

(Except for the facing pages, item #351 is a reprint of item #132 discourse by Julius Bednarz, entitled NOT BY POWER NOR BY MIGHT. The paper directly below is by T. A. Smith.)

AS IT SEEMS TO ME - #3

Since the writing of “AS IT SEEMS TO ME, #1 and #2” another fact has come to mind that we wish to share with you. This is something we are all aware of, and it may be useful in reducing tensions and the promotion of the Divine family spirit, if we make intelligent use of it. This fact is that mentally we are all different—our minds do not always reason alike. Our Pastor has touched upon this fact a number of times.

There are at least three differences of opinion on prophetic matters that have been occupying the minds and attention of the brethren for several years past. They are: **1.** The time for the start of the thousand-year reign of Christ. **2.** The rise and fall of Christendom. **3.** Whether there are spirit begotten ones in Babylon, and whether it is possible to be begotten of the spirit while in Babylon. Number three is more current perhaps than the other two, so we are going to concentrate on that for the purpose of this present discussion.

On these three differences there is no question that brethren holding opposite viewpoints, honestly believe their conclusions are backed up with reason, facts, scripture and quotes from the Pastor. It is quite likely that each “side” (we don’t like to use the word “side” as it is foreign to the spirit of the Christian brotherhood) honestly believes that their viewpoint can hardly be seriously questioned or successfully refuted.

But there is something here that must be taken into consideration, and that is that OUR MINDS DO NOT ALWAYS FUNCTION EXACTLY THE SAME IN THE REALM OF PROPHETIC STUDY. What is the Lord’s spirit in a situation like this? We suggest the manna comment for Jan. 8th which reads as follows: “According to the Scriptural standard, the elect church of Christ should be the most polished, the most refined, the most polite, the most generous, the most kind of all the people in the world;—and should be these in the most absolute sense; not in the mere sense of an outward form and appearance of kindness, gentleness, etc., so common in the world; but a gentleness, a kindness, proceeding from the heart, proceeding from an appreciation of the Lord’s spirit of the Truth, the spirit of love, and the spirit of justice, also.” (We remember at this point that one brother said that Brother Russell was the kindest person he ever knew.) In acting this way we will promote the precious Divine family spirit that we all regard so highly.

We know we all love to have others agree with us, but is this necessary considering the nature of the subjects on which we disagree? Our differences on prophecy do not involve important doctrines such as the ransom, the covenants, the church’s part in the sin offering, the second presence or the times of restitution. This being the case wouldn’t it

be the Lord's spirit to restrain our zeal for our particular viewpoint and do a little sacrificing? We do not believe in compromising the Truth itself, but on these differences, we could sacrifice some of our desire to have all agree with us, and take the position that we are all on the same level and each one has the right to reach his own conclusions, and none of us has the right to force his views or harp on them constantly.

Is this a high price to pay to preserve the spirit of brotherly love between us? We think not. In fact we are of the opinion that we are paying a high price right now if we adopt an inflexible attitude and not face the fact that our minds do not reason exactly alike. The Lord's spirit, in our opinion, is to be considerate of one another's rights and grant full liberty of belief. We are being divided by the wrong spirit (at least that is the way it seems to us), and if this is a violation of Proverbs 6:16 (the seventh thing the Lord hates is the "sowing of discord among brethren") then we are in DEEP TROUBLE.

We hesitate to give illustrations of ideas that brethren hold as correct as we might give the impression that we are pressing hard for a particular viewpoint ourselves. But that is not the purpose of our present discussion. We admit that we do hold a particular viewpoint on spirit begotten ones in Babylon and spirit begetting in Babylon; but no one can accuse us of pressing our viewpoint upon anyone. We have lived with this difference of opinion for over forty years and have not felt grieved that some others do not agree with us. (Lately, however, something strange has happened that has changed things, and it seems brethren are unwilling to grant liberty on this subject, and are unwilling to "live and let live.")

Well, here is our illustration: some brethren honestly believe there is a 40 year harvest upon the nominal system and that this ended in 19.14, and their conclusion is that there are no more spirit begotten ones in Babylon since that date.. (There is much, much more to this belief, but this will be sufficient for our purpose.) Other brethren believe this conclusion is only an assumption and are unwilling to accept it. They believe this conclusion is an interpretation, pure and simple and that it can be refuted..

