

(Except for the facing pages, item #336 will be a Reprint of item #115, entitled SYMPATHY FOR ALL: HELPFUL HINTS. The item directly below is a paper by T. A. Smith entitled AS IT SEEMS TO ME.)

AS IT SEEMS TO ME.

We as Bible Students feel that we are the most favored lot of the whole human race. We are a New Creation—yes, a NEW Creation. There have been many creations, but starting with our Lord Jesus, we are as of now, the very last creation.

The Head of this New Creation was once a mighty being on the spirit plane, but humbled himself from his rich condition, to become a man to effect the redemption and deliverance of the human race from the sentence of death pronounced upon Adam, our primeval Father. He not only humbled himself to become a man but afterward, when he was thirty years of age, he made a full consecration of himself to do the will of God. That will was to lay down his life to become a ransom to redeem Adam from the sentence of death. From Hebrews, 10th chapter, we learn that “the law was a shadow of good things to come;” and that certain “sacrifices were offered” “year by year continually.” But those sacrifices were made for “sins every year,” but the “blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin.” When Jesus came into the world, he saith, “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.” Then Jesus said, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” In doing this he took away the typical and established the antitypical even his own perfect human sacrifice to ransom the human race. “He was holy, harmless, undefiled” and performed his sacrifice perfectly until, on the cross he uttered his final words “IT IS FINISHED.”

Jesus did the will of God perfectly, and as Head of a New Creation, set the example for his body members. He did not his own will, but the will of the heavenly Father, and his teachings and the teachings of his apostles proclaimed the law and standard for the Body Members of the New Creation. The work of training and developing the New creation proceeded throughout the whole Gospel Age. Deducting 29 years from 1874 we have 1845 years that were spent in the development of the New Creation. It began at the time our Lord was begotten of the spirit. The Head of the New Creation returned to this earth in 1874 to complete the work of selecting and development of the New Creation. There began the end of the age and a Harvest work was started to finish the job.

A very remarkable personage was chosen to take charge, so to speak, of the final stages of the selection and development of the New Creation. He was called “that wise and faithful servant” and was given the task of giving the final members of the New Creation “meat in due season.” And what a feast was spread for the New Creation in the very end of the age! Our Pastor said his work was not so much of origination as putting in order

and harmonizing the truths of the Bible. We have had given to us a complete understanding of the doctrines of the Divine Plan and we have a harmonized Bible. We have had explained to us the Lord's will concerning us—that we are to be sanctified and lay down our lives for one another and be ambassadors for God in the world—“ministers of reconciliation” so we can be used to convey the message of reconciliation—“be ye reconciled to God.” And among other special blessings, we have a love and fellowship that only the Spiritual Divine Family can enter into and understand, and it is literally true that, like the peace of God, the world can neither give nor take away or even understand it. We want to bear down on this theme—the fellowship and love that belongs to the members of the Divine Family, because there is something going on that is interfering with this precious possession from our Heavenly Father.

We are aware that our Christian Brotherhood is not always enjoying good fellowship and love. We sense it but are not always able to analyze the reason why. We are not delegated as judges of the hearts of one another, and none of us have that ability anyway. So all I wish to do is to touch upon a few facts “AS THEY SEEM TO ME.”

We have inherited a number of unresolved prophetic lines of thought after our Pastor's death. These have excited the interest of the Lord's people more or less, depending perhaps, upon temperament—some are deeply interested, others not so much so, and still others are merely listeners.

Our beloved Pastor was interested in every detail of our Heavenly Father's Word. We can remember for example, his reasoning about the final experiences of Elijah and Elisha; the final experiences of John the Baptist; the smiting of Jordan; the 149th Psalm, just to name a few. And other lines of thought have interested the brethren, such as the thousand-year reign; whether there is to be a combining of Civil and Church power; and very recently, for some time now, the subject of spirit begotten in Babylon and spirit begetting in Babylon.

We have observed that some have become EXTREMELY INTERESTED in these matters and have presented some views that delight some of the brethren, but annoy others. This is what we want to talk about: WHY IS THIS? WHAT IS THE REASON? ARE WE DOING SOMETHING WRONG: AND IF SO, WHAT? We would like to present some thoughts for the serious and prayerful consideration of you, my brethren of the Divine Family. I am deeply saddened by what I observe and would like to see some changes for the better. I don't pretend to be wiser than anyone else or more spiritual or more qualified to speak; but I have noted some important principles in our Pastor's writings, and I would like to bring these principles out to full view, with the hope that we may discover what we might be doing wrong and how to get a better balance.

To begin with, I positively do not believe there is any line of thought on prophecy—any

“loose ends” that are important enough that we need a clarification or interpretation, else we will not know what the Lord’s will is for us in our day. I firmly believe we have a complete message in the Pastor’s writings—we know what the Divine Plan is; we know what the Lord’s will is for us, both as to character development and the Lord’s service in behalf of the New Creation and as God’s witnesses in the world. I think it is perfectly proper to be interested in all “the loose ends of prophecy” which we inherited after our Pastor’s death. I believe it is proper to have the liberty to express our opinions on prophecy and I think it is vital that we grant full liberty to one another to have opinions and to express opinions. But the practical question is—how far should our interest go in such matters, and how should we present our views? This is the crux of the whole matter.

