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WHAT COURSE SHOULD WE TAKE?

WE HAVE received two letters inquiring about the practical bearing of our October, 1914, hopes on the affairs of this life. It occurs to us that others who have not written may have the same thought; so we give to you all a digest of our answers.

The Brother who wrote us suggested that he is a farmer, and that if sure that the Church would be gathered before October, 1914, or that the great Time of Trouble would there begin, he would in either case be inclined to quit farming and to spend the year in the Colporteur work, as he would have sufficient money to do this if he were to mortgage his farm or sell it.

In our reply we advised the Brother that if he had a wife or family dependent upon him for support, we thought that this suggestion would not be a wise one at all, but that if he were unincumbered, we would consider the thought a very good one. He would be merely giving a year to the Lord's work, and at the close of the year might hope in any event to be in reasonable health and as capable as ever of earning a living.

We believe that a year spent in the Colporteur work would prove an excellent schooling in perseverance and self-denial, in service of others, and in thinking upon and handling holy things. Yet even in this case we believe that some allowance should be made for temperament and capability for Colporteur service. While few, if any, have no talent whatever for such work, there are some who have so little talent that they might merely discourage themselves without accomplishing much in the interest of others. We must use all wisdom in respect to what we [R5348 : page 342] attempt to do, that our time and strength – mental and physical – shall render us as good results as possible to the Lord's praise. Each should seek wisdom from on High to guide him in such matters.

Another letter received inquired respecting the proper treatment to be given to a member of the Class who insisted on opposing the chronology and denouncing all faith in October, 1914, either as respects the gathering of the Church or the inauguration of the world's great Time of Trouble. Our reply may be applicable in other cases. It is to the effect that nobody should be specially encouraged in such an opposition; for a bad spirit is always objectionable, injurious. However, we should not denounce those who in a proper spirit express their dissent in respect to the date mentioned and what may be there expected; nor should we feel aggrieved toward them. We should recognize the individual rights of all, and treat everybody according to the Golden Rule. Nor should we feel at liberty to express our views more dogmatically than we would think right for others to do in expressing their views.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The fact is that, notwithstanding the strength of our position and our hope that it may be true, it is nevertheless of *faith* and not of *knowledge*. To some, faith in the matter may become almost as strong and convincing as knowledge. Nevertheless, it is not *knowledge, it is faith*. We must admit that there are possibilities of our having made a mistake in respect to the chronology, even though we do not see where any mistake has been made in calculating the Seven Times of the Gentiles as expiring about October 1, 1914.

If others feel equally convinced respecting some other date which does not appeal to us, we should not on that account reject them as members of the Body of Christ. Rather, we should say, Whether you or we have the *date* correct, we must all agree that the signs of the times as we read them indicate clearly that the Master is nigh, even at the door; and that His Kingdom is soon due to begin to take control. This means that, whether within one year or within ten or twenty years, the *things* which we are expecting will *surely be*

accomplished. The Church will be gathered, the Messianic Reign of Righteousness will begin, preceded, as foretold, by the great Time of Trouble.

The general facts are much more valuable and important than merely the day or the year respecting these facts. "Let brotherly love continue!" Suffer not any dispute over a day or a year to break the most precious bond of love which binds us to the Lord and to all who are truly His. Be *specially* careful on *this point* when the subject of discussion is one respecting which we have no *positive* knowledge. The rupture of fellowship may sometimes be necessary, when we "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints" – faith in the Divine Plan, in the Redeemer, in the efficacy of His death, etc. These matters are *positively* stated in the Bible – not left to deduction, as in the case of chronology and all matters based upon chronology.

A CLEARER VIEW OF PROPHECY

From time to time the Editor has assured the friends that as features of the Truth become more and more distinct to him he would surely give THE WATCH TOWER readers the benefit of this clearer view; in other words, he would keep nothing back.

We have presented in THE WATCH TOWER, for thirty-three years past, the fact that great Babylon will receive her judgment before the nations receive theirs. The statement, "Judgment must begin at the House of God," while applying especially to the real, or consecrated Church, we believe has also a bearing upon the nominal systems. It will be after the fall of Babylon, her casting as a great millstone into the sea, that the great distress of nations will come, apparently.

Nevertheless, we have all probably been inclined to think more particularly of the *world's* Time of Trouble – to look for it, to expect it daily, or by October, 1914, as one result of the closing of the

Gentile Times, or years. Perhaps we have neglected to some extent the fact that great Babylon apparently is dealt with before that world-trouble comes. The thought has been borne in upon the Editor very forcefully during the past two weeks that to expect the world's great trouble to begin on or before October 1, 1914, would be to expect astounding things during the intervening months.

