

word of God. I cannot describe my feelings of delight and joy when I read the clear expositions of scripture as I found them in the *Millennial Harbinger*. Every word had a clear meaning, all stripped of sectarian spiritualising and metaphysical theories so well calculated to deceive the honest, unwary hearers. I wanted to tell everybody about the beauty, charms, power and goodness of God's word. I esteem the *Christian Baptist* and *Millennial Harbinger* as the choicest books of the world, save the Bible. The germs of the whole, however, lie in the *Christian Baptist*. We have some valuable publications now, but none of them can touch the *Christian Baptist* and *Millennial Harbinger*.

In those works, the ground of difference between the ancient Gospel and order of things and the whole body of sectarians, was made so clear that now all we can do is to follow after, and happy is the man who does not stray away after the speculations, doctrines and contrivances of man.

But, history repeats itself, and we see men now doing as they did about the second or third centuries of the Christian era, when the kingdom of the clergy was growing up and perfected by Constantine, the emperor. The germs of the kingdom of clergy are at work now, and appearances are that they will be as intolerant as they were in former times.

Some of the first lessons I learned were how a sinner could become a Disciple of Christ, or Christian, and how his sins are forgiven. All this agonizing for years to know, or rather *feel* their sins forgiven was not set aside in the light of the Gospel. To illustrate this, dear reader, allow me to introduce an incident that occurred in Ohio. Two middle-aged women, who were neighbors, one a well informed Disciple of Christ, the other an honest, sincere seeker for salvation after the Methodist order. They were talking on various matters, among them religion. This poor seeker, with flowing tears, began relating her sorrows and fears of dying unforgiven. She said she had been at the stool of penitence for twenty years and could never get through so she could know she had got religion. The poor dear old lady sobbed aloud with streaming eyes. That well-informed godly Disciple was well prepared, and glad of an opportunity of preaching the Gospel of Christ in contrast with the Gospel of Methodism. She said, "You believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, don't you?" "O, yes, with all my heart, and have done so for a long time. "You have repented of your sins, too, I suppose?" "O, yes, for over twenty years." "Well, then," said the preacher, "all you have to do is to be immersed into Christ for the remission of your sins and you will be forgiven." And then she read the word of the Lord to her. She (the seeker) sat confounded for a while and then said, "Is that all? is that all I have to do? The answer was, "That is all the Lord requires of you or any other one." The next day she was buried with the Lord in baptism, and rejoiced that she knew her sins were forgiven, for her Lord said so. Then she had the feelings she had been so long seeking for. The two neighbors were now sisters in Christ.

After my learning first principles, as they are called, the next theme was the church, the bride the Lamb's wife. Here I see myself in a large field of thought, too large, I fear, to attempt an elucidation of all its principles and duties. The church of Christ is the perfection of God's wisdom and goodness in preparing a happy home, like as a well ordered family for His people to assemble to worship. It fills every place where the servants of the Lord are authorized to work for the salvation of man.

At the time of the reformation under Luther, Calvin, and their compeers, running down taking in Wesley and others, there was a perfect mania for

creed making. It is curious to look into church history and see how many sects arose, and the most insignificant must have a creed. It is said that now there are about six hundred and thirty sects in the religious world and all have a creed, but they are not so doctrinal as formerly. Forty-five and fifty years ago it was almost an unpardonable sin to call in question their creed. I used to hear Methodists talking about churching some refractory members. This, that and the other thing was or was not according to discipline. I said, "What does the Bible say about such matters?" "O, we don't know, we are not governed by the Bible, it is our discipline we are guided by."

How very different now. The creed question is seldom introduced. The common membership or laity of any of the sects scarcely know they have a creed. It is confined to the priesthood. As far as I know the laity are not required to subscribe to a creed, and hence, you will find all sorts of belief or doctrines held by members of the same church.

Following up the creed question it is easy to see that the society mania has taken the place of the creed. The church of Christ stands on the pillar of God's truths as it is in His word. To this we are commanded not to add to or take from. No helps, no auxiliaries, no tacking on societies. These societies have a show of goodness, like will worship, but the effect is wonderfully deleterious to the true light of God's word. The church of Christ embraces everything God desires His people to do. It is a protection, help, temperance, missionary, aid society. Time and patience would fail me in going through the society catalogue. Every one of these human get-ups have a portion of the church to sweeten and make it palatable to the recipient. Doctors know how to do this. They make nauseating pills with a coating of sugar so they can be taken easily, leaving a sweet taste in the mouth, but they are filled with bitterness.

