

EXTRACTS FROM INTERESTING LETTERS

Texas, March 26, 1885.

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: I hope and believe I am one of the consecrated ones, but do not know what member of the body I am. As I have no special gift as yet developed, I must be one of the feet members. He who knoweth the heart sees that I am willing and desire to be one of the members, serving in love, knowing what great things God has done for me and how unworthy I am. You will find enclosed \$3.00, to be used in „running the body.” It is a small amount, but I hope to send more, as I am prospered. I have been very much enlightened by two pieces in the March number of the TOWER, viz., „Think it not strange,” and „If the whole body were an eye,” &c. May our Father reveal more of the truth to the eye members for the building up and unification of the whole body! I would love to meet with you March 29th; though absent in flesh can be with you in spirit. Please remember the isolated members.

Yours in fellowship, _____.

Vinton County, Ohio.

BROTHER RUSSELL: I received the papers and likewise the Food you sent me in due time, and am truly thankful for them. But I do not think you can understand how grateful I am unless you know how hungry I was. I have stood for nearly thirty years on the rock Christ Jesus, knowing that in him our Father would in due time bless all families of the earth. But sometimes I was almost discouraged because I could not see the plan. I have no human creed to bind me. In all those long years I have only belonged to Christ, and now, praise be to God, who has helped me to stand in the dark, as light now springs up and shines forth in due time, I am ready to walk. I will do all I can for the spread of truth.

A sister in Christ, _____.

Glasgow, Scotland, Feb. 16, 1885.

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: I would take it as a favor if you would continue the TOWER to me. I had the hope of being able to send my subscription, but I see that I will not be able for some time. The monthly visits of the TOWER are so highly prized by me that I would feel the want of them very much. They are my only comfort now, being cut off from all the sects called churches. It gives me much pleasure to inform you that I met with four sisters and six brothers in this city twice within the last month, and we purpose celebrating the Passover. Hoping the Lord will bless his own work, I remain

Your Brother in Christ, _____.

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Bristol, England.

MY DEAR SIR AND BROTHER: When I wrote asking you to correspond with me by letter, I had no idea that ZION'S WATCH TOWER was a paper, never having heard of it, else I should have known that your time would *not* permit you to answer every inquirer by letter. But as you so kindly acquainted me with that paper, I send you three dollars, being subscription for three copies of the TOWER, and the rest for postage of a few copies of „Food for Thinking Christians” and „Tabernacle Tract.”

I do not know how to express my thanks to God and you for those blessings I have received. Really I hardly know myself for joy. For some time past I have been dimly conscious that a blessing was hovering over me, because I have been going through the deep waters, and I could not account for it. I asked my fellow-believers if they were used to such wrestling as I was experiencing, and they knew nothing of it. I see now the fallow ground was being broken up to receive the *good seed*. O, how I praise Him for the truth He has given me, and in what a way, too. I joined the Church of England soon after I was converted, but a few months was enough there; then I joined the Wesleyans, but a little more than a year was enough: then I joined the „Brethren,” of which I am still a member, but I do not think it likely to continue long, because when they know I deny the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as eternal *torment*, I think my connection must cease of necessity. I have been a member of a mission to preach the gospel to the poorest classes in the lowest parts of the city, but I was prevented from ill health from continuing doing so, which I now see was my Father's hand restraining. God has given me a talent (the gift of preaching), and although I quite expect all the halls and rooms will be closed against me, yet I will declare *the truth* in the streets

and in the public places as soon as ever I am taught more clearly. I do need some Aquilla or Priscilla, but I can trust to Jesus who is made to me *wisdom*. I have spoken to several since I have read your papers, and they have had *ears to hear* in a measure. I feel a great desire to tell it out, and am intensely anxious for the Tabernacle Tract and Food again (I only had one on loan), for instead of the TOWER satisfying me it has set me craving for more. My Bible is no longer a book of a dead language; it is a mine of wealth. I was talking yesterday with a young friend about that article in last number, „Except a corn of wheat *die*,” and while talking the Spirit took of the things of Christ and showed them unto me.

Praying that our Father may still enable you to see many more precious views from the WATCH TOWER, and use you as the channel to convey it to his hungering and thinking children,

I am yours sincerely, _____.

P.S.—I am a *cab-driver*, and am lost in wonder and amazement as to why He has favored *me* thus, but 1 Cor. 1:21 is being made literally true in my experience.

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Texas, January, 1885.

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: I write this for information. We (a few brothers and sisters) have come out of the Church (so called), and are standing for, and searching for the truth. I have been preaching four years, and from the first was called peculiar in my opinions. About two years past I received a copy of ZION'S WATCH TOWER of a dear friend and brother, which I read and compared with the Bible, and have been at it since. I soon began to preach in harmony with the TOWER, because I believed it to be in harmony with the Bible. Therefore my preaching got worse instead of better, my church said, and the consequence was I soon left them, shook off the shackles, pulled out of the yoke, and bless God I am standing in the liberty. During this time I have circulated the TOWER and preached in harmony with its teachings. When I left the church some others—about twenty and since then more—have also come out. The greater portion of us were Methodists. Having, therefore, never been baptized (by immersion), the question has been considered by us. Some want to be baptized, and others are satisfied. They have come to me, and as I have not been immersed I hesitated about immersing others. If I could find a brother that would baptize me, and do, nor ask, any more, I would be glad to receive baptism. The Baptists here will not baptize unless we join their Church, and we do not want to become again entangled with a yoke of bondage.

Now, what ought we to do? I do, and have for some years desired to do, God's will; and I do not want to leave one duty undone. I do pray and believe that you will find time to answer this letter.

Your brother, _____.

