

THE  
CONSECRATED LIFE;

OR,

Thoughts on Practical Religion.

BY THE REV. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF 'THE SURE FOUNDATION,' ETC.;  
EDITOR OF 'CHRISTIAN PROGRESS,' 'LIVING WATERS,' AND  
'THE CHURCHMAN'S PENNY MAGAZINE'

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'Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.'—ROM. xiv. 8.

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**WISDOM FOR YOUNG LADIES:  
AN ADDRESS TO LADIES' SCHOOLS.**

BY THE REV. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,

*Author of 'The Sure Foundation,' and  
'The Consecrated Life.'*

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This little Book contains a *verbatim* report (with a few slight alterations) of an Address delivered at the special Service for the Young Ladies' Schools of Brighton, on Wednesday, February 11, 1880, at the Parish Church.

It has been carefully revised, and is now issued with a view to wide circulation among Young Ladies' Schools.

It is hoped that the readers of this Book will distribute it as widely as possible to young people at School.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE present volume is intended as a sequel to *The Sure Foundation*, which was published a few months ago. The latter volume deals almost exclusively with *foundation* truths, showing the completeness of the believer's standing before God in Christ; and the writer acknowledges, with much thankfulness to God, the many letters which reached him from those who found blessing from its perusal.

He now sends forth a companion volume to the former one. His present object is to show that true religion is an intensely practical thing. It is too common an idea that as long as religion just cuts at the root of outward worldliness, and puts an end to the more advanced forms of gaiety, it matters little about the practical duties of home and business life, or the subjugation of personal tempers and bad habits.

The writer endeavours to point out the mistake of such views, and to show that true religion involves nothing short of an entire Consecration of the whole being, with all the faculties and powers of mind and body.

Important as it is to have the foundation of a really religious life properly laid, as *The Sure Foundation* is intended to show, it is equally important that the building up upon this foundation should receive the most careful attention. Just as there may be very much building up in what *appears* to be religion, upon an altogether wrong foundation, so there may be, even upon the right foundation, a very deficient building up. The aim of the present volume is to unfold the blessedness and reality of the life of entire Consecration to God, as the only right building upon the Sure Foundation,—that Foundation which is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST (1 Cor. iii. 11).

ENGLEFIELD,  
BENGEQ, HERTFORD.

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Compiled by the Rev. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,

*Author of 'The Sure Foundation,' and  
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THE  
CONSECRATED LIFE.



I.

Consecration consequent on  
Conversion.

**W**E have heard much about 'Consecration,' and 'meetings for Consecration'; and it will be well to have a distinct and clear idea upon the subject. In many minds there is considerable confusion about it; but the matter is simple enough, if we view it as it is brought before us in the Scriptures.

By Consecration we mean a condition of devotion to God and dedication to Him. It is a setting oneself apart for God from every other service,—a life lived, in all its details, with reference to Him and His will concerning us.

Such is the picture given us in the Scriptures of the life of God's people. As Christ, having 'died unto sin once,' now 'liveth *unto God*,' so the believer is to reckon himself 'dead indeed unto sin, but alive *unto God* in<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. vi. 10, 11).

This is one of the many beautiful analogies between Christ and the believer which are found in the Scriptures. As His glorified resurrection life is lived 'unto God,' with reference in everything to the mind and will of God, with an entire absorption in His thoughts about all things, so is the new resurrection life of the believer to be in all its details lived out with continual reference to the will of God.

Then, this reckoning of faith is to be no mere theory, but to be practically exhibited as a reality in the life. The reign of sin is no longer to be permitted. Obedience to it in any form is to be refused (verse 12). And this is to result in a definite yielding up of ourselves 'unto God' in the outward life 'as those that are alive from the dead' (verse 13). In this '*unto God*' lies the whole secret of Consecration.

<sup>1</sup> This is the exact rendering of the original. This death and new life 'unto God' is ours only through union with Christ, and not apart from Him.



Or, again, the believer's life is described as a 'living unto the Lord,' where the reference is to Christ; and no believer is said to 'live to himself' (Rom. xiv. 7, 8). He is said both to 'live unto the Lord,' and to 'die unto the Lord.' Some understand *dying* 'unto the Lord' better than they do *living* unto Him. When they come to die, they put everything very definitely into His hands. They commit to Him very fully their souls' salvation. They give into His care their bodies to be guarded in the dust, and 'raised up again at the last day' (John vi. 39, 44). They hand over to Him all their affairs, the charge of their families, their spheres of work, their businesses,—simply everything; and they do so in simple and childlike confidence, knowing that He is more than equal to the charge. But why should we wait for death to teach us this lesson of entire confidence in Him? We should in life commit all just as definitely and confidently to His care and keeping, thus 'living unto the Lord' just as really as 'dying unto the Lord.' Every question which arises as to what should be done or left undone in practical Christian life is to be settled with regard to the fact that, whatever line of conduct the believer adopts, he does it not according to

his own individual likes or dislikes, but '*unto the Lord*.' He is to act in every matter, from the greatest to the least, so far as he is able to 'understand what the will of the Lord is' (Eph. v. 17), in accordance with it, remembering the 'account of himself to God' which 'every one of us' must eventually give (Rom. xiv. 12). He will try to anticipate as far as possible the judgment which Christ will then pass upon 'the things done in the body' (2 Cor. v. 10).

The same idea also appears when he is bidden to 'do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor. x. 31), or 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Col. iii. 17); or when the necessity is insisted upon of his living 'the rest of his time . . . to the will of God' (1 Pet. iv. 2).

And let us observe that this Consecration to God is, properly speaking, the necessary consequent of true conversion. It is quite a mistake to suppose, as some seem to do, that its proper place in Christian life is that of an after-experience, a sort of second conversion, which some attain to and some do not. That it often is so cannot be denied; but this ought not to be. The only proper life of a truly converted person is one of entire Consecration

to God. There are not two standards of Christian life, a higher and a lower. And we should be careful not to use language which might be taken to imply this. Where a full Consecration to God does not follow conversion, there has been something defective in the teaching; there is a failing to see that real conversion is a thorough turning of the heart and life to God; or else there is some lack of sincerity, which should suggest deep searchings of heart. A person who professes true conversion, and is not *as truly* consecrated to God, is a spiritual anomaly which ought not to exist.

But while we strongly insist on this, we must look at things as they *actually are*, and not only as they *ought* to be. Painful observation obliges us to admit that such people do exist. And this leads us to another most necessary thought. While Consecration should be the immediate result of true conversion, it does not come *as a mere matter of course*. Because a man is converted, it does not necessarily follow that he is in a condition of entire Consecration. This is the practical responsibility consequent upon conversion; but it may not be observed as it should be, and very often it is not.

Hence it follows that Consecration to God becomes a matter of *real and earnest personal effort*. There must be nothing taken for granted about it. The believer must see to it that, in the light of an opened understanding, and in the power of a will renewed by the Holy Spirit of God, his life really is thus lived 'unto God.'

Moreover, we must clearly understand the grounds upon which a life of Consecration to God becomes, not only a privilege, but a clear and positive duty. These are twofold.

1. We may regard it in the light of an offering prompted by thankful love. The woman 'which was a sinner,' in the consciousness of having been forgiven much, is said by our Lord to have 'loved much;' and this accounted for her loving devotion to Him (Luke vii. 47). So one source of our Consecration to Him is the thankful love of a renewed and pardoned soul. And where this consciousness of renewal and pardon is real and clear, it is difficult to understand how there can be anything else than a thorough Consecration to God. It appears as our most blessed and happy privilege.

2. But there is another aspect of the matter, which brings it before us rather in the light of a

most solemn duty. We shall do well to consider it.

Consecration to God must be regarded simply as the practical recognition in daily life of a great fact which already exists. 'Ye ARE Christ's' (1 Cor. iii. 23). 'We ARE the Lord's' (Rom. xiv. 8). This is true, whether the believer has practically recognised it or not. Believers are apt to speak as if by some act of Consecration they made themselves over to God, to be henceforth entirely and only His. But the fact is that *they are His already*, only they have not been living as if it were true. We do not become the Lord's by consecrating ourselves to Him, but we consecrate ourselves to Him because *we are already His*.

It is so important to observe this distinction, because it lies at the root of all true Consecration, and places the believer in his proper position with reference to it.

We shall now point out the bearings of this truth on some matters relating to Consecration.

We see clearly from it, in the first place, the sad condition of the unconsecrated believer,—a spiritual defrauder, one who 'robs God' (Mal. iii. 8) of what rightly belongs to Him; one who is using at his own will and for his own ends

what should always be used with reference only to the will of God, and with a view to His purposes. He is one who dares to act towards God as he would not be allowed, by common justice, to act towards his fellow-man. Believers must enter into the meaning of those words, 'Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price' (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20), and must act accordingly. The only proper conclusion is that which the Apostle at once draws: 'Therefore glorify God in your body.'<sup>1</sup>

And if this is so, which we cannot for a moment doubt, we learn another very important truth,—that a life of real Consecration to God is the only condition in which a bright assurance of salvation may be enjoyed and maintained. Let none misunderstand us here. Assurance does not rest upon any consciousness of the reality of our Consecration to God, but is the immediate result of real faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, when the matter is rightly understood, and Consecration is seen to be the proper result and the true evidence of

<sup>1</sup> The words, 'and in your spirit, which are God's,' added in our English version, are not found in the oldest and best manuscripts of the Epistle, and are generally believed to be an addition by some later writer.

conversion, we do not wonder that among professing Christians there are so many who are full of doubts and fears. The wonder would rather be if they were not. They believe certain truths ; but they hang back from the entire surrender of all to God. They are conscious of doubtful habits, if not of positive sins, actually allowed, and of course they doubt and fear. Many of the doubts would vanish at once, if people recognised in themselves more decidedly the evidences of a real conversion in a life entirely given up to God. Entire Consecration to God is the unfailing remedy for a great deal of doubting.

And, further still, we discover from this that a decided Consecration is the only condition in which real progress in Christian life is possible. The backwardness and spiritual deadness, after many years of religious profession, of which so many complain, is generally to be accounted for, when the whole truth is known. There is something held back, some controversy with God, some positive sin, or at all events some questionable habit of life retained.

And from this we gather another most important secret of the spiritual life. Backsliding is one of the saddest features of Christian ex-

perience. It is in no sense of the word a necessity in any case, but it is a terrible possibility. And we may be very sure that backsliding takes its origin in a lack of real Consecration. Backsliders do not come from the ranks of those who are truly consecrated to God. Indeed, a thorough Consecration to His service is one of the greatest safeguards against this fearful danger.

And, lastly, the fact that, as believers, we *already* belong to God, removes a difficulty of which some have spoken. They question whether their Consecration of themselves to Him is really accepted by Him or not. If they could be sure of this (they say), they would be full of joy in His service. But let us remember that Consecration to God does not open up the question at all as to whether any particular act of ours is accepted by Him. It is just the practical recognition by us of the glorious fact that, for Christ's sake and in Christ, we are His already. It is the acknowledgment by us of the truth that we have been 'accepted in the Beloved' (Eph. i. 6). And we may be absolutely assured that if we ourselves have been accepted by God in Christ, every really sincere endeavour of ours, howsoever mixed up with



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mistake and failure, to act out this great reality will meet with His approval and acceptance also. He knows how to understand our good intention, even when through human infirmity we make a mistake. And the precious blood of Christ 'cleanseth us from all sin,' while 'we walk in the light' before Him (1 John i. 7).

## II.

## The Nature of Consecration.

THE absolute necessity of a life of Consecration to God having been demonstrated, we will now consider the nature of such Consecration.

And, firstly, we remark that it must be very *definite*. We have seen that Consecration to God should be the necessary result of true conversion, but that it may be more or less wanting or defective. Therefore we insist strongly upon the need of being *definite* in the matter. We may even be deeply impressed with the necessity of a truly consecrated life, and yet we may lamentably fail for want of definiteness.