Those who have studied the Pastor’s writings carefully know that we are not to use our combativeness unrestrained—we are to exercise self-control and after we have expressed our views we are to let the matter rest—at least in the hearing of those who may disagree with our views. This, to me is the first important rule or principle that is vital if we are to promote and preserve the Divine family fellowship and love.

Another point—we are taught that if we have a dream and wish to tell it, we should state that it is a dream; but if we have the Lord’s word, let us speak it faithfully (Jer. 23:28). So in our presentations of opinions and interpretations we should be fair enough to admit that we are presenting an opinion or interpretation, and SAY SO: AND ALSO SAY THAT WE ARE NOT DOGMATIC ABOUT WHAT WE ARE PRESENTING, AND ACT ACCORDINGLY.

We have observed that some brethren get so enthused over their viewpoint they fail to realize that what they are presenting is not gospel truth and not necessarily in harmony with the Harvest Message. We have observed that some brethren do not fully realize what is happening and they fall in line with a brother’s interpretation and accept it with little thought.

Another observation (and this is extremely distressing), a brother will present his views and interpretations and he will imply, if not plainly state, that if you do not go along with his views you are lacking in understanding and are measurably disloyal to the Harvest Message—he implies that you are “lacking in spiritual perception.” Not all do this, we are very happy to say.

In our study of the Pastor’s writings over many years, we have noted that he viewed doctrinal matters altogether different than prophetic matters. On doctrinal matters he was dogmatic and positive. On prophetic matters he was careful to explain that he was “feeling his way along” so to speak, and was very conservative and cautious. He emphasized the point that we are required to “walk by faith.” He was confident of certain prophetic lines of thought such as the return of our Lord in 1874, the end of the Gentile

Times in 1914, that the Jubilee Trumpet has been sounding since 1874, and the “times of restitution” started in 1874, that we are witnessing the destruction of the old order by the Kingdom power of our reigning Lord; that we are in the Harvest or end of the age. He felt confident of more than this, but we will not take the time to go into detail. (Incidentally, the strongest proof of the second presence, in our opinion, is the wonderful Harvest Message from our present Lord.)

It might be helpful to our theme to give a few instances from the Pastor’s pen revealing his conservative attitude toward prophecy. This might assist us to catch the point that there is nothing vital on prophecy that we must figure out some viewpoint or interpretation that is important to guide us in our day, since our Pastor’s death. (WE CANNOT EMPHASIZE THIS POINT TOO STRONGLY.) As we consider our Pastor’s expressions, let us note that his attitude did not lessen his interest in prophecy, neither did it put him in a dangerous attitude where he would become blind and lose his grasp of understanding prophecy; If any of us would use the same expressions as the Pastor, we would probably become suspect; so we want to emphasize the point that what we are going to write is from the Pastor’s own pen, and not from ours. As we consider carefully our Pastor’s attitude and expressions, we may see that there is no reason why we should get all excited over some “loose end” TODAY. Under the heading of “Chronology” we have assembled quite a number of the Pastor’s expressions that have had a steadying effect in our own Christian life. When the Pastor expressed himself, HE WAS CALM AND NOT EXCITED and this is important in our own lives.

[The following are summaries and paraphrases from the cited articles.]

Chronology—not so definitely stated as doctrines (R5374-5); blessing even if out of way several years (R5374-5); if 1915 should fail, doctrines would still stand sure (R5374:2-1; if 1915 would fail, would reexamine prophecies to see if could find error (R5374:2-1). [Comment—this prophecy did not fail—1914 witnessed the end of the Gentile Times.] If 1915 does not witness full development of matters this proves all deductions wrong including harvest (5375:2-1).

Chronology—regarding not unreasonable to think that dispossession proceedings would take 20 years (R5449:2-1).

Chronology—uncertainty of does not shake our faith in the Divine Plan (R5450-4 to 7).

Chronology—not too certain, but accepted by faith. Interpretation of prophecy based upon. Expected readers to use own judgment (R5450-8, also col. 2, par. 3 & 4).

Chronological predictions—Pastoral caution (R5249-8).

Chronology—re: the date 1914 we have not spoken in infallible terms. Our faith in, is based upon corroboration, interlacing and intermeshing and not upon the chronology itself. A knowledge of times and seasons is helpful, encouraging, inspiring; but this itself is not the gospel and even without all this, we should still rejoice in the gospel, etc. We should let our moderation be known to all. (R5249:2-3 to 5).