IN REPLY

It does us good to learn of each others victories and achievements, as well as to sympathize in each other's burdens and difficulties; and we and all the members of the body who shall read the above will rejoice with you, realizing that it has fallen to you as it is written: „Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Your question too, is good, as indicating the right spirit: Like one of old you are evidently inquiring, „Lord, what wilt thou have me to do”—you no longer seek the will of men or sects but of God, because you are free. Thank God for this. You have seen, as all must, who study the Bible and are thinking Christians, that *Baptism* is enjoined, both by precept and example by

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Jesus and the Apostles. You realize that baptism must have a significance beyond the mere outward symbol, and yet you realize that the *symbol* which was important enough for Jesus and the Apostles to practice and teach, is important enough for you to practice and teach also.

Possibly you have not noticed that the word Baptize is a Greek word, which, like the word Christ, is transferred into the English, but not translated. As the word Christ, if translated into English, would mean *anointed*, so the word *Baptize* translated would signify to dip, to plunge, to immerse. You have probably noticed also that Jesus and the Apostles taught nothing with reference to baptizing infants, and that nothing in the Bible gives the least ground for the theory so prevalent among many of the sects, especially the Lutherans and Roman Catholics, that the babe which has not been sprinkled should it die would be damned to eternal torture. On the contrary, you have no doubt noticed, that in every case it is the BELIEVER who is enjoined to be baptized, and we all know that if the believing could be done by proxy much more the baptizing could be done for another.

This much we may know from a very limited use of reason in the study of the bare facts recorded, without seeing the true import of the ordinance. But when we come to see the significance of the ordinance, no room is left for conjecture. As already pointed out in these columns [see Oct., '84, issue], the baptism of Christ and that of John are of different import. The former indicates that all who perform the symbol *have* consecrated themselves to death, have delivered themselves over

into the hands of Jesus, praying that He will work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure; that we may be *buried* as human beings—immersed into the BODY [the true Church*] of Christ by being immersed *into death* with him, (Rom. 6:3,4,) and be also with Him and like our Head [spiritual beings] in the resurrection; sharing *his* death and also *his* resurrection. (Phil. 3:10.)

*The „Baptists“ get a glimpse only of the significance of the ordinance: they see that Baptism is the only means of access to the body, the church, but fail to see the real Church—the one whose names are written in heaven; as they fail also to grasp the true import of the immersion into death, of which that into water is only the symbol.

Those who do see the real meaning and significance of the water symbol, must see in it a beauty and force. The complete burial and the struggle which nature makes against it, are strikingly suggestive of the complete consecration against which our human will struggles hard. The helpless condition of the one buried, and the power yet ease by which the administrator can raise him up, represent strikingly our helplessness in death, and the power of God who raised up Jesus, to raise up us also by Jesus. Thus the raising up represents not only our future quickening and perfection, but also the fact that we even now are in the world as no longer human beings, but „*new creatures*“ in Christ Jesus, walking in newness of life; in the world, but no longer of it.

If any one sees clearly the real import of the ordinance, and DESIRES not to follow those footprints of Jesus as well as others, he should, in honesty to himself, make a thorough examination of the obstacle which hinders, lest peradventure it be pride which would *prove* that the real baptism, the real death, had not taken place. The wholly consecrated heart will be willing, if not anxious, to have it's Master's will done in every matter.

We have never urged any one to perform the symbol. Jesus and the Apostles never did so. Like the reality, it must be a voluntary offering, to be an „offering“ at all. The same is true of all the Lord's dealings with those whose *selection* is now in progress: they are called or invited, not forced or compelled. The Lord's Supper and Baptism, and the things symbolized by these, are held out as privileges, and are intended to draw or select those who thus appreciate them. Our *obedience* is the test of our *love*, and thus the Master puts it: „If ye love me, keep my commandments.“

Does some one inquire whether the obtaining of the CROWN might depend on so small a matter as obedience to a symbol? We answer, Yes, it might. If the propriety and significance of the ordinance never came to your notice, or if you could not obey it, then you are blameless of any disobedience; but to him that knew his Master's will and did it not, to him it is SIN—wilful sin. (James 4:17; Luke 12:47.) Such are not overcomers. God tests powerfully sometimes with small things. In Eden the

sin was in disobedience: the fruit was the test which showed it. So here various are the tests by which our Lord requires us to prove our full consecration. The form or symbol is nothing, except as it represents the real consecration. Is the consecration real and complete which is ashamed of the symbol? It is well that we make sure work of it by being conformed in all things to the pattern of our Lord. Let no man take thy crown. They will soon all be „laid up” for overcomers and the body complete; now is the acceptable time if you have any sacrifice to present to God, holy and acceptable by Jesus Christ.

For our part we stand in constant fear (2 Cor. 11:3; Heb. 4:1.) for those who have failed to perform the symbol after having realized the true significance of Baptism. Nothing short of *full*, complete consecration will stand the test of the trials of this „Evil day” into which we have already entered: all others must fall under the delusive snares of the adversary. Only as we are wholly swallowed up in consecration shall we be „able to stand.” Such being kept by the power of God are the Elect and the delusions and snares would deceive *if it were possible*, the very elect; but it is not possible, because they shall be holden. One fear is lest those referred to should be found short of full consecration.

As to who shall baptize you in symbol, my Brother, it makes no difference. I should prefer one of the Brethren who appreciates the reality. You could then plant him and others in the likeness of Christ’s death, and raise them in a figure or symbol of His resurrection. It matters not where, either—a regularly prepared Baptistry, which you might hire for the occasion, or the river, or any place where there is plenty of water. (John 3:23.)

„Let your moderation be known unto all men.”— Phil. 4:5.

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— April, 1885 —