If, then, at the time of our conversion, or if this was not sufficiently marked in our experience, as is often the case, to be fixed at any particular date, then at some subsequent time, we have never solemnly entered into covenant with God to be *practically* His, let us do so

without delay. We know that actually and already we 'ARE Christ's' (1 Cor. iii. 23), whether we have recognised it or not. But let there be a *very definite recognition* of it, as a personal transaction between ourselves and Him.

Some spiritual writers have advised that a sort of solemn deed of Consecration should be written out and signed by the believer, and preserved as a standing witness of the reality of the transaction. Dr. Doddridge, in his *Rise and Progress of Religion*, gives two examples of these. And there is this advantage about it, that it gives a definiteness to the act which it otherwise might not have.

But whether this is done or not, we must see to it that our Consecration extends beyond vague talk and mere empty desires. It must become a *practical reality*. Let us once and for ever, on our part, accept *with all its consequences* the truth that we 'are Christ's.' On our knees before God let us do so; and when it is done, let us just live it out.

Moreover, let it not only be real, but *very simple*,—done in childlike faith. We should look and wait for no emotional feelings or experiences of any kind, any more than we

waited for them before believing in Christ for pardon and acceptance. We came to Him then in simple faith, trusting Him, and we became His. So now, just as really, with the same simple faith, we must recognise the truth that we *are* His.

And if, after this solemn transaction with God, we do not *feel* different to what we did before, or have not the emotional experiences which we expected to accompany such an act, we may *know* that a great difference has taken place all the same. Before, we were 'Christ's,' but we were living as if we were not. Now, we have set ourselves apart for Him, really to live as those who actually belong to Him.

But such definiteness is not all that is required to make up a real Consecration to God. It must be a *willing* transaction,—not performed, that is, as a mere matter of duty, although we must not lose sight of this very important aspect of it. It must not be just given because the circumstances of the case actually demand it of us. But it should be accompanied by a real surrender of the will to God, so as to be ready cheerfully and immediately to enter into all that He puts before us.

The real secret of Consecration lies in the will. So long as the will does not heartily go with it, there will never be settled happiness. The will ever drags heavily behind when it does not lead the way. Conflict occurs over and over again. The unconsecrated will must constantly rebel; and a sincere attempt at a true Consecration to God will be found a heavy burden.

But this involves a very definite *trust*,—not only, we mean, as regards the past, and with reference to our acceptance in Christ to be His, but also, as regards the future, with reference to the course of life which may open out before us.

It is very easy to talk lightly about Consecration; but if it is real and definite, it may, and very probably will, open out consequences which we little thought, and from which the unconsecrated will would shrink. It may mean trouble, sorrow, ridicule, reproach, opposition, persecution, loss of worldly prospects, and many things very trying to flesh and blood. Indeed, there are some who have been candid enough to ask, before entering heartily upon it, whether a full Consecration to God of this kind might not result in His requiring of them more

in this way than they are prepared to give. Our only answer is that we can trust the kindest and most loving Father to do what He will with His tenderly loved child.

Some who appear to be believers hold back from such a Consecration, because they feel that God's will concerning them may involve something different from the line of life and work which seems most attractive to them. They like to live and work, as they suppose, for Him ; but it must be in their own way, and after their own inclinations. They must choose the line of work and the methods of carrying it out. At the best, it is *their* work for Him, rather than *His* for them. And so, instead of joyfully and readily falling in with it, they timidly hesitate to enter into such a practical recognition of the fact that they 'ARE Christ's.'

But want of trust is at the root of all this. This is the secret of an unconsecrated will. We cannot trust God to do with us what He will, to place us where He has work for us, and to use us as He thinks best. We are perhaps persuading ourselves that we want to do what is right ; but we cannot rest in His arrangements, if they do not accord with ours.

Hence, in a real Consecration to God there

must of necessity be a very decided trust in Him as to the future. We must leave all consequences in His hands. We must rest with the most implicit confidence in the assurance that 'His work is perfect ; for all His ways are judgment : a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He' (Deut. xxxii. 4). We must trust Him that every one of His future dealings with us will be in infinite wisdom and boundless love. And we must, after such a Consecration, never for a moment hesitate to enter upon whatever appears to be His will.

And such a Consecration to God must be made *up to our present light*. We must be careful on this point. Few things do so much violence to the spiritual life as to act in any single matter contrary to the light which we have upon it. It hinders real communion with God, and robs the soul of all capacity for enjoying spiritual things. Our Consecration must therefore extend, in every little detail, to the *full extent* of our light and knowledge. Whatever we know to be out of harmony with God's will must, at all cost and at once, be laid aside ; and whatever appears as His will concerning us must, with equal readiness, at all cost and at once, be taken up.

But when we are conscious that this is so, we must not perplex ourselves about anything beyond. So far as our actual knowledge is concerned, we *are* fully consecrated ; and we are also in a condition of *readiness* to apply the same principle the moment fresh light reveals anything further to lay aside. We may then regard ourselves, either in actual fact or else in readiness of spirit, to be wholly consecrated to God.

And this leads to another important point. A real consecration will ever be *progressive*. New light will reveal as sinful, or at least as doubtful, many things which we before have permitted in our lives. And this may lead some earnest souls into darkness. Such discoveries may lead them to doubt the reality of their previous Consecration.<sup>1</sup> But this is only a temptation, and must be resisted as such. If our Consecration really reaches our present light, never let us be discouraged when new light shows us that what we have been allowing must be given up. Rather let us take it as an evidence that the work of grace is going on. Only let us see to it, that as new light breaks in it is immediately acted upon.

<sup>1</sup> A few further remarks on this subject are given on page 94.



Another remark becomes necessary. There are many things which appear doubtful to some Christians. They hardly know whether to give them up or not. What is to be done? Great care is needed also here; for it too often happens that some lingering relish for the thing in question lies at the root of the doubt, and causes the hesitation. We think that such doubtful things would become few if believers were really consecrated to God in the very centre of their wills, and were really in submission to His word in every matter. But when, even under these circumstances, some doubt remains, our line of duty is clear. St. Paul very distinctly says that 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin' (Rom. xiv. 23). Whatever, that is, cannot be done with a simple confidence that it is right and pleasing to God, becomes sin to the individual concerned, whatever it may be to others. It must be laid aside, along with everything known to be wrong, until further light makes our course more plain.

Then it is very important to remember that this Consecration to God, once made, must be daily and hourly sustained. And the best method of sustaining it is not so much by repeated declarations of it to God, useful and

necessary as these are, but *by seeing that it is every moment carried into practical effect.* And

- if at any time there is a consciousness of failure in it, let there be humbling of soul, confession, and renewal, but no discouragement. Let us be more watchful in those very particulars in which we fell; but never let our confidence waver for a moment either in God's willingness to forgive, or in His power to 'keep us from falling' (Jude, ver. 24), as we trust Him for it.

One possible source of difficulty remains to be noticed. Some believers may doubt the reality of their Consecration to God, because they are at times conscious of seeming to will otherwise than as God's will appears. Circumstances may occur which they must recognise to be God's will, but yet they may be aware of wishing it otherwise. We must not be perplexed at this. Our blessed Lord Himself would have shrunk from the cup of bitter sorrow, had it been consistent with the will of God. But the reality of Consecration appeared in His heartily accepting His Father's will, when He in His human will would have had it otherwise. 'Nevertheless *not what I will,*' He said, 'but what Thou wilt' (Mark xiv. 36). Of course,

this thought must be dwelt upon with great care ; for directly the will appears in rebellion, or otherwise than as heartily accepting what it might have wished otherwise, Consecration becomes so far defective. We might, for instance, without sin have wished the loved one to be spared to us, or the cherished purpose to have been carried out ; but we sin the moment we hesitate lovingly to accept our Father's will.

Some writers have spoken of their experience as that of a will so entirely in unison with the will of God, that they never have the slightest contrary wish ; and their language sometimes tends to discourage those who are sometimes conscious of wishing otherwise. But it is always dangerous to put the standard higher than it seems to have been in the case of our blessed Lord Himself. We believe that the way in which we have stated it is the truest view of the matter, and the one more likely to encourage those who are at times conscious of conflicts of the will to a joyful submission to, and hearty acquiescence in, the will of God.

## III.

**The Extent of Consecration to God.**

**A**FTER having considered the absolute necessity of Consecration to God, and having dwelt upon the nature of such Consecration, we will now enter into the extent to which it is to be carried out in the daily life.

We have seen that, properly considered, Consecration to God is simply the recognition in the details of life that we are already His. It is just living ourselves, and using all things about us, with reference only to His will, and to His purposes concerning us and them.

This statement of the matter at once makes it clear that our Consecration to God must be *entire*. Its extent must reach to every matter that concerns us. Nothing must be excluded, however small it may seem to us.

This is one of the mistakes into which many fall. They really do 'yield themselves unto God' in a great many things, and perhaps in

most, or in *very nearly* all, but just not quite in *all* things. There is some one thing only, it may be, towards which their hearts' affections go out unchecked, and they shrink from bringing it to the searching light of God. They have a sort of feeling that, if they did so in all honesty of purpose, it must be laid aside ; and so they let it pass without much examination. It may be that they try to persuade themselves that, as they really are given up to God's will in so many things, the one or two matters in which they are not can be overlooked.

But such people are never really happy. They find out, at last, that a hundred things in which God's will only is sought does not compensate for one thing in which it is not. They discover that real enjoyment of God is not so much increased by Consecration in a great many things, as it is clouded by want of Consecration in a very few. Indeed, the one thing, perhaps, in which we are not 'walking in the light of His countenance' (Ps. lxxxix. 15), does more to mar communion with God than any number of things in which we are really endeavouring so to walk goes to make us enjoy it.

Thus the necessity for an entire Consecra-

tion to Him lies in the very nature of the case. Anything which betrays a want of trust on our part, or a desire to retain or use something apart from His will, especially when we are conscious that He knows all about it, must ever prevent the enjoyment which we might have of His love and service. On our side, at all events, it produces a sort of estrangement which makes our communion at times almost a burdensome duty, instead of a blessed enjoyment.

Thus we find in the Scriptures nothing short of an *entire* Consecration to God insisted on. 'Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or *whatsoever ye do*, do ALL to the glory of God' (1 Cor. x. 31). Again, '*Whatsoever ye do* in word or deed, do ALL in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Col. iii. 17). The 'newness of life' in which the believer is to 'walk' (Rom. vi. 4), is to extend to 'ALL things,' which, in the case of those who are 'in Christ,' 'are become new' (2 Cor. v. 17). The Apostle Paul was ready to count 'ALL things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord' (Phil. iii. 8). Not one single thing would he allow to hinder his great aim, which was to '*know Him*' (ver. 10). And he exhorts

believers to 'prove (or test) ALL things,' in order to 'hold fast that which is good' (1 Thess. v. 21). But it often takes a believer a long time to find out practically that '*all*' really means not *nearly* all, nor even all *but* one or two things, but actually and absolutely ALL.

When this lesson, however, has been learned, it becomes a definite and settled habit to endeavour to view everything with regard to God's will, and, until this is clearly discerned, to keep in abeyance our own inclinations. Then there ceases to exist a great deal of that inward disturbance which many speak of as 'conflict.' Not that the flesh—the old nature left in us—ever ceases its 'lusting against' God's Holy Spirit in us (Gal. v. 17). But when the will and the affections are watchfully guarded, and not allowed to go out in any direction until 'the mind of the Lord' (Lev. xxiv. 12) has been definitely sought, patiently waited for, and clearly recognised, much of the bitterness of what is generally called 'conflict' disappears from Christian life.

This sort of conflict is very often the result of the affections having been allowed to centre themselves, without this watchfulness, upon persons, things, habits, plans, etc., from which

afterwards they have to be torn away when we really come to the test of God's will. This unconsecrated state of the affections, which allows them to be fixed upon any object before the Lord's will is consulted, is the chief cause of much of the believer's conflict. But this may be, to a very large extent, avoided by the sort of Consecration which we describe. Those whose Consecration in this most important respect is only partial, do not understand the cessation of this kind of conflict; and sometimes speak of it as an impossibility, because they know nothing of the experience referred to. But some know it as a blessed reality of which nothing can rob them.

