

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Ques. Please let me know by what name you people call yourselves? What denomination?

Ans. We are strictly unsectarian, and consequently recognize no sectarian name, believing with Paul, (read 1 Cor. 3:1-4) that where one saith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, or I am a Baptist, or I a Methodist, etc., it is an evidence of carnality, and consequently in opposition to the Spirit of Christ. Did Paul or Apollos die for us? If so, let us call ourselves theirs. Were we baptized into the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, or other denominational churches? If so, we are members of it, and should be properly recognized by those names. But if we were baptized into the one body or church of which Jesus is the one and only Head, then we are members in particular of his body, and the only name appropriate would be his; Scripturally called the "Church of Christ," "Christians," "Church of the first born," and such like general names. Again we would remark that ours is the only Scriptural basis of Christian union, viz.: We have no creed (fence) to bind us together or to keep others out of our company. The Bible is our only standard, and its teachings our only creed, and recognizing the progressive character of the unfolding of Scriptural truths, we are ready and prepared to add to or modify our creed (faith – belief) as we get increase of light from our Standard.

We are in fellowship with all Christians in whom we can recognize the Spirit of Christ, and especially with those who recognize the Bible as the only standard. We do not require, therefore, that all shall see, just as we do in order to be called Christians; realizing that growth in both grace and knowledge is a gradual process. Nor do we see reason to expect that any but the watchmen of

Zion will "see eye to eye" (Isa. 52:8) until that which is perfect is come, when that which is in part shall be done away. (1 Cor. 13:10.)

If all Christians were to thus free themselves of prescribed creeds, and study the Word of God without denominational bias, truth and knowledge and real Christian fellowship and unity, would result. The Spirit of the Head would pervade the unfettered members of the body, and sectarian pride would vanish. Thus we believe, thus we practice, and thus we teach. It becomes our duty to denounce sectarianism and the God-dishonoring creeds of men which, while contradicting each other, unite in misrepresenting God's Word and character. Because these are bonds which hinder God's children from rendering him the homage due unto his name, hinder their knowing him, hinder their worshiping in spirit and in truth, and also hinder them from enjoying that joy and peace which their Father designed they should have. We "cry aloud and spare not."

Because we believe sectarianism to be a snare of the devil, and in opposition both to God and his saints, therefore we labor to set them free, and bring them into the liberty of Christ. That this has been so accounted before the present day by holy men of God, we quote you from the words of JOHN BUNYAN, whose **[R344 : page 8]** name is a household word, and one of whose books has been more read than any other ever written except the Bible – "Pilgrim's Progress." He wrote: –

"Since you would know by what name I would be distinguished from others, I tell you I would be, and hope I am, a Christian; and choose, if God should count me worthy, to be called a Christian, a believer, or other such name which is approved by the Holy Ghost. And as for those factious (or sect) titles of Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Independent, or the like, I conclude that they came neither from Antioch nor from Jerusalem, but from Hell and Babylon, for they tend to divisions: you may know them by their fruits."

JOHN BUNYAN.

John Bunyan was a Christian whose creed was the Bible (He was commonly called a "Baptist," though, then, and in a few Baptist churches now, the Bible is the only written confession of faith.) He was imprisoned in Bedford Jail by the English Church in 1660, because he thus believed. It was while there imprisoned that he wrote of "Pilgrim."

Ques. Was not the typical perfection of the Jews the perfecting of the human, to which their sacrifices pointed?

Ans. The sacrifices and people and reconciliation, were all alike typical of the real sacrifices, all people, and the reconciling of the world. To re-concile is to harmonize again. It of course means a reconciling of two already existent beings – God and man. Because of the ransom and reconciliation, man is to be liberated from death and restored to perfection. This certainly involves no change of either God's or man's nature. Hence, we argue that the benefits of Christ's ransom is to men, restitution of what was once possessed – perfect manhood. The change of nature (to become new creatures) is only made during this age, and results from self-sacrifice after justification.

Dear Brother R. I have not been a reader long and cannot understand how you harmonize, the article in the Dec. No., "The Blessed Dead," with "The Door Was Shut," article which appeared in a previous number of the Tower. Please explain.