Chronology—not based upon indisputable evidence (R5367-7). Some equally as bright don't accept these conclusions (R5367-8). Possibly some have presented our conclusions more strongly than we (R5367-9). If our expectations fail our chronology is proved wrong (R5368:2-1). However, the other strings in our harp would be in tune and that is what no other aggregation of God's people on earth could boast (R5368:2-2).

Chronology—we should not denounce those who in the proper spirit express dissent as to inferences regarding Oct., 1914 (R5348-7, 8; R5349-last par.). We must admit the possibilities of our making a mistake (R5348-8); whether we have the date correct we must all agree to the signs of the times (R5348:2-2); the general facts are much more valuable—"let brotherly love continue" (R5348:2-3).

Chronology—if church here in 1915 we shall think we have made some mistake (R5329-1). [Comment—the article "THE HARVEST IS NOT ENDED" gives confidence that we are on the right track along with our Pastor.]

Chronology—we do not know the day or the hour, but we know of the times and seasons (R5339:2-3). [Comment—how grandly true—we do not feel stranded—we KNOW the time and season in which we are living.]

Chronology—surely room for slight differences of opinion (R5142-3); if permitted to miscalculate, signs of times show miscalculations very slight (R5142;2-3).

Chronology—20 year variation would be trifling matter in such a long period (R4867:2-1).

Chronology—not infallible. Even if in "outer darkness" on this, we have more to rejoice in than all others (R4726-7, also col. 2, par. 14). [Comment—we certainly are not in "outer darkness," are we?]

Chronology—our faith and hopes would be equally clear and logical whether this age ends in Oct., 1914, or a century later (R4530-last par.).

Chronology—we do not even aver that there is no mistake in our interpretation of prophecy and our calculations of chronology (R4110-3).

Chronology—should be glad if it, as an alarm clock, awakened us, even though too soon. The Divine Plan remains the same regardless (R4736:2-6 to 8).

This is all VERY STRONG MEAT. Some who have never made a close study of the Reprints may be surprised that the Pastor expressed himself in such a conservative manner, and they may feel this is near the edge of doubting. But such is not the case as can be proved by an examination of the other side of the coin. The Pastor delved into many phases of chronology and prophecy, and he was very confident that he was on the right track and had a strong faith. There seems to be two major hitching posts as far as chronology is concerned—1874 and 1914. There are other hitching posts to be sure, but they are minor as compared with 1874 and 1914.

It is not supposable that the brethren engaged in this lively controversy over spirit begetting in the nominal system, versus no spirit begetting in the nominal system have ulterior motives. Rather they give every appearance of being sincere and honest and

entirely loyal to the Harvest Message. But it appears the controversy is TOO LIVELY for the good of the Christian brotherhood. We are not wise enough to know just why brethren are TOO LIVELY—only the Lord is competent to judge such matters.

This we do know—brethren are becoming polarized and some of the sheep are becoming restless and the lambs don't know what to make of it all, as they are not yet established in full knowledge of the Pastor's articles. And the fellowship and love that should exist between members of the Divine Family are being displaced by more or less hard feelings. This is sad to say the least and even alarming. Satan is pleased, no doubt; and this is why we are concerned and the reason for preparing this paper.

In conclusion we would like to state the following:

1. In my opinion there are no “loose ends” on prophecy since our Pastor's death that necessitates some viewpoint or some interpretation that we must all agree to. We believe rather, that the Harvest Message is complete, and all that needs to be done is to study it diligently and obey its principles.
2. There are a number of unresolved points on prophecy since our Pastor's death, but these should not disturb us for we must walk by faith clear to the end of our journey as New Creatures. This is a test of self-control and brotherly love and a test of our faith in God's promises.
3. Our Pastor has emphasized a number of times that we must not use combativeness to try to force the brethren to accept our particular viewpoint.
4. We think it is only fair that we admit that our presentations are indeed only opinions and interpretations at times, and we should clearly state this and also state that we know we must not be dogmatic about such matters. This is test of our humility and brotherly love.
5. It is unfair to use language which implies that if one does not agree, he is not faithful to the truth in the Harvest Message. Perhaps every one of us believes his own views are in good harmony with the Pastor's presentations. We should recognize this as a fact and be fair and kind to one another when we have differences.
6. We think it is important to make a difference between the sound doctrines of the Divine Plan and reasoning on lines of prophecy. This in itself may assist us to a greater possession of the spirit of a sound mind.
7. We believe all engaged in this lively controversy are GOOD BRETHREN and are not actuated by selfish motives.
8. If the Pastor, who was chosen of God to lead and guide the New Creation in the very end of the age, and who was “that wise and faithful servant” thought it necessary to be cautious and conservative on prophetic subjects, isn't there a thousand reasons why WE should be even more cautious and conservative on prophetic subjects and interpretations?!
9. We suggest a careful study of item #154—QUOTES AND COMMENTS ON

THE GREAT COMPANY. We have found these quotes helpful. I think we can get along and have our differences if we only go about it right. The fellowship and love of the Divine Family are worth striving for.

Sincerely in Christ,

Theodore A. Smith