When our Consecration to God is *entire*, founded upon the simple trust of which we have spoken already, the mind is made up, and determined, by the grace of God, that the affections shall centre upon nothing but what appears clearly and undoubtedly to be the will of God. And then this principle, once definitely arrived at, is made to extend just as definitely to the *whole* life. 'ALL things,' in the fullest sense of the words, are brought under its power.

'The glory of God' and the 'name of the



Lord Jesus' thus become the touchstone by which everything is tried. And the result of this is found to be twofold.

1. It supplies a most useful and helpful rule of life, by which it becomes easy to determine what we should do and what we should leave alone. Whatever we can do 'to the glory of God' and 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' we may do without hesitation ; and whatever cannot be done with these objects directly in view, must, at all cost, be laid aside. This simple rule would settle many questions with which believers often allow themselves to be perplexed, and upon which they are ever asking the advice of ministers and others. This is the standard by which we are to settle what we should allow, and what we should refuse.

2. Such a Consecration as this also makes a religion of daily life. It not only gives us a necessary and useful rule of life, but also supplies a noble and glorious motive for all we do. It thus brings the commonest actions of life on a level with those which we are apt to call the most sacred. It destroys all distinction between 'secular' and 'religious' employment. There is nothing 'secular' in such a life ; all is religious. There can be no higher motive than

'the glory of God' and 'the name of the Lord Jesus.' With these really and definitely in view, 'whatever our hand findeth to do,' we can 'do it with our might' (Eccles. ix. 10). We shall develop this thought more largely in another chapter. It is far too important to be dismissed merely with a passing notice, as it is one of the secrets of a really happy life, whatever be the outward surroundings.

## IV.

**Consecration in Daily Life.**


**W**E have already seen that Consecration to God is to extend to 'ALL things' in the fullest and most comprehensive sense of the words. And it is only another way of putting the same thing, when we say that nothing—absolutely not one single thing—is to be excluded from it.

At first sight it might seem that quite enough has been said upon the subject, and that, with this principle clearly before us, it would be better now left to each individual Christian for its application to the details of each one's daily life.

We know, however, from experience in dealing with souls, that it is just here that the practical difficulties of so many begin. They agree most fully with the principle laid down, that ALL should be consecrated to God. They could not think otherwise ; and indeed the one earnest

desire of their hearts is that it may be so. But the moment they attempt to turn mere theory into practical reality, they seem hedged in on all sides with difficulty.

There seems so much connected with their daily life in which it appears almost impossible to carry out the idea of entire Consecration. The constant engagements of professional or business life seem to weigh so heavily. The duties of the varied situations which they fill so constantly demand their attention. The cares of families make such a claim upon their time. Household and domestic calls of one sort or another follow each other from morning till evening. And, with younger Christians, the duties connected with school life absorb so much time. The result of this is that many earnest-minded believers are discouraged. There seems to be little or no time for what is generally called 'religion.' Attendance at weekly services, prayer-meetings, and Bible classes is almost impossible. Sometimes even to attend Christian worship once on the Lord's day is hard enough ; and often the moments devoted to private prayer and reading may be much interrupted or curtailed. And the temptation so often arises of thinking that a life of entire Consecration to



God must be the happy privilege of those only who have few such claims and duties to attend to. This gradually becomes a settled belief, and all attempts at the highest Christian experience are given up in despair, as lying beyond the reach of ordinary Christians.

The consequence of this is manifest on all sides. Christians are found everywhere complaining of a conscious want of Consecration to God in a multitude of things, and yet they see no way out of their trouble. They are dissatisfied with their experience, and are often utterly miserable; and of course their power for service and testimony is next to nothing.

Now the way out of this experience, or, what is better still, the way for young Christians not to get into it, is to have clear ideas on the colouring which Consecration to God imparts to the ordinary actions of daily life, elevating them all into the sphere of religion. The mistake which we have alluded to lies in a complete misunderstanding as to the true nature of Consecration, or perhaps we ought to say in a thorough misconception as to what religion really is.

It is too common a notion to connect with the word 'religion' only certain acts which are

supposed to be performed with more direct and special reference to God than other acts. It is thought to consist merely of prayer, Bible reading, attendance at Christian worship, receiving the Lord's Supper, teaching in the Sunday school, and such like employments. But this is a very great mistake. These actions have their place, and a very important one it is, in the religious life, and each has its use and influence as a means of grace. But they are not religion itself.

Religion, let it be remembered, is no one act or series of acts more especially performed with reference to God than others; but *it is a life* to be lived out at all times, and under all circumstances. It is the whole life, without the very least deduction, devoted or consecrated to the service of God. It is every action, without one single exception, from morning till night, and from night till morning, performed 'to the glory of God.'

This at once reveals the mistake of many who thoughtlessly complain that they have 'little or no time for religion,' and who think that they could be 'more religious' if only they had more time to devote to it. Such people do not understand that a true Christian has exactly


twenty-four hours every day, and seven whole days every week, and fifty-two complete weeks every year, for religion; provided only, of course, that the glory of God is really the motive-spring of their life and actions.

We must clearly understand that it is the motive for which it is performed that gives the real tone and colour to any action. The same two things may be done by two different people, rightly by one, but wrongly by the other,—innocently by the one, but involving sin by the other,—just from the difference in the motive prompting it. Or the very same thing may be at one time right and at another time wrong, even in the same individual, according to the motive from which it is done. And an action or a remark which may appear exceedingly doubtful in the eyes of a looker-on may not appear doubtful at all to the one who is conscious of performing it, or saying it, to ‘the glory of God.’

This glorious motive, then, brings up to the same level all the actions of the believer’s life. Indeed, it elevates the entire life, and makes it a religion. There can be no higher motive than ‘the glory of God,’ which we are to seek in ‘whatsoever we do’ (1 Cor. x. 31). And we

should distinctly see that the most simple duty of daily life, really performed 'to the glory of God,' is far more an act of 'religion' than a service or Bible class attended, a sermon preached, a Sunday-school class taught, a district visited, with any lower object whatsoever in view, such as our own glory, or interest, or pleasure, or merely to please some one who may have invited us to do so.

A difficulty may appear to some with regard to the hours devoted to sleep out of the twenty-four. Are not these at least, it may be asked, to be deducted from the time at our disposal for 'religion?' Not so, indeed. They are most blessedly included. Sleep is one of the absolutely essential conditions of our existence. It is the opportunity for mental rest and repair, which can be effected in no other way. God could have made us so as not to need it. But it has not pleased Him to do so; and sleeping is most pointedly His will concerning us. It may, in the highest sense, be done to His glory; and so it becomes itself part of our religion. The believer who consecrates his sleep to God, and sleeps because it is God's will that he should do so, is just as religious even during the hours of unconsciousness as when he is





engaged in the most active Christian work, or when attending the Lord's table.<sup>1</sup>

And what is true of sleep is just as true of every other necessity of our existence, in which we clearly follow the requirements of our nature, and live in accordance with the laws of our being.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some practical remarks arising from this view of sleep will be found on page 123.

<sup>2</sup> The writer feels bound, in this connection, to protest most heartily against the lamentable ignorance of the laws of their own existence in which most young people are brought up. The consequence is that these laws, with which God has surrounded our being, are, through mere ignorance, persistently broken; and many a weakly body, and many a constitution shattered for life, to say nothing of many an early death, has resulted from unknown violations of the laws of nature. The body which is entrusted to each of us is a marvellous creation of God, 'fearfully and wonderfully made,' and the care of it, so as to preserve it in the highest state of health, is as important a branch of the life of Consecration as any other. An intimate knowledge of the human frame and its various functions, consecrated to God and used as He seems to point the way, must be of the deepest service to the believer himself, who cannot live according to laws which he does not know. Moreover, it may also very often enable him to be a real help to others, in a variety of ways which only experience will indicate. Consecration to God is the one great safeguard for the possession and use of all such knowledge as this. Parents

Eating and drinking are specially mentioned as capable of being done 'to the glory of God' (1 Cor. x. 31); and the meal time, so viewed, is as much a part of our religion as the prayer time.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of these remarks, we see at once how the whole life becomes, in the most real and beautiful sense, a religion. It is not for us, as some seem to suppose, to bring more or less of what is called 'religion' into daily life, to give it a colouring. But it is rather our happy privilege, in *entire* Consecration to God, to bring the whole of the daily life to Him, in its every detail, that it may itself become our religion.

This view of the subject puts every condition of earthly life, from the minister of the gospel, whose time is more or less wholly devoted to what is so often called 'religious work,' to the hardest worked of this world's sons of toil, with every gradation of constant occupation in daily pursuits of every sort in between these, on a grand religious equality. Some may be appointed to a sphere of daily work more conspicuous, or

should see that their children are rightly taught; and young people whose education in this respect has been neglected should lose no time in correcting the mistake.

<sup>1</sup> See further, page 124.

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more directly tending to promote the highest interests of their fellow-creatures, than some others. But all who aim only at 'the glory of God' may know that their life-work, whatever it may happen to be, is in the highest sense for Him. And all may well be satisfied, humbly, earnestly, and trustfully to do their duty in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call them, knowing that in one way or another He is glorified thereby. And while He is glorified, they are reaching, through various channels, the one object for which they all live.

## V.

**Consecration in Family Life.**

**W**E shall now turn to apply the principles of Consecration to God, which have been already laid down, to the family life which it is the lot of most people to live. And by 'family life' we mean all our relationships to those with whom God has placed us within the limits of our home circle. *Consecration in the home* is our subject now.

There are many whose whole time seems taken up with needful attention to the duties of the families which God has given them, or of which He has made them members. And the temptation alluded to in the last chapter, to chafe because so much time is absorbed in domestic occupations, is often keenly felt.

But the great secret of a truly consecrated life is to recognise that God is just as really served by a proper fulfilment of the daily duties which He has put into our hands, when we seek

to fulfil them to His glory, in communion with Him, as when we are attending the public services, or engaged in private reading or prayer. This recollection will often set us right when we feel inclined to rebel, as the constant claims of domestic life seem to interfere with what are generally called 'religious' duties.

We must strongly express our opinion that it is one sign of an imperfect Consecration when this is lost sight of. Few things are more painful than to see those to whom God has entrusted definite and constant home duties, running out at all hours to any meeting they can get to, while the home duties are left undone, or handed over to others to be done anyhow.<sup>1</sup>

The sad results of this mistaken idea of re-

<sup>1</sup> We hope that none will misunderstand us here. Of course there is a blessing attendant on a right use of the means of grace, and no Christian will undervalue them. Indeed, we should endeavour, by our own example, to show the importance of them, by the most regular attendance, *when circumstances render it right to do so*. But it lies all here. What we are anxious to insist upon is that, when circumstances do not render it possible, we should encourage ourselves that we are just as religious at our home duties as in the house of prayer, and perhaps more so.

ligion are many and painful. Domestic jars occur with those who very reasonably complain of such neglect; children also are neglected, with all the evil consequences of this; home is not made as happy as it should be for the unconverted members of the family, to whom the very name of religion becomes, in this way, an aversion; and all real spiritual influence in the household is gone.

It cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that the religious life should recommend itself to others in the most scrupulous discharge of the varied duties connected with the home circle. But it is just here that entire Consecration to God comes in, and relieves us of a great difficulty. So long as the details of daily life are not definitely and entirely consecrated to God, these can never be distinctly regarded as work done for His glory; and there will always exist in our minds some thought about the difference between our 'secular' and 'religious' duties. This idea lies at the root of so much that is to be deplored in the conduct of many Christians. To a truly consecrated Christian there is nothing 'secular.' All is 'religious,' when all is done to 'the glory of God' and 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Col. iii. 17).

The Christian should remember that family life is a very sacred institution, and, in a very special sense, the appointment and will of God. And it is in the recognition of this that Consecration is often put to the most severe test, and either shines out, brightly testifying for God's glory, or else lamentably fails, to the dishonour of the profession of Christ.

True Consecration will lead us most thoroughly to enter into this sacred appointment of God, and to view the home circle as the first and chiefest sphere in which to labour in drawing souls to Christ.

