

## HOLINESS—HOW OBTAINED.

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How may I secure the blessing of a pure heart? Much has been spoken and written on this subject, and yet it is dark to him who has no light. It is very difficult to make clear experimental truths to him who has no experience. It is quite as difficult to explain the way of faith to a seeker of entire sanctification as to a seeker of pardon. Experimental matters, to be understood, must be experienced.

Then there is such a marked variety of Christian experience, so that which is adapted to one is not adapted to the other. Our method will be to lay down general directions, and leave the seeker with the Spirit of God in his own heart.

1. In order to make the work certain, we must have the assurance that we are justified freely. We need not dwell upon the importance of such an experience as a starting point in the pursuit of all salvation. Many have, no doubt, made a very great mistake here; and consequently, have taken for entire sanctification what was only conversion. Their rejoicing in the light has been short-lived, and their profession has done more harm than good.

2. "If you would hit the mark," says Fletcher, "you must know where it is. Some people aim at Christian perfection; but mistaking it for angelical perfection, they shoot above the mark, miss it, and peevishly give up their hopes. Others place the mark as much too low; hence it is that you hear them profess to have attained Christian perfection, where they have not so much as attained the mental serenity of a philosopher, or the candor of a good-natured, conscientious heathen." (Works, Vol. 2, p. 634.)

It is not to be supposed that we can understand all the adjuncts, antecedents and consequences of this subject before we have had an experience, yet we may possess such a knowledge of it as to be able to seek it with a firm confidence that it shall be received.

"If we must know," says Dr. Peek, "the whole way with the clearness of intuition, or of present consciousness before we will take a step, God will doubtless leave us in our present ignorance with regard to the whole matter. If I wish to visit a distant point, concerning which I know nothing excepting the report of travelers, it would be an extravagant demand for me to require perfect information with regard to all the various appearances of the way, and all the fortunes of the journey, before I would venture to set off. It would be quite enough for me to have satisfactory evidence that the desired point was accessible—that the way was feasible—and that the exercise of my natural powers of body and mind would, in due time, bring me there. With this evidence before me, would it be rational for me to sit still and speculate upon circumstances which I never can fully understand until they come under my observation?"

3. We should not aim at the experience of another. No error among the seekers of heart purity is more common than this, and few more fatal. Such an experience as you seek might be ill-suited to your temperament. He who saves, knows best what we need, and will adapt His gifts to us with infinite wisdom.

4. The work of consecration must be complete. We use the word consecration, not because it is the best word, but because it is the word in most common use, and will be more likely to be understood.

Entire consecration is giving ourselves a complete sacrifice to God. The work of entire

sanctification is frequently called "Entire consecration." But surely this does not describe the state known as heart-purity?

There is a difference between entire consecration and entire sanctification; the one is what we do by divine help; the other is what God does in us. Consecration is a devotement of ourselves to God, while heart purity is a work wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. There may be entire consecration without entire sanctification, but there cannot be the latter without the former. It is not supposed that the former can exist without the latter; but still it may exist.

This consecration of ourselves to God must be entire—including body, soul, life, reputation, talent—everything. These are to be used when, where, and as God demands, and only thus. It includes being, doing, and suffering. The soul in this state of abandonment cries,

"Here I give my all to Thee,  
Friends, and time, and earthly store;  
Soul and body Thine to be,—  
Wholly Thine—forevermore."

But just at this point some one will inquire for the difference between the consecration we made of ourselves at the time of our conversion, and the consecration that our entire sanctification calls for. This is an interesting question. The distinction, we think, will develop in four particulars.

"First. When we came to God for pardon, we brought and offered powers that were dead, and only dead, in trespasses and sins; but when we would realize the experience of entire sanctification, we consecrate powers that are permeated with the new life of regeneration. Hence, says an apostle, 'Yield yourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead,' and again, 'I beseech you, brethren, (He is addressing Christians) that ye present your bodies (i. e. your souls and bodies, a part being put for the whole, yourselves) a living sacrifice.' This is the first distinction.

