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QUESTION COLUMN.

Ques. If our debt is paid, Why is it said in Scripture that we are forgiven our trespasses?

Ans. It would be useless for a sinner to approach God asking to be forgiven, because he also forgives trespassers against him. This would be no ground for forgiveness and is never held out thus in Scripture. The prayer referred to – "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" – is not for sinners. Jesus said, "After this manner pray YE. Ye who recognize in Jesus, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" – ye who were once aliens, but are now made nigh by the blood of Christ – Ye may say to Jehovah, "Our Father who art in heaven." And having made a covenant of self-sacrifice, if ye, through temptation, sometimes fail of perfectly keeping it, ye may pray to your Father forgive; and "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you (John 16:23). The world may not call God Father, but we "have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15.) "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ hath [R521 : page 8] the Father" (2 John 9).

Ques. Can a man who has made full consecration to the Lord remain a member of a secret society?

Ans. We cannot speak from personal experience, never having been a member of any such society. But if we should even take for granted that they are in no way opposed to the doctrines of Christ, and that they cultivate morality (which is at least questionable), still we should feel that we were out of place in them. We believe that neither consecrated time, money, nor influence could be thus devoted without interference with the saints' consecration vow to use all their time, all their money, all their influence, not only not against the Lord

but in his service. Since this Journal addresses specially the consecrated class, we feel it unnecessary to do more than point out this conflict with the consecration vow. The same argument holds true exactly against every sectarian society called churches. Consecrated time, money and influence, cannot be thus wasted without injury to the cause, and violence to the vow, in our opinion. The wide scope of our consecration should, to the thoughtful saint, settle all the minor details of its fulfilment.

Ques. Again, can such consecrated ones consistently insure either life or property?

Ans. It is certainly a teaching of Scripture that we should "do good unto all men," and that, if even an enemy hunger, we should feed him. Insurance of life or property, like poor-houses and hospitals, is merely the putting of the teachings of Christ into a business form. It is the creating of a general fund by a large number, for the assistance of any one of their company in an extremity.

We see nothing in this out of harmony with the Master's teachings. Life Insurance is equivalent to the laying aside in a savings bank of a small sum, regularly, for the benefit of some dependent ones. We believe that such a provision by a father for a dependent family is not contrary to the spirit of Jesus' words, when he said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." A treasure is that upon which the heart is set, and many people make treasures of things of less use and value than money quite frequently – reputation, dress, pleasure, relics, etc.

To the truly consecrated no earthly thing should be treasured, all must be counted as dross in comparison with the heavenly things promised. All must be lightly esteemed, so that, at a moment's notice, we shall be ready and willing to sacrifice them to the will of the Lord or, heavenly interests. Some statements by Paul should be understood to be in harmony with our Lord's words. He exhorts the

Church to lay up money every week for the Lord's family – the Church (1 Cor. 16:2); and if right to lay up for this, would it be wrong to use reasonable precaution in laying aside whatever might be reasonably spared from the demands of the present for the future necessities or emergencies of an earthly family entrusted to your care by the same Lord?

But while remembering the words, that "He who provideth not for his own household, hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8), let us also beware of the much more common error, of grasping miserliness which hoards, denying the necessities of the present in their families, and robbing them of the privilege of sharing in the furtherance of the Lord's work – one of the greatest privileges we can deprive ourselves of.

Ques. If those who die in infancy are to be restored to perfection on the human plane, please explain Jesus' words: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"?

Ans. The import of this text evidently is: Of such like is the kingdom. This will be better seen by reading the next verse (Mark 10:15): "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God AS a little child, HE shall not enter therein." See also Matthew's account of this, ch. 18:1-6.

This shows that Jesus is representing the gentle, teachable, guileless, humble disciple by a little child. How beautiful the thought – "children of God!" "Howbeit, in malice be ye children, (having none) but in understanding be men." (1 Cor. 14:20).

Ques. Please explain Heb. 12:8?