But it is just here that so many fail to work. It is easy enough to teach in a Sunday school, or to visit a district or hospital, or even to give a public address, because the home life is not known to those amongst whom we work. But quiet, earnest pleading for Christ in the home must be followed up by a constant self-sacrifice, by continual control over hasty tempers, bitter words, and unkind acts, by patient forbearance with the faults of others, and by a loving discharge of all the countless little calls of family life. A consciousness of shortcoming in those respects causes many active workers outside their homes to do very little inside. An entire Con-

secration to God is the great power for winning souls in one's own home.

And this soul-winning will best be done, not by frowning at and scolding all about us, for the simple reason that they are unconverted and act accordingly, but rather by setting before them the bright, attractive, and self-sacrificing loveliness of the really religious life.

True Christians should endeavour, by their own brightness and love, to make home the happiest place on earth for all the others. They should enter into their amusements, so far as they are in themselves innocent; they should study their tastes and inclinations, and fall in readily with all that can be done by them 'to the glory of God.' And they must remember, again, that this motive sanctifies many an act which would otherwise be best avoided. The song sung which is not actually a 'religious' one, or the round game entered into for the refreshment of minds which have been hard worked during the day, or to 'keep the brothers at home,' when really consecrated to God and taken up just for Him, may all be part of their religious life. And as they often feel that they would rather be otherwise employed, they will find a joy, before unknown, in laying all they



do at the Master's feet, as part of the work He has given them to do. They will enter thus into one of the many aspects of real self-denial.

We are quite sure that if Christians saw clearly in this matter, and really made their home circle a scene of happiness, they would gain in some very important respects.

In the first place, they would probably win their unconverted relations much sooner and in greater numbers to Christ. Nothing has more power with those who are without real religion than to see it exhibited in a bright and cheerful outward life. The too common idea that there is no real happiness in religion much hinders especially young people from deciding for Christ. As we show the mistake of this, we shall do much towards drawing others to Him. Let us seek to attract, and not to drive, them to a religious life.

Then we should find that the other members of our families would more readily spare us for other sorts of religious work, when they see the reality of religion exhibited in loving and joyous sympathy, so far as it is possible, with themselves.

And, once more, when it becomes necessary to stand out and alone in some matter in which

we cannot join them, we shall find that they will far more readily enter into our feelings, when they know that it is not from any moroseness of disposition or assumed superiority, but only from sincere religious conviction, that we act. We are quite sure that worldly relations will bear far more good-naturedly any necessary act of opposition from a religion which otherwise attracts them, than from that which is ever repelling them by its harshness and gloom.

Let it be remembered, however, that we are only writing of the necessary unconverted and worldly associations of home life with which God has surrounded us. The case becomes very different when it amounts to *choosing* unconverted and worldly-minded people as our companions and friends. So far as we are *necessarily* thrown with them, in our daily business or otherwise, the same principles apply. But let us avoid the mistake of thinking that we are to *choose* worldly associates in order to be missionaries among them. The flesh leads us into these scenes of danger, and we mostly fall in them; but the Spirit of God leads us into the other, and then we are safe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is well to notice that our Lord was 'led up of the Spirit' into the scene of His temptation. And before

We have now come to a question about which a few words must be said. At times it will be necessary to stand out and alone. Plans may be proposed, or amusements may be suggested, in which we cannot join; and many find a difficulty here. They are afraid of losing their religious influence over others, and they endeavour to retain it by giving way.

On this subject we make the following practical suggestions:—

1. We must never do what we think to be wrong, *however good the object in view*. A good end does not sanctify bad means. If the thing itself is dangerous, and likely to arouse and develop dangerous tastes, either in ourselves or in others, never let us think that we can safely use it as a preventive of other dangers. We must refuse to 'do evil, that good may come' (Rom. iii. 8).

2. Never let us decide such questions *upon our own likes or dislikes*. A thing may be innocent enough in itself, but it may not accord with our tastes. This does not make it wrong; and we must, for the sake of others, put aside we enter into any companionships, or visit any possible scene of temptation to us, let us be sure that the Spirit of God is leading the way, and that we are following Him.

our own tastes. This is one aspect of 'self-denial.' When it comes to a question of opposing others on the ground of religion, let us be sure that *this is the ground upon which we decide*. Let them also see that this is the case. It must be only 'for the Son of man's sake' (Luke vi. 22) that others 'reproach' us. If they 'revile' us, 'persecute' us, or 'say all manner of evil' against us, charging us with harshness or inconsistency, let us see that they do so 'for *His* sake,' and also 'falsely' (or 'lying,' Matt. v. 11, *marg.*). Some Christians provoke opposition by selfishly following out their own inclinations in the name of religion; and much that is said against them by unconverted people is not 'falsely' spoken, but strictly true. This ought not to be. 'The glory of God,' and not our own inclinations, must be the touchstone of trial. Attention to this would avoid many family disputes, and save religion from much discredit among the unconverted.

3. When opposition becomes necessary, much depends upon how it is done. Some do the right thing, but spoil the effect by doing it in a wrong way. There should be none of that assumption of spiritual superiority which always

gives offence. We should evidence a respect for the opinions of others, and let it be understood that we have no wish to condemn in others, if they can do it to the glory of God, what we feel obliged to leave alone ourselves. There should be a sensible reason given for refusal, and a clear testimony that it would do violence to our conscientious convictions. Also, where it is possible, a loving readiness should be shown to substitute something else in which we could join. Where these things are attended to, while occasions for such testimony would not by any means be removed, the testimony itself would come with a power which only love can impart, and which few would refuse to recognise, however much they might naturally object to it.

## VI.

**Consecration as applied to Parents.<sup>1</sup>**

**W**E shall now endeavour to trace the principles of entire Consecration to God in its bearing upon the relationship existing between parents and their children. In few directions, perhaps, does the believer's Consecration so often break down as in this one; and, at the same time, there are few relationships of life which would be relieved of more difficulties and trials by an entire surrender to God.

It may be safely said that by far the larger share of the difficulties and anxieties of life is that which grows out of the training and placing out in life of children. It is so even with unconverted parents, whose only aim for their

<sup>1</sup> Much in this chapter will apply with equal force to those to whom the care of children has been entrusted in any way. Elder brothers and sisters have often to take quite a parent's place towards the younger ones.

children is worldly advancement. It becomes more so in the case of truly Christian parents. With these, there is, first and foremost, the great desire for their children's conversion. This presses heavily on those whose eyes have been opened to see its tremendous importance. The question is ever present as to how far outward surroundings are likely to promote or hinder it.

Now, in dealing with the case of parents, we say without hesitation that the only course for a truly converted parent is definitely and decidedly to consecrate to God the entire charge and welfare of each individual child.

Parents should bear in mind that their actual position towards their children is to be God's stewards. The children are, in the deepest sense, His, and not theirs. They are simply His agents for applying and carrying out His arrangements for both their spiritual and temporal well-being. Their position is not one of independent authority, but of grave and solemn responsibility to Him ; and therefore they should never act with a view to self-pleasing and self-assertion, but in all respects with careful regard to the mind and will of God.

Of course the *first* desire of really Christian

parents is that their children be brought to know and to love God, and to be His children in Christ Jesus equally with themselves. Everything else is not only secondary to this, but should be entered upon or let alone just according to its possible bearing on this one thing.

But it is just here that so many fail. It seems such a settled principle with most professing Christian parents, that their first duty towards their children is to place them in the best worldly positions they can, to leave them as rich as possible, and to make for them the most influential friendships and the highest matrimonial connections in their power. When this can be done with a little show of religion at the same time, they are very pleased, and talk very much about it. But when this is out of the question, they act on the principle, if they do not actually express it, that they *must* get them on in life. And too often the question of spiritual interest is not only put in the second place, but left out altogether.

And yet such parents complain that their children, as they grow up, are not converted. The wonder would be if they were. They send petitions for them to prayer-meetings, and talk



of pleading God's promises, when they have neglected the very first principle which He has given them for their guidance in such matters. 'The kingdom of God and His righteousness' has not been really sought '*first*' by the parents, and no wonder if it is not sought at all by the children.

There is no doubt whatever that many children are held back by these inconsistencies of 'religious' parents. Young people are quick to observe; and nothing so quickly strikes them as anything not consistent with a profession made. But young people are also quick to imitate and fall in with what they see around them, and so they not unfrequently adopt the 'religion' of their parents, which seems to suit very well indeed their prospects of worldly advancement. But it is only 'a form of godliness,' without 'the power thereof;' and so, when they are old enough to think much for themselves, they very often cast off all religious restraints.

And then worldly people point at 'religious' parents whose children have 'turned out badly,' and put down to the religion what is really due to the *want* of it. It is almost a by-word how often the children of 'religious' parents turn

out worse than those who are brought up with no definite religion before them. There may be much truth in the charge, but, like everything else, there is a reason for it.

We offer the following suggestions to parents who would desire to enter upon an entire Consecration to God with regard to their children :—

1. Let each individual child be a subject of *definite, distinct, and unreserved* Consecration to God. Do not take it for granted that this is so. Let there be no doubt about it. If it has not been done, do it at once. And remember, that the child is not made over by you to God by this act of Consecration. All you do in the matter is solemnly and definitely to recognise the fact that the child *is His already*, and to commence acting accordingly.

2. Then remember that the child, being His, is a very special object of His care, as much, nay, 'much more' so (Matt. vi. 30), than 'the fowls of the air,' or 'the lilies of the field ;' and that He is pledged to provide for them all 'that ye have need of' (verses 26, 28, 32, 33).

3. Next, bear in mind that, as His agent or instrument in the matter, you must seek to provide for them in no way which you would not consider thoroughly worthy of Him. You must

use no means which would not meet with His approval. This is where the faith is often sorely tried. Good prospects may lie in dangerous directions, or involve a sacrifice of principle, and it is hard to give them up. But this is where true Consecration, and that real faith which underlies it, make themselves manifest.

4. Where a choice of schools for them is possible, make religious training the thing sought before all human 'accomplishments.' Many parents have ruined their children by sending them to worldly schools, because the education has been 'good,' or the terms a little lower. Principals of schools can bear testimony to the sad fact that, whereas parents are full of questions relating to diet and accomplishments, very few ever breathe a word about the real spiritual welfare of their children, on placing them at boarding schools.

5. Avoid teaching them anything which *must* foster dangerous tastes. Parents who insist on teaching children to dance, and encourage dancing even in the home circle, must not complain if they exhibit in after life a fondness for the various forms of folly and sin inseparably connected with the ball-room. The same remark will apply with equal force to cards,

private theatricals, habits of drinking, excessive dress, and many other things, which, to say the very least, are in the highest degree dangerous to their spiritual interests.

6. With regard to religion, do not be afraid of giving them too much of it. What does real harm is *too little*. But take care that what you give them is *real*. Children love reality; and the greatest possible moral injury is done to them if this natural love of reality is made to lose its force in the matter of religion. And remember what real religion is. It is the entire life, in all its varied details, lived out in the enjoyment, through simple faith in Christ Jesus, of a real, present, eternal, and assured relationship to God, more real and deep than their relationship to their earthly parents, and of which this latter is only an emblem and shadow. Show them the bright side of religion,—that it adds enjoyment to all the innocent pleasures of life, that it takes away nothing that is really worth keeping, and that it is in itself the source of intense happiness, opening out new avenues of enjoyment before unknown.


7. Never regard the conversion of quite young children as in the least degree improbable. Teach them the faith and fear of God, and the

plan of salvation very simply. They will readily take it in. And then, until they give evidence to the contrary, it is better to *treat them as if they were converted*. Encourage them in every possible way. Only remember that they are children still. Do not expect too much from them. Never doubt their conversion, because they do not exhibit mature thought or ripe Christian experience. Many of what seem to us great faults arise from want of reflection. You know not how soon the work may begin in their hearts, nor the day when what may at first be mere profession becomes real.

