

"CONSECRATION"

(Discourse below by R. H. Barber, 1916 Convention Report, start page 88.)

We shall use three different texts today. The first one is in John 4:23, 24: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship God in Spirit and in truth, for such the Father seeketh to worship him. God is a spirit, and those that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." To worship God in spirit and in truth, means consecration. It means no sham, no hypocrisy. It means to worship Him because we recognize Him as worthy of our adoration and worship, and His laws and ways grander than could possibly be devised by any of his creatures, and obedience to them bringing grandest blessings imaginable. Jesus said: "This is true worship," and that God wants no other. We notice further, that there were no true worship until Jesus. He said: "The hour cometh (the future millennium), and now is" (this Gospel Age). There could be no true worship until Jesus had paid the death penalty. Even the Disciples had to wait until Jesus had ascended up on high. (Heb. 9:24, Acts 2:33.)

Our second text describing consecration is found in Psalm 96:8 "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name." Here is the thought of full consecration again. This text refers to those who, having learned of the glorious beauties of the Divine Plan and Character, voluntarily, gladly and zealously render homage and worship, because they recognize that this is due to him. Still another text is found in Heb. 1:9. It applies to Jesus, but all the consecrated must get to the same condition: "Because thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." This describes the condition of every consecrated heart.

Consecration is a definite act with all who consecrate. It is a promise, an agreement, on our part, that we will do the Father's will, whatever that will may be. It is also a voluntary act. Every completed consecration has two parts: Our part which Paul calls "presenting your bodies a living sacrifice," and the Psalmist denominates, "Making a covenant with him by sacrifice;" and God's part, of accepting our consecration, by begetting us with His Holy Spirit. Both of these parts are essential, but our part comes first. Everyone of God's creatures must consecrate, or else be everlasting destroyed, and every consecration must be tested to see if the consecrator really meant his consecration. The object of these tests or trials is to bring each consecrator up to the condition of loyalty and devotion described in our texts, where the Father's will be done, because each delights to do it and not where each feels that they ought to do it.

After creating the various orders of the heavenly host God began testing them. We do not know how all these tests were applied but the Bible does tell us about one, which well illustrates all tests in general. We note first that all these tests are of a subtle nature, not tests to lie, steal or do some depraved or vicious act. We note now the test came upon the angels. It was in connection with sin in the earth. When those holy and pure angels saw man plunged in sin and death, some of them evidently desired to come down to earth and

help extricate man from his undone condition. Others evidently did not so desire. God permitted them to try their hand, knowing in advance their utter failure. He permitted, however, to furnish an object lesson to all his creatures, heavenly and earthly, that to interfere with the divine arrangement always results disastrously. Peter and Jude both tell us that these angels sinned. Wherein was the sin? Surely not in their good motives, but the course which seemed wise to them led them into sin. But what was the subtle test? It was this: Evidently God's plan had failed, and so they offered their services masked. Instead of waiting to see God accomplish His Will, in His time, and way, they substituted their will, their time, and their way. Their course showed a lack of reverence, lack of confidence in God. They did not realize that God did not need their help. Adam was also a consecrated being and we notice again the subtlety of the test which God applied to him, and which demonstrated that Adam was not submissive to the divine will, because he also lacked reverence for and confidence in God. Note the test. Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit, and must die, and Adam knew it. He was not tempted to eat the fruit, through his appetite or simply because he desired to taste it. But herein lay the temptation. The only woman on earth, his beloved companion, had eaten and must die, and he was tempted to share her fate through his love for her. He did not have a sufficient knowledge of God to trust Him to restore Eve to him in some way. I verily believe that had Adam known about the ability of God to provide a ransom he would not have followed Eve into sin.

How wonderfully God has arranged so that the failure of "those angels that sinned" and Adam's failure, shall serve as lessons to us -- the consecrated members of Christ's Body -- so that we may be better enabled to trust Him, obey Him, and to do His will. God's will is that all men shall obey his laws because they are best, and because they are righteous. He desires none to serve Him because they fear Him, nor because they are compelled to do so.