Ans. To our understanding, all who died previously to Oct. 2d, '81, passed into a "sleep" or "unclothed" condition to wait for this time, when the sleeping should be awakened in resurrection by their Lord, or the unclothed be clothed upon of their spiritual body – their house from heaven. It has not been a blessing to die and thus fall asleep; but now since we live to the time when we may step from the

earthly tabernacle into the heavenly (spiritual) body, without a moment's sleep, it is a blessing. To be thus "changed in a moment" – not unclothed for an instant, but translated from the natural to the spiritual condition instantly, is a privilege never before enjoyed. Since this glorious time is come, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth," (Rev. 14:13,) because as Paul expresses it, they may now be "clothed upon with their house which is from heaven." (2 Cor. 5:1-4.)

The human is to die – the earthly form must be laid off, as Jesus our pattern showed us, (2 Pet. 1:14) but the new life hid with Christ will not die, though it slept until now. Now we understand that the exaltation of the members of the Christ who were asleep has taken place, and the exaltation of those who are alive and remain, is due; and the remaining members of the body will, each in his turn soon experience that glorious change, from this sleep to the perfection of life as immortal spiritual beings like himself – by investing or clothing them with their house from heaven. Thus it may readily be seen that we the living, left over unto the presence do not precede the sleeping ones, but they rise first: Then we shall be changed in a moment to the same immortal condition – like unto Christ's glorious body. As did Jesus so must we all, fully lose humanity, putting off this "tabernacle even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed." (2 Pet. 1:14.) This tabernacle – the flesh. It was consecrated to death and must fully die, but we, the new creatures who inhabit these bodies, do not die and will not need even to sleep, but instantly we shall become more alive than ever; or as Paul says, have "mortality swallowed up of life."

We tarry only as the mouth-pieces – Priests of God, to sound the trumpet notes of truth until the white robed Levites (advanced justified believers) learn to sing the song of restitution and the fullness of salvation, purchased through the precious blood of Christ. (2 Chron. 5:12-14.)

The door which shut was not the door into the kingdom, but the door into the guest-chamber – to the feast. (See article on Feasts.) We understand that though the marriage is not yet accomplished, it is just about to be. The present moments are occupied by the Bride in making herself ready, and no more guests are now admitted.

Ques. If the door to the "high calling" is now closed what should we say to any who now say, "Lord what wouldst thou have me to do?" If we are mouth-pieces of the spirit, we should have a word of the Lord for them – what?

Ans. If it be one who had already consecrated himself as a sacrifice and [R345 : page 8] entered covenant relationship as a new creature, we would say, proceed as before only more zealously to carry out your covenant and become dead to the world, that in the inspection by our King, he may be approved as one who has been faithful unto death.

If it be one who has never before covenanted, he stands in exactly the position of Abraham. He has the gospel or glad tidings of coming earthly blessings to all who love and obey God. This is the "Everlasting Gospel" – that sin's penalty has been paid, and all men may come into harmony with their creator and live. This was the very Gospel which God preached unto Abraham, saying, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be BLESSED." (Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25.) In this Gospel Age – as we speak of it, there is an addition made to the glad tidings which did not apply before it, and does not apply now, since the door is shut. We now know not only that all nations of the earth are soon to be blessed with opportunities of everlasting life and happiness, but during the Gospel age we have been privileged or invited to become members of that spiritual seed of him whom Abraham typified (Jehovah), and as such to be the cause or instruments of the coming blessing. (See Gal. 3:29, and Rom. 11:31,32.) This last call properly ends, when all the members of that

seed have been selected from the world, and then the Gospel message stands just as it did to Abraham – the privilege of joining the blessing seed being ended by accomplishment.

We would say then to such, Live good moral lives – lives of communion with God, engaging in, and promoting every good word or work according to your ability. But you are not now called upon to sacrifice yourselves nor your sinless pleasures and comforts. It is proper that they should abstain from sins to the extent of their ability, and realize that their ransom price covered all the unavoidable weaknesses which arise from the Adamic transgression. Let them thus trust in the Lord and do good, and soon they will share in the blessings of the reign of righteousness.

