

Love Feast Discourse

(The item directly below is a short love feast discourse by the Pastor Russell found on page 150 of the 1908 Convention Report, dated Feb. 23 to Mar. 1, 1908, Cincinnati, Ohio.)

After opening the service with song and prayer, Brother Russell spoke as follows:
Dear Friends: The time has come for our convention to close. From various expressions of joy that I have heard, I am sure that this has been a joyous convention and I have rejoiced with you. Some of the friends have remarked that the fact of the debates being at the time of the convention seemed to lend something to the keen interest of the convention and we are glad that it is so.

When first we met our Brother White, he heard that there was to be a convention here and was greatly disturbed; he did not understand why. I said, This has nothing to do with you Brother White, but is merely a gathering of the friends that want to be at the debates and who do not want to wander around the streets of Cincinnati. I could not make out why he felt so until he called on me last Sunday, and I saw that in calling the convention, he thought we would drown him out like a political convention, and he could not be heard. [Comment: "Brother White" debated with the Pastor.]

I said, Brother White, you do not know these people; they have no such thought. He said he had supposed they would spend the next day discussing what had been said the night before. I said, you can come into the convention at any time and you probably will not hear your name mentioned. He could not understand how we could have a convention and not have a quarrel or wrangle over his name and doctrine. I said, you will find them all true brothers and sisters. I want to tell you that it was one of the encouraging features of the whole matter to note your good nature and respect; and I can see from one year to another, and from one convention to another, your growth in grace and the spirit of the Lord. I trust that you all hold with me that if we had knowledge without love it would profit us nothing. God is not rewarding us according to knowledge, but according to character. I trust that the other hundreds of friends left at home, whom you represent here, will also get a blessing from this convention. Give to the dear friends there our loving greetings, not only mine personally, but of the whole convention. All cannot come together, but all ought to desire to do so.

I was very pleased to note during the debates that you all exercised a kindly spirit, and I never heard an unkind expression about our opponent, even if all was not as we would desire, but that the Lord would bless the brother's eyes that he might see the truth. I want to tell you how much I appreciate that. We are not here, dear friends, to war and fight. We are to edify and build one another up in the most holy faith.

From what I can learn, you have had a feast of fat things, spiritual feasting, enjoying the Lord's Word and talking about the Lord, but think, dear friends of the joy beyond the veil, when we shall have part in the first resurrection, and be like our dear Redeemer.

We are all longing for another General Convention, dear friends, and many of the friends have asked me: Brother Russell, when will we have our next convention? I have told them that so far as we can now say, the next will probably be at Pittsburgh. You know we have moved from Allegheny over to Pittsburgh; they have changed the name of Allegheny and taken it in, and now Allegheny is simply celebrated as the home of **the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society**, and I do not know what Pittsburgh will be, but it has been known as being black, and now we want it to be white. We are hoping to have a convention in Pittsburgh about the 1st of September. Arrangements are not complete, but we think this is one of the most favorable years. We expect to have only one General Convention this year, and all the friends will like to get to Allegheny and Pittsburgh on one occasion at least. There will probably be some favorable arrangements for railroad rates. We expect to have on that occasion at least 2,000 friends.

I was thinking as Brother White made the remark the other evening in his discourse, he said, "this 'Russell Doctrine' is putting people to sleep, and they do not care for anything religious at all." I was thinking how incorrect his view is. I was noticing, for instance, and I would liked to have had time to call his attention to it, that there were about 600 attending this convention from various parts of the United States, Canada; Massachusetts, Maine, Oklahoma, Kansas, and all around everywhere, and I suppose the 600 spend at least \$20.00 each during the week, making \$12,000 spent for this convention. I was thinking of the fact that Brother White and his associates in the Christian denominations, the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist, etc. and all the others, have been preaching hell fire and torment in Cincinnati for 100 years, and yet here in Cincinnati, without railroad-fare, lodging expenses, etc., there was a comparatively small number present compared with the population of the city. We would call attention to the fact that about 600 came a long distance at large expense, and those that came from Cincinnati without expense were not many more. Probably 2,000 attended in all. Some might say that was money wasted. I used to take that view, but as I see the spirit manifested and note the Scriptures which say, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together" and "They that loved the Lord spake often one with another," I do not think it a waste of money. You want to speak with one another and to exchange fellowship. "They that loved the Lord spake often together and a book of remembrance was written of them that thought on His name." "They shall be mine in that day that I come to make up my jewels." We want to be in that jewel class. We want to be rightly exercised by our experiences so that there will be developed in us, more and more, the character-likeness of our Lord Jesus, and if your coming together and all we spend for it helps to develop that character, and you feel you have your money's worth and more, all I can say is God bless you.

I was thinking of a suggestion made that perhaps the people had not come because of money. We never ask for money. I give you an idea of the sentiment of the people: I told you in the address to colporteurs that as I was talking one night and shaking hands after the debate, some one came up and put \$10.00 in my other hand. The next night, some one put a twenty dollar gold piece in my hand. Last night I opened some mail and in it was a letter from Toledo. Brother Kuehn sent a draft for \$100, and said I am sure there are some expenses there and I want to have a share, and he said, As I was writing a check to get the draft, my partner, who is not in the truth at all, but a business man, said: What are you going to get that draft for—to send down to the Watch Tower Society? When I said yes, he said, Count me in for half; I want to have a share in that too. You see how the spirit of the matter goes. Instead of having to ask people for money, I have really had to tell people they ought not to give so much money but ought to keep it for themselves. Is not that peculiar? There are only twenty-five minutes before I must say good bye and catch my train, so I will shake my hands now. [He waved his hands and the audience all responded.]

The Pilgrim Brothers were then asked to come forward and form a line in front of the platform. Then the Cincinnati colporteurs were asked to come forward, the brothers lining up on one side of the Pilgrims and the Sisters on the other side. Then all the other colporteurs present were asked to come forward and form in line. (A very large number came forward, so much so that it began to look as though there would be no audience left. Brother Russell said, I am afraid I made a mistake, this is more than I contracted for. There were in line, eight Pilgrims and seventy-nine colporteurs, forty-one brothers and thirty-eight sisters. There were several others in the audience who did not come forward because of lack of space.

Brother Russell then led the way, passing down along the line shaking hands with all and breaking bread with the Pilgrims, each of whom held a plate of bread. The audience followed Brother Russell in this farewell greeting.

“Blessed Be the Tie that Binds” was sung, and thus on March 1, 1908, closed the BEST Convention.