

BUT ONE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

Pastor Russell Solves a perplexing Problem.

THE TRUE CHURCH LOCATED.

Great Preacher and Harmonizer Defines the Real Christian—Says He is Not Made by Denominational Rites, but by Taking Up the Cross and Following Jesus—All Who Desire to Serve God Will Receive the Divine Blessing and Enter the Promised Land—Academy of Music Crowded.



Brooklyn, N. Y., Oct. 1.—Pastor Russell preached this afternoon in Brooklyn's largest and finest Auditorium, which was crowded to hear his discourse on "Which is the True Church?" It may not be strictly true to say that everyone in the large audience went home fully satisfied that he had located the one true Church to which the Bible continually refers. It is not too much to assert, however, that the vast majority of those who heard were both pleased and convinced. No really great man is without his enemies, but it may surely be said that Pastor Russell is gaining many friends throughout the Christian world every week through the widespread reports of his sermons. The text for the occasion was, "The Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven."—Hebrews xii, 23.

Church of Christ One—Not Many

He adverted to the Scriptural records which refer to the Church of Christ as one, not as many. Pastor Russell declared that in this matter the Church of Rome and the Church of England hold aloof from many Protestant denominations. They claim that to recognize them as churches would be unscriptural, since there is but one Church of the Living God. The various Protestant denominations started out with similar views, similar theories, though today they have abandoned them. The Church of England formed an organization separate from that of Rome, believing that the former had been the one true Church but had departed from the faith, and that it was the duty of the faithful to recognize her as Babylon, confusion.

The claim to be the true Church they applied to themselves. Similarly, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Adventists, Disciples, etc., have withdrawn, and many of these originally claimed to be the one true, loyal, faithful Church of Christ. Today, however, the pendulum has swung to the other side. Moreover, the narrowness of the past is rapidly giving way. All are learning that to be a Christian means more than merely to be immersed; more than merely to believe in the doctrine of Election; more than merely to believe in the doctrine of Free Grace; more than to believe in the doctrine of Transubstantiation or Consubstantiation. With this enlargement of mind Christians are indeed in danger of losing sight of the fact that the True Church is the custodian of "the faith once delivered to the saints"—which acknowledges "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, and one Church of the living God."

One Church in Many Churches

The key to the situation is found in our Lord's words: "Not all that say unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; not all who call themselves Christians, with one denominational tag or another, are members of the one Church, the Church of the First-born, mentioned in our text. As good, rich milk is sometimes called cream, so all the members of Christian denominations are sometimes called Christians—in a complimentary sense, because not unresponsive with true Christian principles. Nevertheless, only those in all denominations who have conformed to the conditions required of Christian discipleship, the salutary ones, constitute the True Church—the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven."

Priests and Levites Antitypical
The entire tribe of Levi was specially consecrated to the Lord, and specially separate from the other tribes and was given no inheritance in the land. Thus the entire Church of Christ are begotten of the Holy Spirit to a superior, heavenly nature; they will have no inheritance with mankind in general in the earthly blessings—restitution to human perfection and participation in the blessings of the world-wide Eden to be. The promise under which they are now being developed is a heavenly, spiritual one. Their change will be a glorious one from earthly nature to a heavenly nature—they will all be like Christ. "They will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will [in this] be like unto the angels; neither can they die any more."

But as from amongst those first-borns of Israel the family of Aaron was selected to be the priests, so from this Church of the First-borns God shows us that He is selecting a Royal

the Bible lays down as conditions for membership in the one true Church. Heretofore, with the false thought in mind that all except the Church would be eternally tormented, we have all shrunk from making any reasonable application of the Scriptural texts regarding saints, discipleship, the becoming members of the Church of the First-born. This was partly because of fear for ourselves, lest we might not come up to the standard of saints, but especially was it because of our realization that the great mass of humanity in Christendom, as well as in heathen lands, came far short of the terms of discipleship laid down in God's Word. Today the matter comes close home to us all, for we realize that many who were very near and dear to us have died outside of the nominal church, and far outside the special line of conditions which marked the Church of the First-born.

