

“AS IT SEEMS TO ME”—#2

T. A. Smith

Since the writing and circulation of item #336 (“AS IT SEEMS TO ME”), some other thoughts have come to mind. They have to do with the question WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ARE WE SUPPOSED TO BE AS MEMBERS OF THE NEW CREATION AS MEMBERS OF THE DIVINE FAMILY? A family relationship implies mutual interests, mutual hopes and mutual care of one another and mutual treatment in the form of kindness, courtesy and sacrifice. This is the very opposite to selfish aloofness, rudeness or careless treatment of our brethren in Christ. We are to consult with one another, “bear with one another” and feel friendly and act friendly toward one another.

As we all know, we are witnessing a strange state of affairs—making an issue of our differences of opinion on spirit begetting in the Nominal System. Brethren are becoming polarized and there are signs of antagonism and occasionally harsh words. We hasten to add that this not true of all the brethren—they do not make an issue of these differences and continue to treat the brethren as expressed so beautifully in Hymn #23.

But why is it that some do make an issue of these differences and the Divine Family Spirit seems to suffer a partial eclipse? It is impossible to read the mind, so all we can do is to reason as best we can. And none of us wish to judge hearts in such reasoning. Our Pastor expressed the thought that many of the Lord’s people are possessed of a good measure of combativeness; and that this is good as we must not be spineless but firm for what is right and willing to defend that which is right and truth. But he cautioned us to use self control and use combativeness to defend the truth and one another and not use it to quarrel with one another or make a hobby of some kind in the way of an idea, a theory or interpretation.

We are wondering, if it may be possible in some cases, if we do seize upon an idea with great earnestness, it is simply because we are of the gritty kind? And then, if, in presenting our views, we are opposed, we react with still greater earnestness? Perhaps we all know what happens when we are opposed by someone—we can FEEL a physical reaction—we FEEL a certain tenseness and the heartbeat will speed up. This is all natural—we are MADE this way. BUT are we not taught to change our old natural ways to something different? The Apostle says we are “to be transformed” (Rom. 12:2) and this has a world of meaning in Christian development.

We are being tested constantly and it is possible to miss the point of some of these tests. In the test under consideration (spirit begetting in the Nominal System, etc.) it seems to us that the difference of opinion may be quite insignificant in importance as compared

with our CONDUCT—in our attitude and treatment of those who do not agree with our viewpoint.

There are three points that come to mind that may be worth considering if a more harmonious state is to be attained. First, are these differences of first importance doctrinally, as compared with such doctrines as the Ransom, the Second Presence, the Covenants, etc.? If not, then why make issues of them? Second, isn't it extremely vital that we do nothing to impair or destroy the Christian Family Spirit? Isn't it even dangerous to be careless along this line? Third, may not a careful consideration of our Pastor's example be extremely helpful as a guide to our own conduct on the subject of how to think and act on prophetic subjects?

On this third point we wish to elaborate somewhat. And we wish to emphasize that we are addressing ourselves to brethren that make the same profession as ourselves—love of the Harvest Message, and recognition of the Pastor as “That Wise and Faithful Servant” who was chosen of the Lord to give us our “meat in due season.”

In “As It Seems to Me” (#1) we quoted from the Pastor to show what his attitude was on prophecy. (See page 4, paragraph 5) “A knowledge of times and seasons is helpful, encouraging, inspiring; but this itself is not the gospel...” The Pastor said more but these words are sufficient for our purpose. We acknowledge from experience that “A knowledge of times and seasons IS HELPFUL, ENCOURAGING, INSPIRING...” And we are grateful beyond words for all the knowledge we do have of “times and seasons.” And we have endeavored to adopt the Pastor's attitude when he added that this knowledge “is not of itself the Gospel.” The Pastor even added these words: and even without all this, we “should still rejoice in His glorious Gospel.” Now this is very strong meat—some find it difficult if not impossible to chew and digest it; but we believe it is important to catch the Pastor's thought and spirit if we are to be balanced Christians. The Pastor was not skeptical or doubtful on prophecy BUT he had it in the RIGHT PLACE—in his thinking processes THE DOCTRINES OF THE DIVINE PLAN CAME FIRST AS THEY WERE THE GOSPEL. Prophetic topics came SECOND, very definitely.

Now how can we benefit from the Pastor's own example? How can we apply or follow his example in the problem at hand? In this way, we think: These differences that we hold should not be held as vital in our family life as brethren in Christ. These differences should be given SECOND PLACE—FIRST PLACE should be given to the spirit of kindness and fairness toward one another in the New Creation in the Divine Family.

We wish to call attention to the fact that we are in no way attempting to promote or refute either view on spirit begetting in Babylon. We know many brethren hold very positive ideas, and it is quite possible these views will never change to any great extent as long as we live. But I do not think there is a thing to be “worried” about if we don't lose the

family spirit. Personally I am fully content to wait and see and try to maintain the precious family spirit. If we all try to maintain the right spirit, this will have a wholesome effect in our high regard for one another and treatment of one another as members of the Divine Family.

We study constantly in our Pastor's writings about brotherly love and "*agape*" love for one another. And we hear much about this from the platform; and also we shake hands with one another and smile when we do so. But, what is going on in the heart? Do we feel antagonistic toward one another over a difference of opinion on this spirit begetting in Babylon? If we do, it is possible we may be missing the point of these tests that are being applied to us today. There is such a thing as "biting and devouring one another" (Gal. 5:15), and this is something to think about very seriously, as it could have a bearing upon our eternal welfare.

Yours in the BELOVED ONE,

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