St. Peter describes the great Day of Wrath, intimating that it will begin with the nominal church class – the heavens. "The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10.) Understanding the *earth* here to represent the present social order, and the *heavens* to represent the ecclesiastical order of affairs, we find that the ecclesiastical heavens are to pass away with [R5349 : page 342] a great noise, a great commotion, a great confusion, and their elements or component parts will be melted in the fervency of the heat and strife of that time; and that then the earth, or social order, will follow it in the combustion or consumption of the trouble of that Day – destroying the present social fabric – overthrowing all law and order in anarchy. If, then, we should expect that the trouble would reach society in general within a year, this would seem to mean that before that time the present religious institutions would collapse. Will they?

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST

Revelation, 13th Chapter, we interpreted in THE WATCH TOWER as far back as 1880. We there suggested that in symbolic language a *beast* represents a government – that the ten-horned beast represented the Papal government, which for a time ruled over all Europe, then the Roman Empire. Although Papacy has no such political influence now, it still claims that it has the right, or authority, to rule all nations, as the representative or vicegerent of Messiah.

We pointed out the two-horned beast as represented in the Church-nation of Great Britain and Ireland; for it also is a government which combines Christianity and civil power. The Bishops sit in Parliament and the King is officially the head of the Church of England. The symbol tells us that as an ecclesiastical power this is a harmless one, "its two horns being like those of a lamb" – not intended to do injury. "But it *spake* as a *dragon*." The dragon represents purely *civil* power and the Government of Great Britain, though nominally religious, speaks, or governs as a dragon, or purely civil power.

We also called attention to the fact that "the Image of the (Papal) Beast" was formed in 1846 A.D. In that year the Protestant denominations, especially in the United States, allied themselves as the "Evangelical Alliance." Their alliance ostensibly was for peace and harmony and noble objects of co-operation; but really the organization would appear to have been intended as an attempt to give dignity and *authority* to all of the various Protestant sects, and as far as possible to hinder the formation of any new sects by excluding them as *unorthodox*.

The Alliance endeavored to establish a standard of orthodoxy and to give a mutual support and backing to all the different creeds identified with it – Baptists, Methodists, [R5349 : page 343] Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc. This attempted authority, or power, constituted it an Image of the Papal Beast, or Government. They saw the power of the Papal argument, that it is *the* Church, and that all others are heretical. So the Evangelical Alliance undertakes to say for its constituent members of all denominations: "All these are orthodox; all others are heretical." In this sense it was a copy, or image, of the Papal institution. It has been merely an Image without life or power for now more than sixty years.

However, the Lord's symbolic prophecy, which we are now considering (Revelation 13), tells us that in the close of this Age the

Image will receive life, vitality, energy, power. No longer will it stand as a mere Image. It will become as active as *the* Beast. Moreover, it will not be antagonistic to the Beast, but sympathetic, and cause that all shall either worship the Beast or the Image – all must be in harmony either with Catholicism, or with the Protestant system, of which the Evangelical Alliance was the primary organization or Image. The Protestant Church Federation will be the outcome as soon as it receives the vitalizing breath.

AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARD FEDERATION

The vitality of the Image is to come from the two-horned Beast; that is, the Church of England. We have been waiting for this consummation more than thirty years, and have seen it draw nearer and nearer. A few years ago the Episcopal Church took an important step toward vitalizing the Church Federation movement, which it is favoring and backing. That important step was the recognition of the ministers of the denominations represented in the Evangelical Alliance. Previously no minister not ordained by the laying on of hands of a Catholic or an Episcopalian bishop was allowed to preach from an Episcopalian pulpit.

Perhaps this recognition of the Image is all the vitalization the Image needs, but we are inclined to expect more. For years the Episcopalians have proffered reordination to the ministers of the different denominations represented in the Evangelical Alliance. And they still proffer it. We have been inclined to expect that the ministers would finally concede the point and accept a reordination at the hands of an Episcopal bishop. But we are not sure of this. It is possible that, to meet the requirements of the case, some other way will be found by which the Episcopal Church will recognize the Church Federation without obligating the ministers to be reordained. We are waiting for this.

As, we understand this Chapter of Revelation, the Image, as soon as vitalized, will very promptly use its influence, prestige,

power, in every way to "make fire come down from heaven" (Rev. 13:13); that is, to punish in the name of the Lord those who in any sense of the word it shall consider to be its opponents. Speedily none will be allowed to buy or sell, in the spiritual marts, except those who have either the mark or the number of the Beast, or of the Image, either in the right hand of co-operation or in the forehead of public confession.

This will mean that the INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION and all others not in affiliation with the Alliance will be subjected to radically coercive measures. *Truth* shall *fall* in the streets. *Righteousness* will be unable to *enter* under the stress of the new order of things. For a time it will appear as though a great Christian victory had been won, shared equally by Papacy and federated – Protestantism – no longer *protesting*. Already we see these two divisions of the heavens rolling together, approaching one another, sympathizing with each other – rolling together for mutual protection.

