

the homestead law.

Brother Patman, I write not with any intention to wound your feelings, for I do not want to offend any of God's little children. But, again, my brother, we differ in thinking the saints have any right in taking part with fellow-citizens in secret organizations; and we think secret societies are works of darkness; and, saints are commanded to have no fellowship with the unprofitable works of darkness, but rather reprove them.— And again, we are commanded not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Surely christians do not think it right to assemble in secret with ungodly men and take an oath to keep a secret! If there is so much good in it let your light shine. Jesus said he had done nothing in secret. It is said that the Grangers have their chaplains, perhaps we are informed right. Are you, christian, willing to be brother to them? are you satisfied to join them in their form of prayer? Yet, the precious brother says he sees no reason why the Church or brethren should complain. If, in these worldly movements, their conduct is legal and honorable, and while in the relation in which they stand to the Church of Christ, they are sound in the faith, and fill their places as orderly members—says he sees no reason why the Church should complain. I can't see how any christian can be an orderly member, or sound in faith, that is a brother to the world and partaker of the world. And if the love of the world be in you the love of the Father is not there. Brethren, you cannot serve God and mammon, for if you be dead to sin, how can you live in it? You may take it for granted, if you love sin, that you are not born of God.

Dear brother Gold, we are of opinion that there is speculation in most of these secret societies. My advice to my dear brethren and sisters is, to have nothing to do with any of these secret organizations of men, but take the word of God for the man of their counsel, for there are ample and full directions, sufficiently and plainly given in God's word, for all his chosen.

May God grant to keep us from every evil work, is my prayer—Amen.

Your unworthy brother in Christ, if one at all,

JOHN G. WILLIAMS.

Remarks:

Both of these dear brethren, and our brethren generally, are agreed on the principles here discussed, I think. It is our duty to obey the powers that be, though not to act dishonestly.

Elder Patman, I have no idea, would vote for a candidate in favor of law-religion.

We are endangered if we become involved in the bitter strife of politics. Look at the newspapers of our land—and you see slander, abuse, hard charges, and false accusations almost filling their sheets. See how such papers stir up the malice, hate, and strife that flood an afflicted country now. The minds of the people are poisoned against each other, party is arrayed against party, in such a manner that one can see but little hope for our nation. We hope that Baptists will not be carried away with this deluge of bitterness. It becomes us to set an example of peace and forbearance. Where is our saltiness, and the light that should be a pattern to men?

On the question of homesteads we believe our brethren generally are agreed. The principle is, that each man should pay his debts, and that law-makers have no right to legislate so as to exempt the debtor from paying his debts, or to deprive the creditor of his rights. That is, legislators have no right to legislate in favor of a certain class of men to the detriment of another class. The law-makers have no right to give me property at the expense of other people and without their consent. It is true that such is not meant in homestead laws. But they allow one to keep so much of his property against all claims of creditors however just. I think the law itself gives evidence of the corruption of the people. No State in a healthy condition would want such a law. We expect our brethren to pay their debts, if they can, just as though such laws did not exist. If anybody takes advantage of them, and defrauds a creditor, and lives on what belongs to others, let the Churches deal with him according to the rule of Bible discipline.

However, if a brother uses his homestead to pay his debts and support his family, showing an honest disposition to do right, could any one of merciful and just feeling oppress or blame him for so doing? It is that class of debtors who take advantage of this law to keep and live in ease on their property that has brought such laws into dis-repute. It is the taking advantage of this law thus that has compelled some of our Associations to pass resolutions forbidding Baptists to take homesteads. If all would do right there would be no need of such resolutions.

These are hard times on many of us. As for myself, I have never known what it was to be out of debt since I was twenty-one years of age. I think that from experience I can make allowance for a poor debtor unable to pay, and can say, that the brother who has this world's goods and can wait on his poor debtor, and show him favor is a great friend to him, and I commend such, and hope that our brethren generally who are creditors will show kindness to their debtors; and that our brethren who are in debt will not take advantage of this kindness or any law of the land, but will pay their debts as much as possible, and let us all live like brethren; and let even the world know that we are honest and merciful from principle.

I had hoped that nothing more would be written on this subject, but perhaps this is timely.

Brother Williams and brother Patman, I have no doubt, love each other and are agreed as brethren on the principles of the bible.—[Ed.]

THE KINGDOM OF LIGHT.

"And there shall be no night there."
Rev. 22: 5.