Second. When we dedicated ourselves to the divine service at conversion, we seemed to mass our offering, and we said very sincerely and earnestly,—

"Here Lord, I give myself away;  
'Tis all that I can do."

But when we would consecrate ourselves unto God, with a view to this richer and deeper experience, then with the illumination received at conversion and characterizing our regenerated life, our consecration becomes more intelligent, specific and careful. It is not merely myself as before. It is now these hands, these feet, these senses, this body with all its members and powers; it is now my soul, with all its ennobling faculties, its understanding judgment, memory, imagination, conscience, will, and affections. It is now all my talents of time, influence, energy, reputation, home, kindred, friends, worldly substance,—every thing. Upon all we have and are we specifically and honestly inscribe, "Sacred to Jesus;" covenanting to use all in harmony with the Divine will. Some at this point have been careful to write upon paper the several items that were included, as well as the several obligations that were assumed, in this fuller consecration of themselves to God. This was the case with the celebrated Dr. Jonathan Edwards, of the Presbyterian Church.

Third. When we would thus specifically consecrate ourselves unto God, there is likely to rise up in the mind or before the conscience,

some peculiarly trying test of obedience. This is varied in different experiences. It may be a little thing, a very little thing, but it is not on that account any the less formidable. Eating an apple amid Paradisaical scenes would seem, from a human standpoint, to have been a very little thing; and then observe, it was a test required of one who was living before God. Adam failed in the test; a failure 'that brought death into the world, and all our woe.' So the test that infinite holiness may lay upon the regenerated may be a little thing, perhaps something connected with our appetites, or with our adornments, or with our associations, or with our services. The question may be, Will you give up that doubtful indulgence, a something in which you regard your own inclinations rather than your soul's good and God's glory, Will you lay aside the last weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you, Will you take your place with the entirely devoted and consent that those around shall say reproachfully, 'He is one of the sanctified,' Oh! it is hesitation or reluctance upon just such points that well explain very much of the feeble, halting, sickly religious experience and Christian life that characterizes too many of the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Fourth: This will appear in the object or end of the two consecrations. When we came offering ourselves to God in the first instance, it was that we might obtain pardon; now we specially yield all, including the doubtful indulgence, with a view to heart purity. Then, groaning under a sense of our guiltiness, we said, 'O wretched man that I am!' We wanted to be lifted into the relationship, and admitted to the privileges of dear children. Now we come as children, having the Spirit of adoption; not for pardon or peace—these are not our conscious need—but we come for a more perfect submission to the Divine will; a more satisfactory sense of heart purity; an increased ability to do or suffer all the will of our Father in heaven, and a deeper and a more blessed rest in Christ.

Observe, then, these four features, as belonging more especially to the consecration required of the regenerated."—Rev. Alfred Cookman.

Rev. D. W. C. Huntington, D. D., in writing on the subject of consecration, inquires:

"Have you been hindered by the devil's lions? (1) 'You cannot keep such high vows. Better promise a little and see if you can keep that.' It would be easier to make a world with God to help, than to do the simplest thing without Him. A war against all sin is the least thing a Christian can undertake. (2) 'I do not know what God may ask of me.' And you need not know; you know He is God, that is enough. (3) 'But I shall be singular.' So you will. The majority of the world is still unchristian. Such singularity as is not mechanical, nor put on to cover spiritual pride, but the result of loving and serving God in an ungodly world, we must all accept. The quicker the better."—Northern Christian Advocate.

5. Implicit, momentary trust in the merits of Christ.

All our devotement, or consecration, is as nothing, if implicit faith is wanting. Faith alone is the condition of entire sanctification, and the only condition. "Every man when he believes is sanctified," says Mr. Wesley.

What am I to believe?

1. I must believe that entire sanctification is a blessing promised in the holy scriptures, and to be enjoyed in this life.