But the triumph of that new order of things will be short. The masses of the people, no longer ignorantly stupid as during the Dark Ages, will awaken to the true situation, and will execute upon Babylon the Great – already repudiated by the Lord – the judgment foretold. She shall be cast like a great millstone into the sea, never to rise again. The sea represents the masses of the people, especially a restless opposition class. The two-horned Beast apparently loses its personality when it gives life to the Image by becoming a member of the Federation.

THE PRESENT OUTLOOK

Now the question arises: *Can* all these things take place within a year? We answer, Yes; it would be possible. A second question is, Is it *likely*? Is it *probable*? And the answer is, No; it seems scarcely probable that so much would be accomplished in one year. Now, there we have the question – each must exercise his own judgment

in respect to the matter. We certainly see a very rank spirit of anger, malice, hatred and strife developing in many quarters, amongst the very ones who constitute the members of the federation. And these slanderous oppositions come usually from the *ministers* of these denominations.

If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (Luke 23:31.) If such bigotry and bitter falsification are practised and such hatred is manifested before the Evangelical Alliance has any life, how arrogant might we suppose the same persons to become after the Image would receive life? And how quickly might the spirit of rancorous persecution be developed?

Let us make the matter clear. According to the old, but erroneous, thought handed down for centuries, the bishops of the Church of England and of the Church of Rome are "apostolic bishops," or successors to the Apostles, according to the old theory of apostolic succession. According to that same theory, no one on earth has one particle of right to teach and to preach, except as those "apostolic bishops" shall grant their permission by laying on their hands.

According to this rule, then, Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians and all such are preaching without authority. When they talk about ordination, they merely mean that each sect ordains its own ministers. The Alliance is attempting to get around this difficulty and to have the sects recognize each other's ordination. The Federation is building upon this general recognition of orthodoxy, and is about, in some manner, to be given life, virility, power, dignity, by something which the Church of England will do for them which will recognize their ordination as ministers.

We may be sure that they will make the road to the preaching and teaching of the Gospel a very narrow one to all attempting to preach without their recognition and ordination. These will be trying times upon us and upon all who will refuse to worship the Beast and

his Image, or to receive the mark of the Beast upon the forehead or upon the hand. – Revelation 13:15-17.

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER

The special point we are now emphasizing is that if we find it difficult, though not impossible, to see that these things could be accomplished within a year, we should feel and act most kindly and tolerantly toward others of the brethren who feel positive that these things will not take place within a year, or who think that they see flaws in our chronological views. "Let brotherly love continue." "Abhor that which is evil. Cleave to that which is good." Thus will the grace of God be with us, to guide us, to bless [R5350 : page 344] us, to cause all of our experiences to work for good, even though some of those experiences should be disappointments in respect to fulfilments of prophecy within the next few months.

The Episcopal Church Conference has just passed an amendment to the Church constitution, providing for the choice of one of their number to be Presiding Bishop – much the same as the Archbishop's office in the Church of England. After some sharp discussion they also authorized their Mission Board to co-operate with mission boards of other Christian bodies. Some bishops objected that this would violate their "priestly vows," but they were outvoted. This co-operation with other Protestants, in conjunction with the action previously taken, permitting other Protestant ministers to participate on invitation in Episcopal Church services, is practically a recognition of the Evangelical Alliance or Church Federation. How much more may be necessary to give LIFE and POWER to the Image we must wait and see.

Our statement in October 15th issue that we have never mentioned October, 1914, as an infallibly sure date, either for the ending of the "Times of the Gentiles" or for any particular occurrence, has been called in question by one of our readers. We are cited to the following words of STUDIES IN THE

SCRIPTURES, Vol. II.: "Now bear in mind the date already found for the beginning of these Gentile Times, viz., 606 B.C., while we proceed to examine the evidence proving their length to be 2520 years – ending A.D. 1914....In view of this strong Bible evidence concerning the Times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God will be accomplished at the end of 1914."

We hold that nothing in these quotations declares the infallibility of the theories we suggested respecting 1914. In these statements, and in all of our statements, we have merely informed our readers respecting our views and the processes of our reasoning on the Scriptures which we have brought to their attention. Thus we have asked each reader to think and judge for himself, and to agree or disagree with us according to his own judgment of the facts.

Notice that in the above quotations no dogmatic statement is made, but that the reader is requested to use his own intellect. For instance, note the words, "*bear in mind*"; again, "*while we proceed to examine the evidence*"; again the reference to "*Bible evidence.*" In the last sentence the author sums up his own views, declaring what he considers to be the truth established by the evidences which he sets before his readers.

In this respect we believe that THE WATCH TOWER presentations differ considerably from others. We state with positiveness the *opinions* of the writer and the reasons therefor, but leave the final decision with each head and heart in all matters, without attempting more.

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