Ans. The Diaglott renders this passage thus: "But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then truly you are spurious and not sons." The apostle shows that during the present time those who are called of God to the new nature, must

anticipate trials and temptations and oppositions, such things being necessary to their preparation for the grand and glorious future work for which God designs them; the overcoming of evil being a proper test of all who are designed to be sharers of God's kingdom power.

Paul in the context shows, that to be a follower of Jesus, is not to be carried to glory on flowery beds of ease; not to reign, but to seek to win a right to the kingdom; not to put on the dress of a racer merely, but to so run as to obtain the prize, which implies weariness, difficulties and obstacles to be encountered. He points out that thus it was with the first runner of this course – Jesus, our leader, captain and forerunner – who opened up this "narrow way" to us by giving himself a ransom for us. Paul argues that we should look to Jesus as a pattern: if his was a race of trial, discouragement and conflicts with evil, we should expect the same, and not be surprised at fiery trials. Was his name cast out as evil – was he hated without cause – did his brethren disown him – was he cast out of the synagogue because he told the truth – and were all these things grievous rather than joyous – discipline rather than pleasure? If so it was with the example and pattern, so it will be with every true follower. Instead, then, of regarding such sufferings of the present time as evidences of disownment by the Lord, we should look for and receive them as evidences that we are accepted as sons, and in training for the promised royal honors. To be without such evidences would indicate that we had never been "begotten by the word of truth." (James 1:18.)

Though they might have been begotten to some other hope by the word of traditions of men, promising a kingdom, etc., on other conditions – such would be spurious and not real heirs of the kingdom.

Ques. What will become of those who hear the Gospel and reject it?

Ans. We would say first, that many are supposed to hear the Gospel who really never do hear it. Jesus said, "Him that hath an ear let him hear." But the God of this world (Satan) has stopped many ears and blinded many eyes, so that they cannot recognize the joyful message we bear. We have the promise, however, that in due time all these deaf ears shall be unstopped, and the blind eyes shall be opened, and then this Gospel in its fulness shall be "testified to all."

If you do not refer to this class (which includes the great mass of the world), but to a class who have actually heard and received the fundamental truth of the Gospel, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and who were actually justified by faith, but who never consecrated themselves as living sacrifices to God, and thus rejected the good news of high calling, we would say of these that they lose their privilege of joint-heirship and reign with Christ.

But if you refer to still another class, viz., those who having heard the Gospel, and having been justified by faith in it, have also covenanted to become living sacrifices, and who afterwards reject the Gospel and become the enemies of the cross of Christ, counting the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified a common thing; for such the Scripture says there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin. Such are, indeed, in a sad condition. In their justification, such had received by faith the benefits from Jesus' death which the world in general will actually receive soon; then they gave up that justified human hope for a hope of sharing the divine nature. Now if they cast aside the only anchor, and "count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy [common, ordinary] thing;" such having had the full benefits of the ransom, and having then cast it aside, for such there remaineth no more an interest in that sacrifice, and, since Christ dieth no more, they are without hope. For

such, death will be the second death, i.e., not the one on account of Adam's sin, but for their own.

Q. Please explain Matt. 23:33.

A. This expression was addressed to the Pharisees as a class, and to the scribes or theologians among them, who zealously promulgated the traditions of the elders. They were looking for a future life as a reward for keeping the Law – or rather the traditions of the elders. Jesus, denouncing their hypocrisy, points out their real character, and, expressing his just indignation, exclaims: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation (judgment) of hell (Gehenna). That is, how can ye escape the judgment to destruction. Gehenna was a place, outside the city of Jerusalem, for the burning or destruction of offal and the bodies of criminals. Jesus here uses it as a symbol of destruction, to which they were justly condemned.

Think not, however, that they were the poor degraded outcasts of society. I tell you, nay. They were the most strict religionists and the most popular and refined theologians of their day – having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. But, though they shall not have a resurrection to life as a reward, as they expected it, and though they were justly condemned to destruction, with all the rest of mankind, they shall have a resurrection, because he whom they rejected and slew bought them with his own precious blood.