8. Then it is most important that Christian parents should not neglect the care of their children for outside work. It is a very common temptation to overlook the sphere of work at home. Ministers' wives especially are liable to it, but also all Christian workers. This is one reason why the children of religious parents often turn out so badly. Let the children see that you regard them as your special work, and that they are cared for before strangers. Devotion to one's children is not only a most solemn and positive duty, but it always tells upon them sooner or later for good in a variety of ways, even when conversion does not follow.

9. Be reasonable with them. That is to say, give them a clear reason for all you do, especially in the matter of worldly companionships and amusements. Bring them up, from the very earliest, to understand that the world and its people are at 'enmity with God' (James iv. 4). Show them in the Scriptures the sharp and strong contrast between God's children and the world, as John i. 10-13, vii. 7, xv. 18, 19, xvii. 9, 14-16; 2 Cor. vi. 14, vii. 1; Gal. i. 4, vi. 14; 1 John ii. 15-17, iv. 4-6, v. 4, 18. Let them understand that all this means something very real. It will explain to them why you cannot permit what you are obliged to refuse.

10. We are strongly convinced that it is the duty of Christian parents to set their faces entirely against what they believe to be wrong. Never permit it, on any persuasion. Some consider that it is better to give way, for fear of creating a dislike for religion. But it is never right to do or to permit what is wrong for any object, however good it may seem. The natural heart will always dislike real religion; and it is a mistake to bring down the standard in the hope of drawing unconverted hearts. The result must be failure. Many, after conversion,



have thanked God for the decision of their parents, although at the time they rebelled against it. At the same time, while refusing what you think to be wrong, be sure to provide every possible pleasure which you believe to be harmless.

11. Keep them as well supplied as possible with books to read ; but be most careful in selecting what you provide. The young mind receives indelible impressions from reading. Avoid all literature that might create an appetite for sin, or that makes light of it ; all that gives false views of life, and of which the scene is entirely in the world ; all in which religion is slighted or ignored. While you do not force religion upon them in all they read, see that all is of a sound, healthy tone. It would be well, as early as possible, to foster a taste for history, biography, and travel, rather than for fiction of any sort.

12. Make the Bible an interesting book to them. It should never be a *lesson*-book. Bible study should not be made a task, but rather a privilege. Encourage them to hunt out subjects and words, and to learn passages by heart. But always teach them that it is a book, not only to be read, but most implicitly to be obeyed.

We conclude with two more remarks which are necessary here. We have been writing rather with reference to Christian parents who are bringing up young children. But in the case of parents converted late in life, great difficulties often arise with their children. They have themselves trained them for the world, and they often have to suffer for it. But we should apply to their case exactly the same suggestions with regard to the attractiveness of religion, its reality, and the refusal of what is believed to be wrong; and then, in faith and prayer, there is nothing but to wait on the Lord for the desired result.

Again, our remarks have been directed rather to cases in which both parents are agreed in 'seeking first the kingdom of God' for their children. Where one only is converted, the difficulty is increased. But we believe that if the suggestions we have given were carried out by only one of the parents, and only so far as the circumstances will admit, it would be attended with the happiest results.



CONSEC

## WORKS

BY THE REV.

J. A. Alexander, D.D.

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In speaking to children, we commence by reminding them that their relationship to their parents is of a specially solemn character. It has its foundation not in any selection of their own, as, for instance, in the case of husband and wife, or master and servant, but in the direct sovereign will of God. This fact is of course equally true in regard to other more distant relationships of life; but it has very special weight in the one which we are considering, because those who are so related are of necessity thrown continually together, and their mutual obligations are being constantly called into action.

This thought (which must, however, be equally considered by parents in dealing with their children) will convince the children that such an appointment of God Himself must, in a more than ordinary sense, and in all the details of the position, be His will concerning them. No questions can arise, as do often arise in other relationships of life, as to whether some other course of action might not have resulted in a connection more in accordance with the will of God. In accordance with what will be helped by our remarks in the last chapter to their parents, we trust that we may now suggest some thoughts which may be useful to parents also.



with God's will. The children may be *absolutely sure* that, so far as any will of their own is concerned, they have presented no hindrance to the purposes of God in reference to the place which they should occupy in life. This will be an encouragement to many who may have difficulties to contend with.

The first thing, then, for the converted child to do is definitely, unreservedly, and with the most absolute assurance of God's gracious acceptance of the act, to consecrate himself to the position which is so manifestly the divine will.

Then, of course, follows the living out, in the practical details of life, the position thus confidently recognised and lovingly received as direct from the hand of God. In doing so, it must be borne in mind that a relationship so certainly appointed by God, and so definitely accepted from Him, must in every little detail be conducted with reference to His expressed directions. This is to be understood when the apostle instructs children to obey their parents '*in the Lord*' (Eph. vi. 1).

And we may without hesitation affirm that, as to the parent is committed (under God) the responsibility of direction and training, so to

the child is committed the necessity of obedience. The parent is to lead; the child is to follow.

This being so, the path of the child is clear enough in every matter which is not recognised as involving actual sin. Where the parent expresses no command, the child is of course perfectly free to act as the Lord appears, by other indications, to lead him. But where a positive command is expressed, and no sin is involved, there *is* the Lord's leading for the time being, and the child must not look for it in any other direction.

This view of the child's position will enable him to see that the obedience which he renders to his parents is rendered really to God. This, which is true also in the less intimate relationships of life (Eph. vi. 7; Col. iii. 23), is in a very special sense true in this one, which, as we have seen, is so directly and specially the appointment of God. And Christian children would more cheerfully give up their own feelings and will on any subject, did they look above the human means, and accept the position, although through the means, yet as direct from God Himself.

It often happens that children, who will accept

cheerfully anything contrary to what they hoped for, if they recognised it as God's will for them, yet chafe and fret if a similar hindrance comes from their parents. It is so, we suppose, because the children either feel that the wisdom of their parents (unlike God's wisdom) may mistake in choosing what is best for them, or that their love may be defective, or else they hope that they may obtain from the parents a reversal of the decision, which they cannot obtain from God. But the real difficulty lies in a defective Consecration, which has not definitely accepted the position from God, and therefore does not recognise His will in the details of it.

Nor must the child consider that the parents' having little or no care about religion alters the case at all. This is a common temptation. We think that this fact (if it exists) makes the duty of the child to yield, wherever it can be done, even more clear than ever; for the heart of the parent is far more likely to be touched and won to Christ by self-sacrificing obedience than any unnecessary resistance. The same rule, then, must hold good when the parents are not professedly religious, as when they are. Every command, not involving positive sin, should be obeyed exactly the same.

And to make this position quite clear, we would explain that by 'involving positive sin,' we mean disobeying any direct commandment of God. No child could obey when commanded to steal, for instance, or to do any act of dishonesty or unkindness which he believes that God's revealed will clearly condemns. In this case, painful as the position may be, it becomes the duty of the child to refuse.

But children must be quite sure that their hesitation to yield springs simply and solely from a consciousness that yielding would be sin. It must not be merely a question of likes or dislikes. A child may naturally dislike a thing which involves no sin, and from this dislike may hesitate to obey. This is clearly wrong. To obey becomes a duty; and the self-sacrifice which it entails is one aspect of Christian self-denial.

And in settling the question as to whether any matter involves sin, we must be careful not to judge others by our own conclusions. If others see differently, let them clearly understand that we only judge the matter for ourselves, and not for them.

And especially should children be careful not to conclude that their parents are not con-

verted, just because they take a different view of many questions than themselves. They generally know far better than the children what is best for them to do or to leave undone. And it is often very painful to hear children speak lightly of the spiritual backwardness of their parents, because they see things in a different light. And even where it is evident that parents are wanting in spiritual views, the children should speak of them and to them with the greatest reverence.

But when it seems clear that to obey would be sin, then the difficulties of the position may often be removed, or at all events considerably lessened, by the way in which the child explains himself to the parent. It is sometimes done in a haughty, provoking spirit, which only makes the matter worse. This is un-Christlike, and wrong. But when the child, with tender, loving earnestness, points out that (whatever view others may have of the subject in question) he would regard it as sinful to yield, and respectfully asks to be released from the obligation, for the Lord's sake, we think that few parents (even unconverted) would push the matter to an extreme, and make direct opposition become necessary.

We believe that the remedy for most of the difficulties connected with religion lies in *being real*. Where a child really exhibits the personal happiness and the loving self-sacrifice of true religion, and, as a consequence, shows always a readiness to meet the wishes of others, whenever it can be innocently done, he will meet with respect and consideration from all. They will then see that it is really religious conviction, and not a selfish exclusiveness, which leads him sometimes to stand alone. Most parents will so value and rejoice in such a child as the gospel, really received, will produce, that they will not hesitate themselves to yield when he lovingly explains that his conscience has any real difficulty in rendering obedience.

The sources from which such differences between parents and children as we are speaking of arise are, of course, very many; but we can only here speak of two from which they very largely proceed. We mean where they concern conformity to the world, or else work for the Lord. A word about each of these may be useful.

With regard to worldly conformity in matters of company, dress, or amusement, it is a matter upon which there will always be some difference



of opinion even among earnest Christians. And before venturing to oppose the wishes of the parent, the child must be clear that the thing required does really amount to complicity with sin. Where this is not clear, the child should yield to the parent against all his own natural inclinations, believing that by doing so he is following the will of God. But he must not forget to testify for the Lord, as occasion offers, under the circumstances in which he is placed. He will often find an opening to speak, and a blessing on the word, when he least expected it.

Then as to direct work for the Lord. The consecrated child often feels deeply a parent's prohibition from engaging in some cherished scheme of work. But so long as the prohibition is continued, unnecessary and even unreasonable as it may sometimes appear, we believe it to be the child's duty to yield. God's command to obey the parent is clear and decisive; while there is no such command to occupy any special sphere of work, which may, after all, be only of our own fancy. And we may rest assured that He will make the way clear for work which He really means us to do.

Moreover, we may regard it as certain that

there are always some methods of work open to every one who seeks them ; and very often the real sphere of work before the child is to testify in the home circle to the reality of religion, by a life of quiet self-devotion to the various members of the family, rather than by work outside.

And with regard to injunctions from parents which appear trying, we recommend the children, after once respectfully stating their difficulty, not to worry constantly for a reversal of the order. It is better to deal with God about it, making it a definite subject of faith and prayer. The Lord is able to remove the objections, and will do so if it pleases Him ; and it is one of the first principles of Consecration to exercise and act upon this simple trust in His wisdom and power.

We feel that we have not anything like exhausted our subject, it admits of such varied treatment in the little details which it opens up. But we trust that the remarks which we have made may suggest the right course of action on the part of children, in the various circumstances of family life.

## VIII.

**Consecration in Business Life.**

**T**HIS is a subject of vast importance to the Christian who is engaged in any business or profession, and who wishes really to do all things 'to the glory of God.' The constant calls of business make themselves felt in the life of thousands ; but we desire to point out how we may maintain our communion with God through our very busiest hours.

One of the greatest mistakes of some earnest-minded people, is that they must give up at once their business or profession, and take entirely to gospel preaching. Now it may be the duty of some to do so, when the path is marked out very clearly for it. But it would be a sad calamity if all really religious men were to forsake their earthly callings. We want converted and consecrated men in our trades and professions, just as much as in our pulpits. We want to show the worldly man

that business life can be conducted in a manner 'worthy of God' (1 Thess. ii. 12). We must see that *living* the gospel in daily life is one of the most effectual methods of preaching it; and that there are various ways of making known the glad tidings of salvation in any business or profession without becoming a minister of religion.

Of course, the first thing to be sure about is *that our business is one which can be conducted to His glory*. Some businesses cannot, although professing Christian men so far blind themselves as to conduct them. These must, at all costs, be laid aside. No considerations of profit or advantage of any sort must allow us to engage in any earthly occupation of which we could not feel that we were conducting it for the Lord Himself, as His stewards or agents.

But, granting that the business is one which can properly supply the rightful needs of the nature which God has given us, or meet the various necessary conditions with which He has surrounded our existence, then it can, in the strictest sense, be conducted to His glory. It is rather *His* business, conducted by us *for Him*. Whatever be our particular share in the

business,—whether as principals, or even as subordinates down to the lowest capacity,—we are His stewards. He must in a very solemn sense be taken into partnership with us, and, moreover, as the senior or consulting partner, as to every detail of the business.