Take up some papers published by the brotherhood now, and what do you see? I see a great portion is filled with "societies" and "conventions" work. Forty-five and fifty years ago no such things could have a place in the publications or in church work. These were confined to sectarian work. What a contrast? Then the whole brotherhood was a unit. The great theme of the preachers was to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, convert sinners, and destroy sectarianism, by showing them the way of the Lord more perfectly, bringing them out of the mysticism in which they were held into the glorious light of the everlasting gospel of our salvation. O, how it pains me to look back half a century and contrast the state of things then and now. Paul truthfully said, "After my departure grievous wolves will enter in, not sparing the flock." They have been creeping in ever since. Happy is he, who sees the wolf (destroyer) coming, clothed like a sheep, and sounds the note of warning in time. Here I must close for the present.

JOSEPH ASH.

WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD.

LUKE XXIV. 5.

It is evidently true in this present age of the world, the true light of the gospel of Jesus Christ is greatly hindered, and its progress retarded rather than increased by the various means and methods used to incite religious sentiment and promote apparent self-interests. The Bible, with its true line of thought and its only and all-sufficient basis of Christian union, seems to have been deluged in the sea of the world's prejudice; and instead of submission and conformity to the Word of God, "philosophical" dogmas have been introduced, and the true and living way mystified; and men have gone seeking the living among the dead. Every

peculiar body of professing people are building according to a devised plan of their own, but still hold Jesus the Christ the object of their faith and the foundation of their profession. I disdain the mean cowardly act of ridiculing any professing body; but whether or no they are building upon "Christ the Rock," or whether they are building in His name upon the sand, is left to be decided when tested by the "Standard of Truth." But that there is a great error somewhere is evident, or there would be a more consolidated union upon the fundamental principles of the Christian system. I often spend a deal of time thinking of the day when all the vast hosts that have built and are building, adhering to their own peculiar tenets of faith, who would not, and cannot, and will not, see the grand and perfect oneness, the main object of our Lord's prayer, when He prayed that they all might be one that the world might believe. But instead of following the sentiment of that prayer, men have sought out many inventions, causing divisions and parting the body of Christ asunder. How will they stand when the last trump of God shall sound, and in order to enter the pearly gates of that "City" wherein dwelleth righteousness they will have to intermingle with those whom they despised while here below? It will be hard indeed for some to abandon the forms and ceremonies they cherished so dearly in life. But, thanks be to our God, there is to be a testing time before an entrance can be effected into that righteous place. No man will be allowed to cross the threshold of heaven carrying anything of self or of self-device. We must stand in Christ complete or we will be classed among the foolish. We may cheat the government of this world, but we cannot cheat the government of heaven. We may shun to pay our duty here in life, but when we arrive at the portals of glory we will find the words "In Bond" stamped upon us. Then in order to be found secure at last we should not seek the living among the dead. Why do men attempt to measure the way to heaven by any other standard than the Word of God? Why should men attempt to advance any other means when the heavenward traveller's guide is at hand? Why should fallible man attempt to issue our tickets for the realms of endless day? When we set out for heaven we should be sure and board the right train, be sure our ticket is genuine, and also be sure we have our guide-book at hand, and pay strict attention to its directions. Let us not be found worshipping the true God (in order to have the true light of the Sun of Righteousness shining into our hearts) among the dark mounds and tombstones of sectarian divisions. I believe as firmly as I believe the Bible to be true, the people who will enjoy heaven will be those who were united in mind and sentiment here below. Why seek the living among the dead? Those women who went to the sepulchre had but little faith in Christ's resurrection or they would not have gone for the purpose of embalming the body. There are thousands of people to-day who have just such superficial faith; not being rooted and grounded in Christ and the principles of the Christian system, they are found seeking the living among the dead. Their faith is so faint they hardly know there is faith required, and still they seem to care for nobody else but themselves. I do not doubt but when they get to heaven (if they ever do) they will want to debar everybody but those who belonged to their creed. They have been seeking the living among the dead, and they have resorted so much among the gloomy retreats they have become as gloomy as the grave and as selfish as death. May God grant to shake the sectarian valley of dry bones and breathe upon them the Spirit of Christ, and that the time may come when all who love Christ and do His will will form one perfect church (not sects) based upon Christ, the mountain stone of Daniel, and His word the rule