

In course of time this view was lost sight of, and attention was focused more upon an individual man.<sup>o</sup> The view generally held, that Pastor Russell himself was the "faithful and wise servant" of Matthew 24:45-47, created considerable difficulty for some years. The insistence that Russell had been "that servant" led many to regard Russell in what amounted actually to creature worship. They believed that all the truth God had seen fit to reveal to his people had been revealed to Russell, and now nothing more could be brought forth because "that servant" was dead. This attitude caused Rutherford to root out any remnants of creature worship that might be left in the organization. For that reason he did not seek the favor of men and, because of the course many had taken in times past, he was suspicious of those who seemed to be working to curry favor with him. This attitude led to an unusual directness in dealing with his associates.

After Rutherford was elected president, it soon began to appear that there were some in the organization who were not in favor of the arrangement. A few believed that they should have been given this position and they went so far as to endeavor to wrest the administrative control from Rutherford's hands. This feeling began to develop early in 1917, within a few months after Rutherford was elected.

#### A SEED OF REBELLION IS PLANTED

**TOM:** Was this a sort of conspiracy or an "every-man-for-himself" controversy?

**JOHN:** The seed of rebellion seemed to germinate in one man, but soon spread and finally did develop into a real conspiracy. This is the way it started.

Pastor Russell had recognized the need for someone from the Society's headquarters to go to Britain to strengthen the

brothers there after World War I broke out. He had intended sending P. S. L. Johnson, born a Jew, who had forsaken Judaism to become a Lutheran minister before he came to a knowledge of the truth. Johnson had served as a speaker for the Society and was a man of recognized ability. This brilliance finally led to his downfall.

Because of Russell's expressed wish, the committee that served before Rutherford's election sent Johnson to England for this proposed task. When he arrived in London he began to assume an authority the Society had not given him, and began to oppose the Society's policy and the Society's Branch servant in the London office. He gave talks to the brothers in England to the effect that he, Johnson, was Pastor Russell's successor, indicating that the mantle of Pastor Russell had fallen upon him just as the prophet Elijah's cloak had fallen upon Elisha.

In the weeks that followed, he tried to take complete control of the British field and make himself the most prominent one in Britain. Without authority he even attempted to dismiss certain members of the London Bethel family. The work was so disrupted and such confusion developed that the Society's Branch servant was forced to complain to Brother Rutherford, the president of the Society. Immediately Brother Rutherford appointed a commission of several prominent brothers in London, not members of the headquarters staff, to hear the facts in this case and report directly to him. The commission met and after due consideration recommended that Johnson be recalled to the United States for the good of the work in Britain.

Brother Rutherford acted upon this committee's recommendation and instructed

<sup>o</sup> *The Battle of Armageddon*, of 1897, pp. 613, 614; *The Finished Mystery*, of 1917, pp. 53, 125, 237, 416-423; *W* 1916, p. 377; *W* 1917, pp. 323, 324; *W* 1919, p. 103; *W* 1923, pp. 67, 68.