Or, if we are engaged in the various necessary professional callings of this life, or in imparting instruction to the young, or in the various processes of lawful manufacture, or in the pursuits of domestic or other service, it is exactly the same thing. In these also we are His stewards, and must act accordingly.

Then the next thing to be sure about is that we conduct such a business or follow such a calling in a manner worthy, not of the business or calling (which may be the highest motive of the worldly man), but, far higher than this, *of God Himself* (Col. i. 10 ; 1 Thess. ii. 12 ; and see Eph. iv. 1).

This involves some most important points, which must be carefully borne in mind.

1. There must be no methods resorted to which cannot bear the strictest investigation 'in the light of God's countenance' (Ps. lxxxix. 15). There must be a coming 'to the light,' that our 'deeds may be made manifest that they are

wrought in God' (John iii. 21). The 'etiquette' of the profession, the 'customs' of the business, the 'habits' of the trade, what the world calls 'usual under the circumstances,' must be no rule for us. Cost what it may, we must stand alone. Lose what we may, we must, like our Master, 'testify of the world' that 'the works thereof are evil' (John vii. 7). Nor must we be surprised if the world 'hate' us for it.

2. Then our profession or business must be *conducted thoroughly well*. A religious life does not mean carelessness in our calling. It is a common mistake of many to suppose what are called earthly matters to be comparatively so unimportant that they be done anyhow, or left undone altogether. When we view our calling in the light of religion, and bring the principles of Consecration to bear upon it, we see how any wilful neglect of it becomes sinful. A Christian professional man should be the most reliable of any. The Christian man's business should be the best conducted in the neighbourhood. The service which the Christian renders to his employer in any lawful occupation should be of the very best kind.

We should carefully see to these things, for two most important reasons.

In the first place, the duties of all lawful callings are really rendered to the Lord. This is plainly declared in Eph. vi. 5-9, and Col. iii. 22, iv. 1. Christians who are in any condition of service, in the hire of another, are exhorted to do their service 'in singleness of heart,' 'not with eye service, as menpleasers,' and 'with good will,' because all they do is 'as unto Christ,' 'as the servants of Christ,' 'as to the Lord, and *not to men*,' and is described as 'doing the will of God,' which should be done 'from the heart.' So, also, Christian employers of labour, in any form, are reminded that they should 'do the same things unto them,' and that their 'Master also is in heaven.' These passages should be carefully studied.

Then, also, the service rendered by the Christian should be of the very best kind, because by it is tested by others, and also manifested to them, the reality of a Christian profession. The world expects this of Christians, and quite rightly so. But when it is not found to be the case, discredit falls, first on religion, and then on Christ Himself. The interests of His kingdom are bound up with these things more than many imagine. And only as Christians really recommend their

religion and their Saviour by what they *are* in their various walks in life, and by their willingness to suffer loss rather than do a doubtful thing, will the world pay any serious attention to the gospel of Christ. And let us all remember that worldly people are ever ready to notice our inconsistencies in daily life, and to use them as an argument to blind their own consciences against the truths of religion.

3. Again, we must see that the duties of our calling do not keep us, without such an absolute necessity as could seldom arise, from that assistance to the religious life which is obtained from the various 'means of grace,' as they are called. The view which an entire Consecration to God enables us to take of the duties of our daily callings, as being in themselves religion, is an unspeakable comfort to those who are much hindered by them from frequenting the means of grace as much as they would like. But where there is true spiritual life, there will be no desire to neglect these means, without necessity, even for the religion of daily life. The same spirit of inward harmony with God which prompts an entire Consecration to Him, will desire also, on all possible opportunities, to gather spiritual strength in the public and



private means of grace. We should be very jealous of business claims, over which we have any control, which prevent the daily reading of the word of God and private prayer, as well as attendance at the week-day meetings for prayer and preaching. Such arrangements should be altered, even if some loss should seem at once to result. And our trust in God will bear us over the trial.

4. This view of the daily calling will enable us also to see how we can, throughout the busiest days, hold uninterrupted communion with God. Not that He is every moment absolutely in our thoughts. But we are doing *His work for Him*; and the deeply-seated consciousness of this in the heart will shed a calmness and rest upon the spirit, which will be constantly recognised by us as the atmosphere of God's presence.

5. Lastly, none need be anxious about the success of a business or an earthly calling so consecrated to God and so conducted. If God's glory be the first object sought, success, in the highest sense, may be confidently expected. There may not be a fortune made quickly, or perhaps at all. But God's promise to those who 'seek first the kingdom of God, and His

righteousness,' is that the necessities of life shall be 'added' (Matt. vi. 33). He may give wealth, or He may withhold it; but either way the truly consecrated Christian 'knows both how to be abased, and knows how to abound' (Phil. iv. 12); and 'godliness with contentment' is to him the 'great gain' (1 Tim. vi. 6) which places him above all lower considerations. Nor need any really consecrated Christian fear about giving satisfaction to his employers. A worldly man can appreciate a thoroughly good assistant or servant. He may think him 'odd' and 'crotchety;' but he will value his services nevertheless, and trust him where he cannot trust others. And even where a loss of our situation becomes, to a truly consecrated Christian, an absolute necessity, a simple-hearted trust in God will meet the trial with a childlike confidence that 'the Lord will provide.'

But it need hardly be said that such a true Consecration would suggest to each that his special position in business should be made the sphere of special effort for winning souls for Christ. Every profession or business offers a *variety of openings*, often peculiar to itself, of *working among special classes of people.* A

word can be spoken, a gospel book can be given, or the opportunity of attending the means of grace can be afforded, often to those not otherwise cared for ; and a multitude of other methods will suggest themselves to the really consecrated heart.

Whatever be our actual position in business, whether as principals or whether as subordinates, those whom we employ, or with whom we are employed, will be regarded not as so many '*hands*,' but as *souls* to be won for Christ. And the Christian whose business life is truly consecrated to God will seek, not by fussily obtruding religion at every moment, but by quietly using each opportunity as it arises, to make that business the platform upon which to work for God.

## IX.

## Consecration of the Thoughts.

WHEN we come to speak of the thoughts, we reach a most important part of the subject of real Consecration to God. It is a thing which is overlooked by so many, and yet it lies at the very root of the matter.

There are many very earnest Christians who heartily enter into the necessity and privilege of entire Consecration to God. They recognise (and often very practically) that all they *do* may be, must be, and *is* done definitely for God. Some, but by no means so many, go farther than this, and realize that real Consecration to God may, and indeed must, include also all that is *said*. But very few see the blessed privilege of going farther still, and 'bringing into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ' (2 Cor. x. 5).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We are aware that this is not, perhaps, the primary meaning of the apostle in this passage. He appears to

And yet it is the thoughts of the heart which need more than anything else to be kept in thorough Consecration to God. These are the springs of all our words and actions; and we may be very sure that if these were carefully watched, a great deal of sorrow and anxiety might be saved.

In the first place, our Lord shows us the importance of right thoughts, by teaching that the thought of evil, indulged in the heart, has, in His sight, the guilt of the sin actually committed (Matt. v. 22, 28; and see 1 John iii. 15). This, of course, is a principle which remains the same, whatever is the particular nature of the thought. And believers are too apt to forget it, and to imagine that there is no sin so long as the actual thing has not been done, or the wrong word has not been spoken. If the *desire* to do the one, or to say the other, has been for a moment indulged, there is guilt which needs confession to God, and cleansing in the precious blood.

be speaking of the power of the gospel which he preached over all opposing thoughts of men. But in their deeper sense, as describing the result of the gospel received into the believer's heart, they certainly express the complete subjection of every imagination of the heart and mind to Christ.

Again, we observe how our Lord places 'evil thoughts' at the head of the list of those things which, by nature, 'come forth from the heart,' and 'defile the man' (Matt. xv. 18-20). And we must ever remember that the believer, although 'born again' (1 Pet. i. 23), and 'created in Christ Jesus' (Eph. ii. 10) 'a new creature' (2 Cor. v. 17), has still the 'old man,' 'the flesh,' which he is to regard as having been 'crucified with' Christ (Rom. vi. 6), and which, 'with its affections and lusts,' he is daily to crucify (Gal. v. 24). 'Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit,' is a prayer which we need to offer continually, as those who require, not once for all only, but continually, the exhortation, 'Be renewed in the spirit of your mind' (Eph. iv. 23).

And again, we must remember that just because the thoughts are the springs of all our words and actions, we should check a great deal of evil speaking and wrong action by attention to them. The evil would be detected on its very first approach, and cast aside.

We should get into the habit of watching our trains of thought. How often we spend precious time in mere useless indulgence of the imagina-

tion, even about matters comparatively innocent. But our unguarded thoughts too often lead us into further mischief than the waste of time.

We let ourselves get into the habit of certain kinds of thoughts. And the mind, owing to this habit, falls into them as readily as possible; and the results of this, in various directions, are sad indeed.

Perhaps in no way does this act so painfully as in the habit of indulging doubts, which are only one of the many forms of evil thoughts. A truly consecrated mind would shrink with horror from the slightest thought of doubt about God's faithfulness and truth. But the habit of doubting thoughts is allowed to grow upon the mind, and the result is a loss of all peace.

Then, with regard to what is called 'anxiety of mind' in reference to our earthly plans and prospects, a great deal of what we suffer about these is purely imaginary. Much of what people spend hours in dread of, never takes place; and they afterwards see that they might have spared themselves many anxious days, and often many sleepless nights, if they had not let their thoughts roam into the future, and dwell upon things which *may* come, about

which they knew nothing. Simple trust in God is satisfied to deal with each moment as it presents itself, and to act, as far as it knows, for the best, about each circumstance as it arises. But directly the thoughts run out into the future, and anxieties about supposed difficulties are indulged, all peace of mind is gone, and we are deprived of the necessary courage to act for the present moment.

And even in the case of future events which are certain to happen, the really consecrated mind will not dwell on the realization of them more than is necessary for making any right and necessary provision to meet them. Beyond this it would be wrong to anticipate even what *must* take place. Never must we borrow a trial from the future, as we cannot borrow *with* it the grace to bear it. This comes *with* the trial. But many suffer much from attempting to bear the trial in advance, without the strength to bear it which ever comes with the trial itself.

Or again : We have received some injury or slight ; some one has vexed us. And we seldom see any harm in brooding over what has happened. We mentally go through what we should like to say or write to the offending one. And by thus realizing, as far as possible, the



injury, and by so impressing it upon our minds, we find ourselves in a condition of unkindliness; and we feel, of course, in consequence, that our spiritual condition is lower than it was. Whereas we should have avoided the evil had our thoughts been under proper control.

But for this, like everything else connected with Consecration to God, we need to be definite. The thoughts must be definitely consecrated to Him. Henceforth we must *think for Him*, as much as we act for Him or speak for Him. We must see that our thoughts are 'worthy of God,' as much as every other detail of our walking (1 Thess. ii. 12). We must judge our thoughts continually, as much as we judge our words and acts; and the moment we find ourselves indulging any wrong thoughts, either about God or man, let us view them in their proper light as sins, just as much as we so regard wrong actions and evil speaking. Let us confess them to God, and find the promised cleansing 'from all sin' in the blood of Jesus Christ. And, once more restored to unclouded communion with God, let us walk all the more watchfully in this most important respect.

This habit of watching the thoughts would become continually more constant. Good

habits grow upon the mind as well as bad ones. Only we need to set to work with a definite purpose of heart. And we must not be discouraged by occasional failures. It is a lesson, like all other spiritual lessons, which we must learn ; and the learning may be gradual. But let us see that it is our aim at every moment of the day.

## X

Consecration in Personal  
Habits.

IT is to be feared that there are few Christians who have not, perhaps unknown or unsuspected by themselves, some practical limit in their Consecration. It should not be so, of course; and nothing should be so earnestly guarded against as any such limit to that entire surrender which it is the privilege of every Christian to make to God.