When father Adam sinned he lost his privilege of consecration for himself, and the right to make consecration and have it tested, for all of his posterity. When Jesus redeemed Adam's lost rights, this right was among them, and was also redeemed both for Adam and his posterity. None could have this right or privilege restored to him till Jesus had paid the death penalty.

The Scriptures clearly reveal the fact that the divine purpose is to have an elect class associated with Jesus in the Millennium kingdom and its work, and that this class is to be selected during this Gospel Age, and God is giving this class the privilege of consecrating and having their consecration tested in advance of the world. Who is this class? Why does God favor them in advance of others? According to the Scriptures these are a class of people who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, truth, and hence are in a friendly attitude toward these. Our Lord referred to these, when he said: "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command ye to do;" and again in John 17, when he said: "I

pray not for the world, but for them (God's friends) whom thou has given me out of the world. Thine they were and thou gavest them me." These have certain qualities of mind and heart which please God, which He can use, and which make it possible to fit them for the kingdom and its work. The majority have not these qualities, and cannot thus be fitted. We note some of these qualities in the following Scriptures: Heb. 11:6, a fundamental quality viz., faith. Matt. 5:6, a hunger and thirst after righteousness. Then again the apostle urges the necessity of a willing mind; and yet again, in Luke 8:15: Our Lord points out the necessity for a good and honest heart.

Wherever the Lord finds one with these qualities he gives to them the privilege of consecrating, and consecration means to them just what it means to the angels, and just what it will mean to the world of mankind in the future, viz: "Doing the Father's will," but it will involve different experiences, because the Father's will is different, as respects this class, than for any others of his creatures. Looking at Jesus' course at consecration we hear him saying, Heb. 10:7: "Lo I come to do thy will O God." There at Jordan Jesus definitely and explicitly made his consecration. But let us notice how he decided as to what was the Father's will, hear him answer: "In the volume of the book it is written of me." And so when the Father had sent the holy spirit to illuminate his mind he immediately withdrew into solitude, where he could meditate on what was "written in the book" concerning him. By the help of this Holy Spirit, emerging and illuminating his mind, the "Heavenly things opened unto him." (Matt. 3:16.) Ah, thus it was that he understood the Father's "will concerning him." He could see that the Father's will was expressed in the book. Doubtless he recognized that Isa. 53 expressed the Father's will. Read it carefully. Jesus saw that "He was to be led as a lamb to the slaughter," that the people would hide their faces from him, that humiliation, and indignity awaited him, that "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him," "He hath put him to shame," and that through it all he was "not to open his mouth." The records of the New Testament tell us how faithfully he carried out every item of the Father's will, as expressed in the prophetic Scriptures and how the Father rewarded this faithfulness, under the severest tests, according to the promise. (Isa. 53:12.)

These sufferings of Jesus, all undeserved, and faithfully endured, were permitted as tests of his obedience and loyalty, and the Apostle tells us that "He learned obedience through the things that he suffered." He had always been obedient, but never before had he been required to be obedient and suffer for his obedience and right-doing. This was a new test, a new trial, and a necessary one, to a share in the kingdom.

We are running for the same prize that Jesus did, and our consecration is to be the same, and to be tested in the same way. When we consecrate we likewise say, "I come to do Thy will O my God." This does not mean to take the will of father, mother, church creed, nor to do our own will. It means just what it says. But we need some help, some instruction, as to what the Lord's will is, and where shall we get it. Ah! here is where

many make the mistake. They go to the religious leaders, or jump at conclusions, some engaging as missionaries, others in temperance work, or other works of moral reform. They engage in these because they discern them to be good works and conclude that this must be the Lord's will, and so engage. Notice the apostle's words: "This is His will even your sanctification." Your own sanctification, not the conversion of the world, not engaging in good works, not a word about "saving souls," and not a single Scripture urges to any of these. It is written in the book concerning us also, and when the Lord pours out his holy spirit upon us, we too, have the "Heavens open unto us," that is, we can begin to understand heavenly things, we can see what the Father's will concerning us is. And what do we see? We see that it is God's will that all who would reign with Him must suffer with Him. (2 Tim. 2:12; 3:12; Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 5:10.) It is further God's will that this suffering shall come be cause of well doing. (Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Pet. 2:19-21; 4:12-19; 3:14, 17.)

