

SOME INTERESTING QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Question.--Does not the foreknowledge of God seal our eternal destiny?

Answer.--However distinctly we may enunciate our belief in God's foreknowledge of coming events the matter will always be beyond our human powers of comprehension. We could easily enough see how God, with all power in heaven and in earth, could predestinate certain events, and then cause them to come to pass, but our difficulty begins when we apply divine foreknowledge to human affairs in regard to which we recognize, according to the Scriptures, that man is a free agent, at liberty to choose his own course, at least concerning all moral and religious questions.

This need have no bearing whatever upon our duty and responsibilities, for we know assuredly from the Scriptures that God is dealing with us, not from the [R4024 : page 207] standpoint of his foreknowledge, but from the standpoint of our obedience. If we are willingly obedient to him, then he could not have foreknown otherwise respecting us. The Lord is dealing with his Church of this Gospel Age according to certain principles set forth in the Scriptures, and it is for us to obey or disobey his instructions, according to our will--God's foreknowledge in no sense or degree interfering with our liberties.

Question.--Is the world growing better?

Answer.--In some respects it is growing better and in other respects it is growing worse. It is growing better in the sense that a higher moral tone prevails on the surface of things, because of knowledge being more generally diffused amongst the masses of Christendom. While Christian principles have not struck their roots deeply into the heart of civilization, they have, at least, given a tone to public sentiment which is very beneficial. The light of true Christianity, its loving spirit, has been exhibited to the world in the Master and in the "little flock," who seek to walk in his steps; and it has established thus a higher standard of thought and deed amongst men--not only of the consecrated class, but also of the worldly class. Their consciences agree to the principles enunciated, and in some degree benevolence has been cultivated, even from a worldly standpoint; and even though it be true to some extent that many of the benevolences performed in connection with the establishment of hospitals, libraries, asylums, etc., are for show and for advertising and vainglory; and even though some benevolences in the care of the sick and the wounded, etc., in times of war are probably prompted by love of gain, nevertheless all these things attest that there is a generally diffused public sentiment which appreciates such things, and which it is sought to please. We are glad of this, glad to note it, glad to acknowledge it. We regret, however, to note that various things indicate that this greater benevolence of our day is a very thin veneer, covering a great deal of selfishness, malice, hatred, envy and strife, which, under certain circumstances, show themselves in a very keen ferocity and general devilishness which it is difficult for the Christian heart to understand. The fact of the matter is that general goodness, heart-consecration to the Lord and filling with his spirit of love, is apparently decreasing in the same ratio as the surface benevolence increases, outward moderation and gentlemanliness being accepted as instead of heart-consecration and sanctification.

Question.--Would it be proper for the consecrated to spend time in the study of foreign languages, music, art, etc., or in attending and belonging to social and literary clubs?

Answer.--It is well that each of us should judge for himself in such matters; but well, also, that each should

leave the judgment of others to themselves. It is not for us to lay down any hard and fast rules for other men's consciences, but we may suggest some lines which each conscience may apply to its own affairs, we believe, profitably.

(1) The consecrated person has given up his will, has covenanted that he will henceforth seek to do, not his own will, but the Lord's will, whether that agrees much or little with his own natural tastes and proclivities. This point being decided, it follows (2) that in the spending of our time we would consider the Lord's will, judging to the best of our ability from his Word and our experiences in life what would be his will-- what would be to his glory and to our own spiritual profit and to the spiritual profit of others, and a decision on this point must be the rule of our lives as consecrated persons, in all of our affairs. (3) With the majority of the Lord's people the providing of things needful of an earthly kind, for self or family dependents, requires much of consecrated time and leaves comparatively little for devotion to matters especially spiritual. (4) Every truly consecrated person, accepting the foregoing views, is bound to admit that the amount of time, talent and energy at his disposal for special service to the Lord, to the Truth and the brethren is very limited indeed. (5) Each realizing this situation will use his little time according to the measure of his zeal. If he loves foreign languages more than he loves the Lord's Word it bespeaks an unsatisfactory condition of heart. If he loves the Lord's Word and service better than foreign languages, but somehow feels that the study of languages, music and art are a duty more important than the study of the Lord's Word and the service of the brethren, it implies a confused condition of mind and an imperfect appreciation of the fact that the time is short in which to make our calling and election sure. (6) The zeal which we show in respect to the use of opportunities in the Lord's service and in our attempt to turn the ordinary affairs of life to his glory, constitutes the indication we are giving to the Lord regarding the amount of our zeal for him and his. (7) It is according to the measure of this zeal of our hearts for the Lord's will and the Lord's service, and not according to the perfection we shall attain in the flesh, that we shall be adjudged overcomers of the world or not overcomers--worthy or not worthy of the prize of our high calling.

Question.--Will the retributions of the Millennial Age be wholly in the nature of corrections in righteousness and punishments for transgressions of that time? or will the punishments be wholly in the sense of or for sins of this present life? or will they take cognizance of both of these?

Answer.--They will take cognizance of both, thus: While primarily they will be reproofs and corrections for transgressions committed during the Millennial Age, and will be reformatory in character, nevertheless in a secondary sense they will take cognizance of the wilful sins of this present life also, because every wilful sin of the present time makes an indelible mark in the character, the disposition, etc., and these indelible character-marks will be upon all in their awakening for trial in the Millennial Age. If the marks be many and deep it can be readily seen that the individual will be correspondingly at a disadvantage in the next life, and have corresponding difficulties and obstacles to hinder him, which he will be required to overcome in order to obtain the life that will then be offered him.

Of course, sins committed ignorantly and unintentionally have also a degrading effect upon mind and body, but far less so than sins committed in violation of conscience, sins against light and knowledge. We may reasonably suppose, too, that it will be part of the work of the Royal Priesthood during the Millennial Age of trial to assist mankind the more over the weaknesses which were incurred unwillingly.