How wonderful is this! a day without a night! a world having no darkness! It is too wonderful for our comprehension now, while in the flesh; "For we know in part" only; and "now we see through a glass, darkly." Ah yes, we are now in a world of light and shadow, night and day; and wherever light dwells there is the abode of darkness too.— And the darkness is not only around us, but also within us. "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people."—Isai. 60: 2.

Truly this condition and place is one of gloom and ignorance, and therefore it is dismal and deplorable. Let us first a little consider and inquire into it, and then we may the

better understand and the more appreciate the other world, where there is no night.

We read that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."—Gen. 1: 1 to 5. Now then, we learn that darkness is a condition of the earth, and always belongs to it; and as earthliness is a necessary condition to darkness, the utmost circle or boundary of the earth and all that is earthly is the extent and circumference of darkness, beyond which there is no night, no darkness, but where shines everlasting light.

Therefore, since darkness depends upon an earthly object, it is not a positive property, but a negative state—not a substance, but a shadow only. It is the absence or shutting out of that real, positive essence which God made and named Day, and saw that it was good. Therefore, the reason why one is in darkness, or the cause of darkness, is not that there is no light, but because some opaque, dense or earthly object comes between, and either partially or totally obscures and shuts out the light. So, only draw aside the veil, or remove the dark glass, and the ever-shining light of day is there, and everywhere, in all its brilliancy to vivify and warm, bless and gladden all, and all things. Darkness and night, then, are nothing more than *earthly shadows*, and the earthly objects which cast these shadows are so many heavy veils, behind which the light is concealed from view, and through which it shines out. Consequently, no object or being of earth has any light in itself, and if it possesses and gives forth any light, it is received and reflected from the fountain or source of light, which is always above the earth. The sun is the source of all natural light of this material and lower world, and his full-orbed face makes the light which God called Day; but when this revolving earthly globe moves between us and the sun, then there is darkness or night. *Night!* The mere name seems fearful and appalling, and conveys to one's mind a sombre volume of solemn meaning. For the black pall of night naturally connects itself in the mind with sin and death, and these with guilt and shame and woe. Wicked men and savage beasts skulk away from the light of day; but they creep forth from their lurking places into the darkness of night to perpetrate their horrid crimes and deeds of violence. So the Lord Jesus saith, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because there deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light,

that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."—John 3: 19, 21. And concerning the machinations of Anti-Christ, or mystery Babylon, and those void of understanding who are lured and caught by her, Solomon says, "and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night."—Prov. 7: 8, 9.— So the darkness of this world is everywhere and all-pervading, overspreading the heart and mind and soul of man, as well as all animate and inanimate nature; for there is a gross opacity in men's natural life and nature, and all things worldly, which makes the soul of man itself a dark dungeon as black as night. The reason is, man has sinned, and sin has enshrouded his whole being with the black pall of death. And this is the darkness which fell upon Egypt, a darkness that could be felt, leaving its appalling blight everywhere, sweeping off all her first-born, and laying her pride and glory and strength in the grave. O! the black and blasting storm-cloud of sin has shut out from the soul and mind of man every precious ray of blessed truth, and bound him down in a noisome cell with strong bands of darkness, ignorance and superstition; and the terrible, black night of death has cut him off from all the sweet and joyous sunbeams of life, and left him as miserable as the accursed city of fallen Babylon, of which it is said, "and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."—Rev. 18: 2. How truly did the Master say, "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"—Matt 6: 23. The history of the world, even the religious world, fearfully exemplifies this.

For "Sin hath reigned unto death;" and not only is there physical contagion and moral evil in man and all the world, but man has even turned executioner upon himself, until in every valley and mountain retreat, and every nook and corner of the earth, the sword of both magistrate and priest has found its victims, darkening all of the beautiful earth with its grim shadows of death, and sending up a universal wail of moaning from houses made desolate and dark and hearts and lives smitten and blighted with grief and sorrow. Such is night!

But let us now turn from this blackness of night, and contemplate the sweet light which shines upon us to gladden and bless us. If there was nothing but darkness and night, then there would be only the horror and desolation of death, and all would be as it was before God made the light, when "darkness was upon the face of the deep." Nevertheless, in our present earthly state, night is necessary, and it fulfills a good and wise end, both in a natural and spiritual sense; therefore God "hath made everything beautiful in his time."—Ecc. 3: 11. For in the present earthly state of development and growth, waste and repair, the cessation, quiet and repose which night imposes upon all nature, ena-