Here is a quote from the Pastor that is held by some who take an opposite viewpoint: "Their next step should be to say, 'Thy people shall be my people.' And so surely as any of God's people are found, they are all brethren of one family, whether they be found amongst Roman Catholics, or Baptists, amongst Methodists or they be found outside of all denominations." (There are several paragraphs under the subheading "HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN" found on Reprint page 5614 which is dated Jan. 15, 1915, written after World War #1 had started.) Some think that Bro. Russell showed here that he knew nothing about all spirit-begotten being out of Babylon by 1914.

Another quote: "...all should see that the fellowship and faith of the early church, under

Divine direction, were built upon the *first principles* of the doctrine of Christ; and nothing more or less should be the basis of Christian fellowship here and now.” (From *Bible Student Monthly*, Vol. 6, #9, page 4, col. 3, par. 5—written in 1914 after World War #1 had started.)

A third quote: “...the really consecrated believer, who has passed from death unto life, finds in them [in the nominal churches] but little real fellowship, except as he discovers here and there a kindred spirit, similarly begotten to newness of life—to new motives, thoughts, words and deeds.” (*Bible Student Monthly*, Vol. 6, #9, page 3, col. 3, par. 2. Written in 1914 after World War #1 had started.).

Begetting—consecration might come about by just “reading your Bible.”—1912 Convention Report, page 363, col. 2, about. half way down.

Error—saints in the past shut their eyes to error and were sanctified by what truth they had as proved by their writings. (Reprint page 2851, col. 2, par. 1 to 3.)

Great Company—“...the great company, which will come through great tribulation, and will get out of Babylon only when she has been cast as a great millstone into the midst of the sea—in the time of anarchous trouble with which this age will close.” (Reprint 3884, par. 4.)

Nominal church—200,000 professed ministers. 180,000 lost faith in God’s Word. 20,000 still hold Bible as God’s Word, but “sadly confused.” *Bible Student Monthly*, Vol. 6, #7, page 2, col. 4, par. 2, dated 1914.

Truth—as a “sanctifying power;” even 1/10 truth sanctifies us. (Reprint page 3193, bottom first column.)

“However, inside and outside of all denominations we may expect to find the Lord’s ‘little flock’...” (*Bible Students Monthly*, Vol. 6, #11, page 3, par. 5, written in 1914.)

One more quote: “This true faith is that all were sinners, justly under God’s condemnation to death through the fall; that Christ Jesus our Lord died *for our sins* according to the scriptures, and that He was raised from the dead by the Father, who thus gave assurance to all that Christ’s sin-offering on our behalf was complete and fully satisfactory, under which those of Adam’s race who are sick of sin and desirous of harmony with God can be justified and return to His love, favor and blessing. (1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Rom. 5:1, 6, 12, 18.) Whoever holds this simple faith is a believer, a member of ‘the household of faith.’ Whoever *with this faith* fully consecrates himself to the Lord’s service is a baptized believer, a probationary member of the one true Church, whose names are written in heaven. If he run the Christian race as he has covenanted to do, he

will win the Prize and be one of the Elect Church in glory, granted a place with the Lord in His Throne.—Rev. 3:21.” (*Bible Student Monthly*, Vol. 6, #9, page 4, top of first column. Written after World War I had started.)

There are many more quotes that could be referred to, from our subject index over many years; but this will be sufficient to show that our minds do not all work the same. The foregoing quotes are not intended as proof of our own personal viewpoint, but merely to illustrate that different brethren, in all sincerity and honesty will take different passages from the Pastor’s writings and will come to opposite conclusions.

In justice to the writer of this paper, we want to emphasize that we hold to the article entitled “DOCTRINES MORE OR LESS IMPORTANT” on Reprint page 5284, and also to the later article entitled “THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION” on Reprint page 5981. We have been impressed with the reasoning under the subheading “REMEMBER DOCTRINAL TESTS ALSO.” It has been our unhappy experience to have brethren EXPAND our remarks into fields of thought we never intended. So we remind all the readers of this paper that we are discussing only the three differences that have resulted in brethren taking sides (and more particularly #3): **(1)** The time for the start of the thousand-year reign of Christ. **(2)** The rise and fall of Christendom. **(3)** Whether there are spirit begotten ones in Babylon, and whether it is possible to be begotten of the spirit while in Babylon.

Sincerely yours in the best of bonds,

Theodore A. Smith