Amongst other texts cited by the Pastor as showing the exclusive and high standard of the elect Church, we quote the following: "If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me; and where I am there shall My disciple be also;" "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne;" "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Luke ix, 23; Matthew vii, 14); "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us" (Hebrews xii, 1); "If these things be in you and abound [the graces of the Holy Spirit] they will make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord, * * * for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."—II Peter i, 8, 11.

Looking Through the Type

St. Paul informs us that all the various features of the Jewish Law were types of still higher, still better things. In our text the expression, "Church of the First-born," has reference to a type instituted in the very beginning of Israel's history, when God brought that people, by the hand of Moses, the Mediator of the Law Covenant, out of the land of Egypt. To this type the Apostle refers in his expression, "The Church of the First-born." The entire nation of Israel, twelve tribes, God had separated from the other nations to represent those who would be a blessing to all other nations, under the Abrahamic Covenant. God's oath to Abraham was: "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Pharaoh, King of Egypt, was holding back the nation from going into Palestine, the Land of Promise. One chastisement after another failed to move him to submission until finally an intense calamity availed. The tenth plague was the smiting of the first-born of Egypt, while the Israelites were protected, thus showing Divine interest in and care over Israel. Their first-born were miraculously preserved—to represent in type the Church of the First-born. The true Church of Christ are not all that will be saved, in the Divine Program, but merely, as St. James says, "These are a kind of first-fruits unto God of His creatures" (James i, 18; Revelation xiv, 4). The after-fruits will come in due time, under the further development of the Divine Plan of the Ages—as the result of Messiah's reign of a thousand years.

Some time after their deliverance from Egypt, by Divine direction, the first-borns of all the families and tribes of Israel were exchanged, person by person, for the one tribe of Levi. The Levites thereafter represented the First-born of the Church—they alone represented the first-borns of Israel passed over in that night. Subsequently the tribe of Levi became the instructors of the nation in religious matters and from them was chosen one family for the Priesthood—Aaron and his sons.

The Scriptural picture is plain. In the antitype we are still in the night of passing over. Soon the Morning of the New Dispensation, under Messiah's reign, will begin, and all desirous of serving God and having His blessings will be delivered from the oppressive power of Satan and his hosts, typified by Pharaoh and his army. God intends to deliver the whole world from Satan's power. Satan shall be bound for a thousand years, during Messiah's reign, and is ultimately to be destroyed, and the people of God—all who desire to worship the Lord and to enter into the glorious Land of Promise—will be led forth. The first-born of these is the Church of the Gospel Age, which will be associated with Christ in His heavenly Kingdom—"the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven."

Only the consecrated and spirit-begotten can have any share in the selection and salvation now in progress, and these must all be tested as to loyalty to God, to the Truth, and to the spirit of righteousness and the spirit of love. The "little flock," the priestly few who are to share the divine nature, will be composed of such as have demonstrated their loyalty to the Lord most satisfactorily. They will be copies of His dear Son, their Redeemer and Lord. This is the one, true Church. To membership in it is our "high calling." The spirit which every member of it must have is the Holy Spirit. The faith accepted by each member in it is "the faith once delivered unto the saints;" the baptism to which every member of it must voluntarily submit is the baptism into Christ's death. "If we be dead with Him we shall also live with Him"

relief, so I cheerfully recommend them."
(Signed) "James C. Dahlman."
—Red Cross Pharmacy (H. Jerman.)

Priesthood—a "little flock." Aaron and his sons were few in comparison to all the tribe of Levi, so only a saintly few expect to attain to glory, honor and immortality with Christ. These are referred to in the Scriptures as "members of the Body of Christ," even as the under-priests, Aaron's sons, in the type, were members of Aaron. Under another beautiful figure this Priestly few are styled the "Bride of Christ," and His joint-heirs in His Kingdom and work.