We find further that it is God's will, that we should bless those who cause us suffering, and rejoice in all these experiences. (1 Pet. 4:13; 2:23; Matt. 5:12, 44, 45.) Doing these things is carrying out our consecration, and means that we are standing the tests. We find that the Father's will is that we also shall be "counted as sheep for the slaughter." (Rom. 8:36.) Submitting to these indignities, and reproaches for Christ's sake, without murmuring or complaint, is "to learn obedience through suffering." It means "to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God." It means to let Him "work out the good pleasure of His will," in your heart. He has promised to supervise so that just the needed trials, just the right kind and at the right time, shall befall us. Not one too many or one too few, and we are plainly told that they will work out good for us; that "that wicked one cannot touch us," and that nothing shall separate us from the love of God.

Some of the things which hinder us from making such a consecration is first, our fear that we cannot faithfully carry it out; second, the opposition of relatives and friends. We should not let the latter move us, as our first duty is to the Lord, and if we should let them keep us out of the kingdom, and later they should learn that they were to blame, they would feel very much ashamed, while on the contrary they would be exceedingly glad in the future if we withstand them now and succeed. Then there are many hindrances to carry out our consecration. Among these we would mention our own flesh through its love for family, business, ease, reputation, pets, flowers. We shall need all the time we can get to make our calling and election sure, and all these things are constantly demanding our time to a greater or less degree. Hence the Bible tells us to "redeem the time." This means to buy back a part of the time we are devoting to business, pleasure, pets, flowers, family, relatives, etc., so that we may have more to use in preparing ourselves for the kingdom. When a boy, I came to class once without my lesson. The teacher asked me why I did not have my lesson, and I answered I did not have time; but the teacher could not be fooled as easily as that, and so she answered "You make time." She knew that I had been spending a lot of time in practice for a baseball game, and she

realized that if I would graduate, I must use my time in study, as this was of more importance than the ball game.

The most important thing to us is our graduation, in the School of Christ, far more important than reputation, friends, relatives, pets, etc., and so our Lord says, "You make time." And how often we try to fool Him (and ourselves) by saying, "I have no time." We are deceiving ourselves. We let our neighbors impose on us. We let our families impose on us, by taking an undue and unreasonable portion of our time. Some unbelieving husbands or wives may demand all of our time, refusing to let us attend a meeting, and threaten to leave the mate if they do attend meetings. What course should we pursue? We are reminded of two texts: "We ought to obey God rather than man," and "if the unbelieving depart, let him depart." (Acts 4:18-20; 5:29; 1 Cor. 7:15.) The self-denial involved in all this is denying self the things which are not sinful, but which hinder our carrying out our consecration. Faithfully carrying out our consecration under such tests or trials develops just such a character as God can use in the kingdom. It develops an earnest desire to "neglect not the assembling of ourselves together," to be prompt at meetings, a longing for study, a love for law, order, and observance of the rights of others, a character so firm that we will refuse to let other hinder our being faithful to the Lord. This is accomplished by suffering. We learn obedience through suffering. We learn to be gentle, loving toward all, yet positive and firm where principle is involved and always our first consideration is God's will.

In the next age the entire race will be required to consecrate, but the consecration will be to obedience. No suffering will be permitted, no sacrificing required, and the reward will be correspondingly less -- eternal life on the earth.

Let us notice in conclusion that only perfect beings can consecrate, and hence our Lord first had to justify the Church in order that it might make an acceptable sacrifice. So in the next age the world will need to be actually justified or lifted out from under the curse, before they can consecrate. This the Redeemer undertakes to do during His 1,000 year reign, then at the end of this reign Jesus turns the race over to the Father, each one perfect, and then they consecrate to do the Father's will, which is "obey and live," and then Satan is loosed, and their consecration is tested. Those who stand the tests will get eternal life on the earth, and thus by the end of the "little season," all will be consecrated, every consecrated tested. All who will not stand the test destroyed in the second death. Then it will be true that God's will shall be done on earth as it is done in Heaven. Then those who worship him, shall worship him in spirit and in truth. Never any opposing will thereafter. Nothing but love, worship and praise, ascending from glad happy hearts, forever and forever.