

DEFECTIVE CONSECRATION

Sheridan Baker.

"Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" Psalms 50:13.

The late revival of holiness has called the attention of the ministry and laity of the Church to the necessity of entire devotement to God, and a great stir has taken place in late years upon the subject in all the Protestant Churches. In all religious assemblies the matter of entire consecration is freely spoken of as a Christian duty, and every pulpit in our land is calling Christian people to this religious exercise. The apostles of entire consecration have multiplied with such astonishing rapidity that no religious teacher is now found anywhere who does not insist upon this duty with great apparent earnestness. But unhappily, from some cause, the matter of entire purification to which a Scriptural consecration primarily points, is almost overlooked. The devotement urged seems to be something expended in the externalities of religion and what is called Christian work; including fairs, festivals, and other labors of the modern Church. It is not directed first to inward purity and then to work divinely assigned to each saved worker, and is, therefore, not a scriptural consecration. Either because these religious teachers know no better, or of inexcusable carelessness, entire purity is not pressed as the great and important necessity of Christian life and experience, and hence the consecration is radically defective.

There are thousands in the churches today who are never heard to pray, testify, or exercise in any way in the public worship, and who persuade themselves that the reason is that they have no talent for such service, but they have gifts for other exercises in the work of the Church. They are highly gifted in conducting socials, regulating festivals, and fathering material for bazaars, and all such secular work, and take these gifts, which may be exercised by all worldlings, as the evidence of spiritual life. A lady in the church expressed her deep gratitude that the Church, in her increasing light and aggressive movements, had discovered work in socials, fairs, and so on, which she could do for the Lord, as she never had any gift for praying, or speaking in class, or conversing with sinners about salvation of their souls. Poor woman, she was a stranger to spiritual life; and this continuous call to consecration and work had not revealed to her the great need of her soul but had driven her to more zealous efforts to make the bazaar a success.

This alarming state of things in the Church of today seem to arise out of the unscriptural notion that the great matter with God, in instituting the Church and calling us to membership in it, was to get our service and our money. Consequently a feeble emphasis is placed on closet devotion and spiritual communion, while great stress is laid on endowing colleges, building churches, and carrying on the other enterprises of Christianity. Hence, also, the scriptural method of getting money is overlooked and other methods substituted which are more likely to move the carnal man. The appeals for Christian work and giving, now made from our pulpits, rendered masterly by the justness of their ethics and the finish of their rhetoric, seem to have but little spiritual force, and fall on ears with no spiritual quickening. Nothing moves till some measure, either of speech or method, which addresses the sensual, the pride, the ambition, or other elements of fallen human nature. Thus the

hearts of God's spiritual children bleed, and their cheeks redden with shame, as they read in the city dailies, and are compelled to hear announced weekly from the pulpits, notices of these measures of replenishing the treasury of the Church. This state of things would rapidly change, if all the leaders of religious thought and action would keep filled with the Spirit, and urge a consecration which looks directly to inward cleansing, and indirectly to service and giving. Let the internal state be right, and all that is outward will soon assume a scriptural adjustment; and no substitute for this order can be acceptable and blessed of God. And because this divine order is practically ignored the sad state complained of has been superinduced.

When God's ancient people had fallen into the condition of the modern Church of this day, he rebuked them in these tender words: "Hear, O my people and I will speak; O, Israel, and I will testify against thee; I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thine house, nor he goats out of thy folds for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. . . If I were hungry. I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High; and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." These people committed the blunder of supposing God was after their property and work, and hence all that they had to do was to attend strictly to the legal sacrifices of their flocks and labor, and all would be right. But God told them that he was not after their cattle and their service, but he wanted their hearts, and had instituted them rites for the purpose of getting their affections and when their hearts were not in them they were an abomination to him. He was wearied with offerings that made them no better. He wanted their thanksgiving, their affection, their loving approaches to him in their trouble. He wanted to see them changing into his own divine image and nature, and as they had no such aim underlying their offerings he "testified against" them.

The Holy Spirit is reproving the Church of today with the same questions. "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" Do I mind your money or your service? Am I dependent on your labor or funds? "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High; and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." It is your heart I am after! and your discipline in all that is Christly has led to the institution of the Church and its ordinances.

The organization on the plan of benevolence was not to get the money of the worshippers, but to furnish them an opportunity to show and intensify their love for God and man, and to develop the self-sacrificing principles of the Christ nature. When, therefore, money is obtained to replenish the treasury of the Church in any other way than by free voluntary contributions, the great purpose of the system of benevolence is defeated. This is true when the methods adopted are on the principles of strict equity; but when they have a doubtful moral bearing the purpose is not only defeated, but the system is prostituted to ruining, instead of disciplining souls for a happy hereafter.

The appointment of the ordinances of the Church was not for the purpose of getting the

labor of the worshippers, but to help their faith to grasp the divine image, and aid them to develop the divine likeness in their spirit life. The Saviour said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be." This following and being where Christ is does not relate to place, but moral condition. Let the believer go with his Savior to the cross, and submit to the crucifixion of the self-life and enter through faith into a state of inward purity which will place him in wedded union with the adorable Bridegroom. This is the Saviour's meaning, and to this blessed state a scriptural consecration looks as the great end to be reached. The order, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service". has for its sequence, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." There is therefore, a fearful omission of truth and duty by those teachers of Christianity who urge a consecration that expends itself in the mere externalities of religion and what is called religious work, and does not aim primarily at the sanctification of the nature. Yet, from the science of many pulpits on the matter of inward holiness, this is the consecration preached, and all that is practiced by thousands of those who occupy the pews. Oh, for some trumpet tongue to awaken the ministry on this matter, and start the pulpits to start the voice of alarm.

THE MINISTRY OF SORROW

A musician ordered of a violin maker the best instrument he could make. At length the musician was sent for to come and try his instrument. As he drew the bow across the strings his face clouded and he became angry. Lifting the instrument he dashed it to pieces on the table, paid the price he had contracted to pay and left the shop. But the violin-maker gathered up the broken pieces and set to work to remake the instrument. Again the musician was sent for, and drew the bow across the strings as before. The violin was perfect. He asked the price. "Nothing," the violin-maker replied. "That is the same instrument you broke to pieces. I put it together, and out of the shattered fragments this perfect instrument was made." This is the way God does oftentimes with men's lives. They are not what they ought to be. Outwardly they may seem very beautiful, but no sweet music comes from them. They are lacking in spirituality, and the likeness of Christ does not appear in them. Then God permits them to be broken in sorrow or suffering, and with the fragments makes a new life which yields praise, honor and blessing.—*Miller.*

CHRISTIAN COURTESY

"Be courteous," says the rugged Galilean fisherman. Christianity is the tree, and character the fruit, but courtesy is the flavor. The tree may produce fruit that is sound, but unpleasant to the taste. The best fruit has a rich, delightful flavor—it tastes good.

Like courage, courtesy contains the root, word, core, or heart. Each springs from a clean heart, an honest heart. "Kind hearts are more than coronets." Courteous acts and words are not born of discourteous thoughts. "Be good, think good, do good," is the order.

Courtesy is a mark of greatness. It is said of the great French statesman, Richelieu, that he could say "No" so gracefully and winningly that applicants for office thus refused went away beaming with pleasure.—*The Gospel Banner.*