Chosen to Bless the People

As these Levites, including the priests, were elected, or selected, for the purpose of being the instructors of Israel, so we perceive the Scriptures to teach that the Church of the First-born, when glorified, will be associated with Messiah in His great work of blessing and instructing all the people—all the families of the earth. The knowledge of the Lord at that time will be made known to all mankind; all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped. All the Levite class will share in the work of blessing, which the Lord for so many centuries has declared through the mouth of all the holy Prophets.

The merit of the death of Jesus, the Just for the unjust, when applied on behalf of the whole world, will be efficacious for the cancelling of the sins of the world, and their full reconciliation to the Father. It will be Divine mercy, however, which will prevent mankind from being at once turned over directly to the Father, as soon as the satisfaction for their sins shall have been tendered and accepted at the close of this Age of dealing with the Church. Instead a New Law Covenant will be sealed and made operative with Israel, and under that New Covenant the whole world will be privileged to come into relationship with Messiah and the blessings of His Kingdom, which will represent to them Divine mercy, power and opportunity for returning to human perfection and an everlasting, earthly home—or, rejecting this grace, they will die the Second Death, from which there will be no recovery.

The effect of the New Covenant will be to bring the willing and obedient of all the people of earth fully back into harmony with God; and this, attained at the end of Messiah's reign of a thousand years, will prepare the way for the surrender of everything to the Heavenly Father, that He may be all in all, and that the world thereafter may be dealt with as perfect beings, along the lines of absolute justice and without any further need of a Mediator or other merciful provisions.

The Pith of the Argument

This is the pith of St. Paul's argument in our text and context. He points us down to the consummation of this Age—to the time when the Church of the First-born shall be completed on the plane of glory—to the time when Israel and the world of mankind will reach the place where God will introduce the New Covenant, typified in the Law Covenant. As the latter was introduced by the shaking of Sinai, in a general time of darkness, thus, the Apostle intimates, the New Covenant is about to be inaugurated. In the end of this Age, by a time of most awful trouble, of which that at Sinai was merely a symbolic picture or type, God's voice then shook the earth, but in the antitype He will shake everything that can be shaken. Things which are absolutely just, true and righteous will remain unshaken, and we, the Church of the First-born, the antitypical Priesthood, will receive a Kingdom which cannot be shaken.

The True Church's Glory

In the past we failed to see who would be members of the true Church because our eyes of understanding were beclouded by error. Similarly, we have failed to see the grandeur, the honor and blessing which God has promised shall be the portion of the one true Church, the "little flock." We mixed heavenly things with earthly things. We confounded the blessing of restitution to human perfection and an earthly Eden with the spiritual blessing. We appropriated to ourselves the promises made to the faithful of Israel, that they should "build houses and inhabit them, and plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them, and should long enjoy the work of their hands."

In general we were confused. Now as we come to see God's great Plan and the different features of the same, we are able to discriminate and to apply properly the Scriptures relating to each class. The Royal Priesthood are to be joint-heirs with the Redeemer, partakers of the divine nature and sharers of their Lord's glory, honor and immortality. (Romans ii, 7.) The larger company, symbolized by all the Levites, aside from the family of Aaron, are to be the honored servants of the Royal Priesthood; and the world of mankind are to have the glorious opportunities and blessings of earthly restitution.

Only the consecrated and spirit-begotten can have any share in the selection and salvation now in progress, and these must all be tested as to loyalty to God, to the Truth, and to the spirit of righteousness and the spirit of love. The "little flock," the priestly few who are to share the divine nature, will be composed of such as have demonstrated their loyalty to the Lord most satisfactorily. They will be copies of His dear Son, their Redeemer and Lord. This is the one, true Church. To membership in it is our "high calling." The spirit which every member of it must have is the Holy Spirit. The faith accepted by each member in it is "the faith once delivered unto the saints;" the baptism to which every member of it must voluntarily submit is the baptism into Christ's death. "If we be dead with Him we shall also live with Him"

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