We are speaking now, it must be remembered, of *unknown or unsuspected* limits. No *conscious* shortcoming must be allowed for a moment, or it will quickly rob us of real enjoyment of spiritual things.

And we shall probably find that, as we go on in the religious life, we shall be made increasingly conscious of habits permitted by us which increasing light reveals to us as at all events doubtful.

Sometimes it happens that earnest Christians are much perplexed on this very point. They desire to make the most full and complete Consecration to God; and up to the measure of their present light they do so. But when, after a time, something appears to them among their permitted habits as wrong, they are tempted to doubt the reality of their former Consecration as not having been complete, because not including the habit which now they can practise no longer. Such discoveries from time to time distress them, and lead them to wonder whether, at the present moment, they are as fully consecrated as they ought to be; in other words, whether there may not still be more things allowed by them, and which will yet be seen as at all events inexpedient, if not actually wrong.

Discouragement on this score must not be allowed for a moment. It is one of the snares of more advanced Christian life. Our condition here is continually spoken of in God's word as one of growth and progress in every sort of spiritual attainment; and as increasing light reveals unsuspected evils, it is for us to be thankful that they have been discovered, and to rejoice that more light has been given us.

Such discoveries, of course, may well humble us, and cause us always to walk softly; but, while every newly revealed evil is laid aside as soon as it is known, we must be careful not to fall into any bondage of spirit about evil not yet revealed.


We make these remarks at the present time, because it is in the little personal habits that these discoveries mostly occur. The greater matters which have been under special consideration, such as business and family life, and the mutual relationships of parents and children, are often made the subjects of definite Consecration long before the Christian sees, or at all events practically recognises, the need of ordering every little detail of life according to the same principles. Many things seem too small to be thought of in connection with God; others appear at first sight to have a very remote indeed, if any, connection with what is generally understood by 'religion,' and so to be more or less free from its influence.

But when the true view of religion is understood,—that it is the whole life, in all its details, lived out in reference to the will of God,—then what seem the lesser personal habits assume

an importance which they had not before. Then it appears that no action, however small, in the life of a child of God, in the performance of which he may or may not act in a manner worthy of his heavenly Father, is unimportant.

Moreover, it is just in these personal habits that there is need of such constant watchfulness, and this for several very important reasons.

Firstly, there is *the influence which our personal habits have upon our own spiritual life*. It cannot be too clearly insisted upon that the sort of Christians we are is very much determined by these apparently lesser matters. It may seem surprising that such very little things should exercise such an influence over us for good or evil; but so it is. And probably we are to understand that the greatness or insignificance of the thing itself is not so much the point. The real question is the state of the heart which either allows or recoils from what is known, or is suspected, to be contrary to God's will. The things themselves are only the opportunities or occasions for the heart to exhibit its real condition. And every such exhibition tells upon the spiritual life, and prepares



the way, and makes it easier, for further exhibition in the same direction. And as our personal habits, however small, are thus a sort of index of the state of our hearts, and at the same time have their bearing upon our spiritual condition for good or evil, it is most important that we should watch them very narrowly.

Then, again, there is *the influence of our personal habits upon others*. The importance of attention to this cannot be overstated; and just for the reason already mentioned, that these things are the truest indications of the reality of our profession. As others watch us, to see whether we really *are* what we *profess* to be, they very naturally watch our daily personal habits. From these they principally judge of the reality and power of the religion of Christ. At all events, these habits are the occasions for the most frequent exhibition to others of the fact that we are 'new creatures;' and as such they claim our special attention.

Once more, in the lesser personal habits, the reality of our Consecration is put to the most severe and constant test. In them, not only are our natural tastes and personal inclinations most of all brought under control, but the con-

trol is constant in its application, and often required to be quite suddenly called into exercise; and unless it is of a very decided character, it will most often give way in these particulars.

And then, again, for this very reason, that it so easily breaks down here, it mostly happens that declension in Consecration begins almost unperceived in the lesser personal habits. And as we get accustomed to the declension in the lesser matters, we gradually allow it to extend also to those which seem to us of greater importance. For this reason we regard these personal habits of daily life as being to a very large extent the battlefield of a life of entire Consecration to God. Here the will has to be kept in the constant attitude of surrender; and here has to be learned that absolutely necessary habit of referring to the will of God all the details of life, without which the greater conquests will not be won.

Hence we regard it as most essential, that at the outset of the religious life the daily personal habits should be made the subject of the most definite and unreserved Consecration, and that, as we proceed in this life, they should be very jealously watched.



And if it be asked what we mean by the daily personal habits, the mention of a few will suggest to each reader the advantage of making a list for himself, with special regard to his own peculiar circumstances. Among these personal habits we include companionships, amusements, diligence and punctuality in everything, early or late rising in the morning, methods of spending time, the style of books we read and lend, our ways of spending money, our habits of dress, our general manner and deportment in conversation, our conduct under worry and provocation, kindly judgments on others, and a multitude of similar things which will occur to all who are accustomed carefully to watch the current of their daily lives, and who realize the importance of consecrating everything to the Lord, and of exhibiting in all things the sanctifying influence of true religion.

## XI.

**Consecrated Marriage.**

**T**HERE is no relationship in which the difficulties connected with an entire Consecration to God become more intricate and delicate, than between married persons. And yet it often happens that they are more deliberately self-chosen than those of any other position in life.

We mean, of course, that there should be no union in marriage at all between one who is really converted to God and one who is not. This is not insisted upon as it should be in public and private teaching; and the result is that many young Christians enter upon unsuitable marriages, either without any idea that it is wrong, or at best with a very slight view of the grave mistake they are making. And it is sad to observe how often professing Christian parents not only sanction such marriages for their children, when they are actually proposed, when

'worldly prospects' are in the question, but even urge, and sometimes force, their children into worldly society, with a view to their 'marrying well' as the result of it.

We think that no work on Consecration would be complete without some plain teaching on this point which may be helpful to young Christians, as so much of the happiness of life is bound up in such a question.

To arrive at right views on the subject, it is important to have a very clear view of the reality of conversion to God and the spiritual results which follow it.

Real conversion is no matter of profession, however loud and high. It is a thorough turning, in full purpose of heart, to God for salvation and eternal life in Christ Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit's working in each heart; and there follows on it, as the direct and necessary result, through His indwelling in the believer, a spiritual and most real union with Christ, of which the marriage union is an outward symbol and figure (see Eph. v. 22-33). And this being so, all that we know, from our outward senses, of the latter, only pictures to us the intense reality of the former.

The believer is distinctly said to be 'married

unto' the risen Lord (Rom. vii. 4); and this is no mere figure of speech. The reality of this union is pressed over and over again under other equally plain images, such as the oneness of the head with the members of the body (Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. x. 17, xii. 12-27; Eph. i. 22, 23, iv. 4, 12, 15, 16, v. 23-30; Col. i. 18, 24, ii. 19); of the temple with its foundation (Eph. ii. 19-22; see also 1 Peter ii. 4, 5); and of the vine with its branches (John xv. 1-8). 'Joined unto the Lord,' the believer is 'one spirit' with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17).

This union is the only true explanation of the expressions, 'in Christ,' 'in Him,' 'in whom,' which are so frequently used in the New Testament to describe the believer's relationship to Christ as the most intense and real oneness.

Hence, in dealing with the subject of the re-marriage of Christian widows, who had married heathen husbands before their own conversion, St. Paul most clearly points out the sphere from which only another husband might be obtained. 'To whom she will,' is at once limited by, 'only in the Lord' (1 Cor. vii. 39). And it seems hardly open to doubt that he directly alluded to the same thing in the in-

junction, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers;' and in the teaching which follows in 2 Cor. vi. 14-18. So that marriage 'in the Lord' is all that is allowed to a believer. And St. Peter clearly shows that in Christian marriage 'heirs together of the grace of life' is the right and proper ideal (1 Pet. iii. 7).

The only real aspect of marriage for the Christian is that of the union thereby of two who are already united to the Lord Jesus; so that this union can strictly take place *in Him*.

But marriage, whether in Christ or out of Christ, results in a union after the flesh between the persons married, so that they are said to be 'one flesh' (Matt. xix. 5, 6). When, therefore, the spiritual view of Christian marriage is lost sight of, there is the sad but very real anomaly of an outward union after the flesh of one who is 'in Christ' with one who is out of Christ. In this case the deepest conception of Christian marriage is wanting, since the spiritual union in Christ can have no existence at all. There is the 'one flesh' relationship between the two, but not that of the 'one spirit,' because both parties are not 'joined unto the Lord,' in whom alone such a union can exist.

Moreover, besides this radical defect in such

a marriage from its only true Christian aspect, there results a union after the flesh between a saved one and a lost one. This must rob the Christian, who is really alive to the position, of all true happiness in married life ; and the more so the more deeply the affections are engaged. No amount of hope that conversion may eventually take place, can remove, from a heart that can feel it at all, the present sorrow that the partner of one's life is at the time being unsaved. And then, if conversion never takes place, death establishes an eternal separation between the two ; while in the case of true Christian marriage the separation is but for a while. This is a point of the greatest importance.

And, in addition to this, there must always be a want of real harmony between the husband and wife, when one is converted and the other not. They view almost everything in a different light. Endless questions arise, which are not so prominent in the period of mere attachment and in the earlier days of married life. Questions relating to the training of children, to company, to amusements, to dress,—in fact, almost to everything,—must come to the front ; and, at the best, they can only be settled in a

spirit of compromise between the two. To the Christian there must always be a feeling of a want unsupplied. Thorough oneness of feeling and action is of course impossible; and the result must always be a greater or less lack of confidence, where all ought to be confidence and trust.

Yet, in spite of all this, it is remarkable to see how all these principles are lost sight of, often very gradually, by young Christians, who would in the case of others urge all that we have said, yet who have in view matrimonial alliances prompted by their natural and unrestrained fancies. And it is more distressing still to see older Christians, who ought to know better, and who sometimes have had actual experience of an 'unequal' marriage, still deliberately advising the younger to follow out the leadings of natural inclination.

Moreover, it is very sad to notice the steps by which young people, who once 'ran well,' are led into these 'unequal' alliances, when once they have allowed their affections to become engaged. Love is said proverbially to be 'blind,' but in nothing so blind as in the perception of spiritual realities.

The first delusion, so long as these spiritual

realities are still recognised, is to persuade oneself that one's mission in life is to marry the unconverted one, in order to bring about conversion. 1 Peter iii. 1 is freely quoted, quite regardless of verse 7. The idea of 'winning' the unconverted wife or husband is strongly urged. But it is overlooked that this is the direction to wives who, before their own conversion, had married heathen husbands, and who, after conversion, should endeavour to win them to Christ. It is applicable, of course, when one of two who were both married in an unconverted state is really converted. Such an one may hopefully expect that God, in answer to prayer, and through the power of a holy life, will bring the other to the knowledge of Himself. But it is quite another matter, and to our mind a presumption with no scriptural warrant, that God will bring to conversion any unconverted one we may choose to marry.

Another delusion is to endeavour to construe circumstances into God's 'leading' one to take such a step. Nothing is more easy than to twist almost any circumstance into a 'leading,' if one really wants to do so. But we may be sure that 'leadings' which are really from God



do not indicate a course of action not warranted by His word.

Moreover, experience of such cases generally shows that, instead of the unconverted one being converted, the Christian has been gradually drawn down by all the surroundings, if not into actual carelessness and backsliding, at all events to a lower spiritual level;<sup>1</sup> and has had, sometimes, after seeing the mistake when too late, to bear a lifelong burden of sorrow, with nothing but the interchange of mere human affection to lighten its weight.

But gradually, when there is a temptation to marry, either for worldly prospects or just to provide a future home, or when, with no such object in view, the affections have become engaged, a peculiar blindness comes over the mind, and spiritual realities begin to fade away. The Christian becomes persuaded that the unconverted one is 'better than I am;' and, as far

<sup>1</sup> It is most remarkable that, when the Israelites were forbidden to form matrimonial alliances with the nations who did not worship the true God, the caution is so plainly given that it would result in the hearts of God's people being drawn aside from Him (Deut. vii. 3, 4); and so it happened, when they insisted on trying the experiment (Judg. iii. 5, 6).

as *natural* character goes, this may be very true. But that is not the point.