The glad tidings of justification and redemption, and the call to faith, repentance, and obedience, which we thus proclaim, is the same which the nominal church has been proclaiming all along, though so greatly mixed with error and superstition as not to be discernible to many as glad tidings. Very few have realized their privilege to sacrifice things, to which, as men, they have a legitimate right; very few have realized a begetting to a new nature. One prominent point of difference however, should be remembered: Our God is not a demon with a heart of stone, unjust, unmerciful, unkind; but a God of LOVE, plenteous in MERCY, who so loved the world, that he gave his Son that all might come to a knowledge of the truth, and be brought back to perfection of being and happiness. "And for this purpose are the ages to come," in which, to show the exceeding riches of his grace and his loving kindness. Eph. 2:7.

Ques. Please explain Matt. 25:46.

Ans. The punishment and reward are of equal duration. We are here told that the reward will be life, but in this passage the nature of the punishment is not specified. Readers generally take for granted that it means everlasting misery and torment. They infer this from

some symbolic expressions used in the book of Revelations, which they confess they do not understand. But God's Word nowhere says that the punishment of sin is torment. If we admit what is here stated that their punishment will be equal in duration with the reward promised, and will then inquire of the Word – What is the nature of the punishment? – we shall soon have light. We read, "The soul (person) that sinneth, it shall die;" – "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." So we find it quite harmonious. "These shall go away into eternal punishment death, from which there will be no release – no resurrection); but the righteous into life eternal.

The power to live comes from God, and he promises it only to the righteous. God has an unquestionable right to deprive all his creatures of life, if they will not use it in harmony with his righteous will. But none but a devil of worst stamp could perpetrate eternal hopeless torment and agony upon any creature. Satan has, from the first, been a misrepresenter of God's character and word, and in this matter seems to have succeeded in deceiving many of God's dear saints. Oh, that all might learn to study God's Word in the light which it throws upon itself, and not allow the creeds and traditions of men to twist and warp their minds, destroy their peace and their trust in God, by turning the Word of God into a lie.

To what extent the minds of men may be twisted, is illustrated by the teachings of New England's great preacher of former years – Jonathan Edwards. In preaching upon the eternal punishment of the wicked, which he said was misery and torture, he pictured it so frightfully, that some in the congregation sprang from their seats screaming, and caught hold of the pillars of the church as though fearful of being dropped into the yawning chasm. We quote his sentiments, and, as nearly as we can recall, his words.

Addressing the Christians present, he said: Your hearts then will not ache for, and throb in sympathy with your friends and children;

you will look over the battlements of heaven and see them in that awful everlasting torture, and turn round and praise God the louder.

What a terrible, strong delusion possessed that child of God, that he could utter such blasphemy. It was a blasphemy against men as well as against the God of love, for if there is or ever was in all the universe of God, so awfully degraded a being that he could have everlasting joy at the expense of another's everlasting misery, that one is too miserable a wretch to be worthy even of the name of devil. If being made like our glorious and perfect Head would annihilate in this manner every spark of love, pity, and mercy, then should we earnestly pray and hope that we to his likeness should never attain. Take it home to your own heart, thinking Christian – Have you by death lost a loved and cherished son or daughter, brother, sister, father, or mother, or friend, whom you feel sure walked not "the narrow way to life"? Think, then, of what a change must come ere you could blend with their cries of anguish, your shouts of joy and pleasure.

But no longer will such preaching frighten the people; the picture is so wide of the truth that the unprejudiced thinker, both in and out of the church, sees it to be the very opposite to the character of a God of love. For this reason, though the Bible has not changed, nor their creeds, theologians have generally abandoned the fire theory, and now say the punishment will be a gnawing of conscience. Yet when wanting to alarm some one into love for God, they will add that the lashings of conscience will be even more terrible than flames.

No wonder that many sectarians, imitating their conception of a God, become loveless and hard, and in their families exalt the rule of fear, rather than the rule of love. No one knows how bad an effect is produced on civilized society by the monstrous ideas of God's character, as instilled by the traditions of men.

All heathen nations have horrible images of their Gods. All picture them horrible, with malicious power; and though Christians ignore pictures and images, yet they draw a mental picture of their God as dreadful. It surely needs much help to love a being such as they are taught he is. The wonder is that every intelligent person has not been driven into infidelity by it, and we verily believe that many more are skeptical than openly profess it: their actions speak loudly of it.

In God's Word we see how evil was permitted for good reasons, and that the "little flock"* now being developed, instead of rejoicing in the misery of ninety nine one hundredths of their fellows, will be praising God and manifesting the exceeding riches of his grace in the ages to come, by blessing all the families of the earth.
