

Praise and Testimony Meeting led by Pilgrim Brother Bohnet

Sister Margaret Russell Land (Brother Russell's sister) arose and said:

Dear Brethren: I rejoice to be here; undoubtedly the Master, the Chief Reaper, is in our midst. How our hearts rejoice as we realize it is His spirit which illuminates each countenance and teaches us how to love one another! How true His words, "My sheep know My voice, and another they will not follow."

Since coming here many have inquired, "How long since you came to a knowledge of the Truth"? Upon my reply that it is "about thirty-three years," much interest has been expressed, with desire to learn something of the infancy and growth of what we term "present truth." After hearing, these have expressed great desire that still others should hear the same as a stimulus to **their faith**; so I trust that my testimony may be used of the Master to the blessing of some of His little ones.

Taking retrospective view, we see that more than 1,900 years ago the seed of Truth was planted. My mind pictures the seed-germ encased in the hard cover, representing the dark ages, which **apparently** hindered its growth, until "the due time," about the 16th century, when it sprouted. Laborers such as Zwingli, Melancthon, Luther, Calvin, Knox and Wesley were hired during various periods of its development to water this precious tree of promise. "**In due time,**" we believe about 1874, the husbandman transplanted it **into the open**, that it might the better grow, blossom and bear fruit. At this stage He hired other laborers, having had several, we believe, in preparation; but He must needs have one who, despite "the burden and heat of the day," would prove faithful to His trust, even to the very end.

A few years prior to this period He anointed the eyes of a lad of 17 years that he might behold the errors and dishonoring doctrines being promulgated among God's true people. I rejoice to believe that later God's smile of favor rested upon him, my dearly beloved brother, according to the flesh, and that he was accepted as a laborer, not from necessity on God's part, but because this vessel lay in his pathway, empty and ready for service. This youth as a member of the Congregational church constantly inquired for explanations of various obscure passages of Scripture. His Bible class teacher, fearing that these unanswerable questions might make infidels of the other young men in the class, advised that the questions be referred to the pastor of the church, who after studying as to how he could harmonize the **seemingly** contradictory statements with which he was confronted and thus to **prove the Bible to be God's Word** by showing its harmony said, "Charles, I can help you very easily." And taking a book from his library said, "Read this carefully; it will satisfy your mind thoroughly on these points." He, very much pleased, took it home and began to read, but after reading one page he closed the volume and returned to the minister with the remark, "I shall need to see the book which precedes this one." "Why, what do you mean?" asked the minister. "I mean that this book starts out by assuming to be true the very things I desire to have **proven** to be true. I want the book which proves the Bible to be **God's** word and shows harmony in these Scriptures." The minister said, "I would advise you to stop investigating these things, for they were never intended to be understood." But he was met with the query, "Why then, did God place them here? If this is God's word, I believe He designed that it should be understood." Finally it was decided best to call a meeting of the Church session. Here was more perplexity for the youth; he wondering why it should be necessary to call in consultation any outsiders; but he consented, and the Session was called in a special meeting for the purpose of

discussing these perplexing questions and endeavoring to reconcile and prove reasonable some of the church doctrines. The men constituting this "Session" ranked high in professional and literary circles, one being a Professor in the Allegheny Theological Seminary. Charles met with them. At the close of the meeting the list of questions were returned to him with the admission that no satisfactory solution to these could be found. Later at a church meeting he requested a letter of dismissal, stating his reasons for withdrawing from church fellowship. About this time he had a very strange dream, and although he was not at all superstitious, not a believer in signs, dreams, etc., being extremely practical, yet this dream strangely impressed him. In his dream he seemed confined in an underground passage and stifled as with gases. Upon seeking an exit, he started toward a tiny yet the only visible **light**. He, however, found his progress impeded by prostrate bodies, **seemingly** dead, but upon examination he discovered they were merely stupefied with these same gases. He awoke, and feeling much impressed by this dream sought its significance, until finally this thought dawned upon him: Could it be that these were all stupefied by the same gases (doctrinal errors) from which he was awaking? Could it possibly be that God was awakening him **first**, and that his life's work was to awaken and help release others? He determined to seek further knowledge, remembering the Lord's words, "Seek and ye shall find, knock and **it shall be opened unto you.**" From that time onward so devoted was he to the Lord's service that he spent all of his leisure time in mission work and conducting Bible studies, etc. About 1874 the true mode of Baptism and its import was discerned by him, and he and father, together with a number of others, including myself, symbolized our baptism into Christ by water immersion.

Later, about 1877, after attending a series of services held by my brother, a prominent Pittsburgh physician remarked concerning him, "I should not be much surprised if **he** should prove to be the youthful David who will yet slay with his pebble of Truth the great ecclesiastical Goliath." I feel I can truthfully say ever since those years he has been to me an example of self-sacrifice in every sense of that word and an inspiration, reiterating by his example the Apostle's words, "**This one thing I do.**"

Sincerely and persistently he has pressed on to accomplish what he evidently felt to be his God-given mission. For thirty-three years I have watched his toilings up the hill of difficulty, for those were not days when warm, glad hearts welcomed him, nor words of "God-speed" heard to encourage him, as now; but days of scorn, for the Truth's sake, in which it looked foolish indeed to stem the tide of popular thought upon these subjects almost alone, turning the back upon all that seemed tangible, for that **which at that time** seemed so visionary. True, others came, and for a while rejoiced and assisted, but many becoming weary and relaxed their efforts. Though such discouragements came with "the burden and heat of the day," yet special grace and assistance also came, and the Master whispered, "Be not weary in well doing; in due time thou shalt reap if thou faint not." (I Pet. 2:12,19; also Heb. 6:10.) Thus sustained and strengthened he continues until, behold! **the tree blossoms**, and its fragrance is wafted to the ends of earth, and others come "from every nation, kindred, and tongue" to co-labor in promoting the growth of Truth, which is so precious to us now!

"Paul may plant and Appolos water, but **God** giveth the increase." The Kingdom, the work, the laborers are all **His**, and to **Him** we delight to give the glory. We come to this convention 2,500 strong, testifying to the saving power of Him who over 1,900 years ago left us a legacy of love, with the assurance that if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. As the reigning time draws very near, dear ones, let us "watch, fight and pray," taking heed that no man take our crown. Thus "we shall come off more than conquerors through Him who loved and gave Himself for us."

The whole congregation, both downstairs and in the galleries, raised their hands.

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