in infancy, according to their light, yet I propose to arrange to be baptized.

I trust that you will pardon the unseemly length of this letter, which has really grown far beyond my intention, beyond your time, but not, I hope, beyond your forbearance.

Your loving brother in the Lord,

ROBT. S. SMYTH.

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**"THE LIGHT THAT IS IN THEE"**

*Question.* – Please explain the statement, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

*Answer.* – Apparently our translators have failed to get the Master's thought; hence the bungling statement troubles the English reader. Manifestly it is absurd to say that a light in a person is darkness. If it is light it cannot be darkness; if it is darkness it cannot be light.

In Volume V., STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, we have endeavored to give the correct thought without taking time for discussion. On page 264 we render it thus: "If the light that is in thee become darkness [be extinguished], how great is that darkness." Evidently the darkness would be greater to the person who had once had the light and who had lost it than to the person who had never had it.

In Volume V., STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, page 294, we quote the passage, "If the light that is in thee be [become] darkness, how great is that darkness." The paraphrasing here is still different, but gives exactly the same thought, that light was once enjoyed and darkness displaced it.

A very good translation of the entire passage reads: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is unclouded your whole body will be lighted up; but if your eye is diseased your whole body will be dark. And if the inner light become darkness, how intense must that darkness be!"

Our Lord was showing the importance of a proper spiritual sight, in order to discern Truth clearly. Originally man had a clear eye, mental as well as physical. By reason of sin his discernment of right and wrong has been more or less blurred, and some are totally blind to the deeper and spiritual things. As St. Paul says, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of all who believe not." (2 Corinthians 4:4.) Again St. Paul prays for the Church, "I pray God for you,...that the eyes of your understanding opening, ye may be able to comprehend what is the hope of His calling," etc. (Ephesians 1:15-18.) This is the same thought which our Lord

sets forth. Whether the darkness is that which came by the fall of the natural man or whether it be a darkness which comes upon the Christian after having been once enlightened – either way – the darkness is the greater by reason of whatever light we once enjoyed.

The Bible uses the figure of the Church as the Body of Christ – its members His members. St. Paul suggests that the eye, ear, tongue, etc., which belong to the head, are special gifts for the Church. Thus the Lord has set in the Body the various members. He mentions the eye as one of these. A lesson is suggested in connection with the Lord's Word that in proportion as the Lord's people at any time have clearness of understanding of the Divine Truth it would be because the eye members would be blessed of the Lord with clearness of vision and opportunity to assist the entire Body.

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## **WHAT IS ADAM'S CONDITION?**

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

It is over twenty-three years since the Lord opened my eyes to see the beauties of the great Plan of Salvation, and each year of that period has surpassed the preceding one in the preciousness of the Truth of God.

During that time every experience has emphasized the fact that our understanding of the Divine purpose is irrefutably correct, and I write to tell you of a little conversation between one of the Brethren and a gentleman who takes a leading part in Sunday School work in his neighborhood, which well illustrates the confusion of those who follow the creeds of men instead of the Word of God.

They were discussing the state of the dead, the denominationalist [R5798 : page 334] arguing that at the moment of death everyone went either to a heaven of bliss or to a hell of torment, while our Brother insisted that the Bible taught the dead were dead until the time for the awakening at the Second Coming of Christ.

Brother W. said, "Now there was Adam, where do you suppose he went at the time of his death?"

Mr. A. replied, "Adam did not do anything very heinous, and even after he was driven out of the Garden of Eden he seemed to long for fellowship with God; so I presume he went to heaven when he died."

The Brother said, "But look here, Adam was the one who got all the rest of us in trouble by his disobedience. As St. Paul says, 'By the disobedience of one, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation,' and according to your view this means that Adam's sin was the thing which started millions of the race on the road which will terminate in an eternity of torture; and yet Adam, the one who helped to send them there, is to go to heaven."

Mr. A. said, "That is so, isn't it? I never thought of that before. Surely Adam could not go to heaven after that. My statement was incorrect; Adam must have gone to hell when he died."

Brother W. said, "But see what that involves you in. Adam merely ate some forbidden fruit, and all have done as bad things as that. So if God sentenced Adam to such an awful eternity for such a little thing, what hope can the rest of us have?"

The gentleman answered this with, "That's so, that's so. My first answer was right, Adam surely went to heaven."

Our Brother replied, "If that is true then it involves you in a greater absurdity than before. Had Adam been obedient he would have dwelt forever in that perfect Paradise, the Garden of Eden, but now he had disobeyed and must die, and in consequence of his sin he was to get something far better than he ever would have had by obedience."

Our friend in his confusion tried to correct himself again saying, "That couldn't be; that would be inconsistent; Adam must have gone to hell – that's the correct thought."

Again our Brother had his turn: "But see what this leads to. Thousands of years ago Adam sinned and died, while today men are passing into death who have had far more of the spirit of rebellion in their hearts than Adam ever had; and yet they will have thousands of years less of infernal agony than Adam, who committed such a little sin in comparison. Would that be justice?"

Mr. A. said, "You've got me all confused. I do not know where I'm at, and I don't know where Adam's at either."

How well this brings home to our hearts the fact that while the Truth is "clear as crystal," the error is "clear as mud"! I do not like to use an undignified expression like the last, but it takes an undignified statement to describe an undignified system of doctrine. Thanks be to the Lord who has lifted our feet out of the mud and placed them upon the Rock!

With many prayers that the Heavenly Father will continue to use you to His glory to the very end of your course, I remain,

In much Christian love,

B. H. BARTON.

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