Next, an endeavour is often made to show that the unconverted one may after all be converted. And to do this, the standard of conversion has to be lowered to include the case in point. The separation between those *in* Christ and those *out of* Christ is watered down and lost sight of; it ceases to be real. *Any* profession of religion is taken for a true one. And at last the Christian goes so far as to ignore totally any difference between the converted and the unconverted, and marries, on perfectly equal terms, one whose standing in Christ is, to say the most of it, a very doubtful thing, and in many cases has obviously no existence at all.

What wonder, then, after such a toning down of all spiritual realities, if the Christian is ready to fall into those cold, careless, backsliding ways, against which the principal safeguard is to preserve a clear and vivid view of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus? The safeguard is broken down; and, in the generality of cases, the descent to a lower standard of Christian life is marked and continued. In such cases it often requires a crushing sorrow to bring the wanderer back; and even when this is accom-

plished, there too often remains the life-long trial of a divided household.<sup>1</sup>

To conclude this subject, we would make the following practical remarks to young Christians:—

1. Regard yourselves as united in the closest union with the Lord Jesus ; and remember that He is the first and chiefest object of your renewed affections. Let these be consecrated very definitely to Him, whose alone they are.

2. Bear in mind that you have no right, as you should have no desire, to share those affections, which have been consecrated to Christ, with one whose love has not been fixed on Him.

3. Never let your affections go out unchecked towards any one, until you have ascertained that it is to one who is 'in Christ' in the true sense. You will save yourself many a bitter conflict, which *must* take place when the affections have at last to be torn from one upon whom they ought never to have been fixed.

<sup>1</sup> Let it be remarked that we are not saying that the conversion of the unconverted one *never* takes place. Sometimes it does. But it is a risk which no Christian has a right to run, apart from the fact that such a marriage falls short of the true ideal of the Christian ordinance, as we have shown above.

4. Never regard any one, however naturally attractive, as worthy of your *consecrated* affections, whose own affections have not been first as really consecrated to Christ.

5. Never think that consecrated affections can meet their rightful *human* objects in scenes of mere worldly gaiety and excitement. Never seek them there; and strongly suspect all who find their pleasure there.

6. Beware of those who, while not really converted themselves, profess 'not to mind,' or even to prefer a 'religious' husband or wife. Many, and especially young Christian girls, are over-persuaded by this. They think it 'a good sign.' But it mostly means that the 'religion' after marriage must keep itself within certain bounds, and a life of entire Consecration becomes hedged on all sides with difficulties.

7. Remember that, while Christian marriage has its special blessings and joys, it has also its peculiar responsibilities and cares. Do not hastily seek it. Let the Lord bring it before you, in His own time, and in the way which you can recognise as from Him, if it is to be at all. And meanwhile, recollect that your affections have already a *human* Object, 'whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now

ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory' (1 Pet. i. 8). Be true-hearted to Him, and He will give you all that He knows to be best.

8. And, lastly, bear in mind that marriage is not the great aim for which to live. The life-work of a Christian is to advance the glory of God ; and there are many ways in which this can be done, in a more entire devotion to direct work for Him, by those who are free from the responsibilities and cares of married life. The teaching of St. Paul in 1 Cor. vii. 32-35, though doubtless intended to refer more especially to the then 'present necessity' (ver. 26, *marg.*), has its application also for all times, and should be carefully considered in connection with the subject of this chapter.

## XII.

**Consecration and Health.**

WE are now entering upon another subject, which, like the last, is not often dealt with in works on Consecration. But, when rightly understood, it is scarcely second to any which have been considered in the present volume.

Our relationship, as Christians, to the body which God has given us, should receive our most thoughtful attention for several very important reasons, which we shall now urge. Many of these reasons may be gathered from a careful consideration of 1 Cor. vi. 13-20, to which we invite our readers to turn.

At the outset of the passage, we have the Consecration of the body distinctly required. We are clearly told that not only is the body for no sinful use, but that it is actually '*for the Lord.*' And this solemn truth is still further

enforced by the words added, that the Lord is also '*for the body*' (ver. 13).

Next, it appears that the bodies of Christians are, by no mere figure of speech, but actually, 'the members of Christ,'—limbs of that spiritual but very real body of which He is the head (ver. 15. See also 1 Cor. xii. 12-27; Eph. i. 22, 23, iv. 15, 16, v. 30; Col. i. 18, ii. 19).

Then we find that the Christian's body is distinctly spoken of as the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost (ver. 19). This indwelling of the Spirit of God in the believer is one of the most clearly and frequently expressed facts in the New Testament. And this can only be a reality by His actually inhabiting our human bodies, just as really as our own human spirit inhabits them. The body is called by the apostle 'the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God.'

And following upon this is the no less solemn result of what has been said. 'Ye are not your own,' the apostle adds (ver. 19); and further enforces this by the additional reason, 'for ye are bought with a price' (ver. 20), referring, of course, to the redemption by the precious blood of Christ. And let it be noticed most carefully, that this 'not your own' is said with immediate

and special reference here to *the body*. This is the subject of discussion. So that we are to conclude that our bodies, in a very real sense, belong to God ; not only, of course, by right of creation, but also by right of redemption through the blood of Christ, and of actual possession by the Holy Ghost. It is only in a secondary sense that our bodies are our own at all. Most solemnly, and by many undeniable titles, they are God's property. They are only entrusted by Him to our care and keeping. They are a stewardship, for which we are most deeply responsible to Him, and for which, like all other stewardships, 'every one of us shall give account of himself to God' (Rom. xiv. 12).

And the apostle's practical conclusion is no less emphatic, that the body is to be regarded as an instrument by which to 'glorify God.' 'Therefore, glorify God in your body.'<sup>1</sup>

And again, turning to Rom. xii. 1, we read that the bodies of believers are to be 'presented' 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,' as their 'reasonable service.' And from Rom. vi. 13 it appears that not only are we to 'yield,' in a general sense, ourselves 'unto God,' but this yielding is, in a very definite

<sup>1</sup> See p. 16 (*footnote*).



way, to extend, severally and individually, to the 'members' of the body, which are to become 'instruments of righteousness unto God' (Rom. vi. 13).

Of course there are many very practical considerations which spring from all this about the believer's body. It must, with all its members, be used for God. Every member should be definitely and unreservedly consecrated to Him, and used only for the purpose for which He has given it, and for nothing which is not believed to be to His glory in one way or another.

But our present object is to point out, and practically to enforce, that aspect of entire Consecration to God which embraces the preservation of the body, as far as in us lies, in a condition of health and strength. If it so specially belongs to God, and is a member of Christ's body, and 'the temple of the Holy Ghost,' as well as the instrument in which to glorify God, and the sacrifice to be continually presented to Him, we should see that it suffers no violence at our hands, and is kept for Him and His service as strong and well as we possibly can keep it.

And over and above the considerations already urged for the preservation of the bodily

health as a part of Consecration to God, we suggest also the following for reflection :—

The body is a marvellous creation of God, 'fearfully and wonderfully made' (Ps. cxxxix. 14). The careful study of its various parts and offices should be undertaken by us, that we may be able to echo the Psalmist's words, 'Marvellous are Thy works.' Not only, however, for this, but also because, as we understand more of the wonderful adaptation of every part, and the intimate connection between all the parts, we shall increasingly see the necessity of properly using so exquisite and delicate an organization.

We shall find that much ill health and many an early death may be avoided by a due regard to the laws by which the body should be governed. We shall find, too, that many earnest Christians, some unknowingly, and some even knowingly, have cut short their life of usefulness with their own hand, either to settle down into the permanent invalid, or else to be removed altogether, when the life-work had been hardly more than begun. And often we hear people talk of the 'strange dispensation,' when some young worker has been cut off, when the science even of common sense is able to show

that, with proper care for the health, it might have been otherwise.

It is one thing to 'have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ' (Phil. i. 23), when His time comes to take us to Himself; but we have no right to hasten the time a single day by disregard of the laws of health. We have no more right to neglect the laws of health in such a complicated organization as the body, and so to shorten life, than we have to destroy our life by the more speedy process of the suicide. But so few take this decided view of the responsibility of life; and fewer still care to express it in plain language.

There is no doubt that very much in the way of sickness, with all its attendant evils of daily duties and Christian work having to be laid aside, is put down thoughtlessly to 'the will of God,' although it can only be so in the sense that it is His will that, when the laws of our being are outraged and broken, suffering must follow. God has surrounded our existence with laws and conditions of life and health; and when we neglect these, we not only sin against Him, but we must expect the penalty of our neglect in some form of bodily suffering.

We are not saying that every kind of suffering

may be prevented. It is not so. Some are born with delicate constitutions, which must sooner or later bring suffering; but this is mostly owing to neglect of the laws of health by a previous generation, and it should teach us, for our future children's sake, to take care of our own health. But even the naturally delicate constitution may be improved, and weak health in great measure restored, by attention to these matters.

We will now consider this subject in its bearing on Christian work, pointing out two important features of Consecration to God in connection with health.

1. It will influence the *kind of work* we do. The same Consecration which leads us cheerfully to take up work which we believe to be intended for us, however much we should naturally shrink from it, should lead us with equal cheerfulness to leave alone even much desired work for which we are manifestly not suited. And the question of *physical strength* should be taken into careful calculation, as an indication of God's will. We understand this when the idea is entertained of undertaking work abroad in some doubtful climate, which the constitution might not stand. We even take medical advice, and act accordingly. But it is just as necessary

to adapt work to physical strength and constitution at home. Some who can do good work of a quiet sort in speaking a word here and there, and in writing books, tracts, or letters for Christ, or in distributing tracts and books, cannot stand the 'knocking about' of visiting districts and taking meetings, especially when the air is bad and the hours late. Those with weak throats and delicate chests should avoid work which involves much talking, and especially open-air work and exposure to weather. But an imperfect Consecration often leads them to long after and take up what God has so manifestly forbidden them; and the result is, sooner or later, physical exhaustion and disease.

2. Again, as to the *quantity* of our work. True Consecration will also reveal the necessity of confining even suitable work within the limits of our strength. It is such a temptation to go on from one thing to another. The work seems to us so necessary, and we push on with restless anxiety to do 'all we can.' We imagine that *we* only can do it, or that if we do it not, it will never be done. But simple trust in God will trust Him with His own work, and will banish that selfish idea that nothing will be done if we do not do it. He can raise up workers for what

He requires to be accomplished ; and we may take it as quite certain that He does not expect from us what He has not given us strength to perform. In all work the line must be drawn of course *somewhere*, for everywhere around each worker there is far more than any *one* can do ; and that Consecration to God which includes the bodily health, will draw this line within the limits of physical strength. It is so sad to see useful workers laid entirely aside, because they have not known where to stop their exertions.

Of course it will be understood that we are writing thus for those who really are earnest *workers*, and not for those easy-going Christians whose lack of real Consecration results in little or no effort to win souls to Christ.

But the connection between Consecration and health opens up far more considerations than merely the regulation of work to physical strength. It reveals also the necessity of careful attendance to the natural requirements of the bodily health. St. Paul speaks of the man 'loving and cherishing his own flesh,' not only with approbation, but he uses the figure to symbolize Christ's care for the Church (Eph. v. 29) ; and he says that men should love their wives '*as their own bodies.*' He also condemns the

false teachers at Colosse, who thought, as some Christians still seem to think, that there is any sanctity in 'neglecting (or not sparing, *marg.*) the body' (Col. ii. 23).

There are 'things which are needful to the body' (Jas. ii. 16). It has its requirements; and it is just as much the concern of real religion to attend to them, as to attend to what more specially *seems* to concern our spiritual being. We say '*seems* to concern,' because there is a closer connection than many think between body and spirit. The spirit of man, in its mysterious habitation in the body, uses the body organs and faculties as the means of its own consciousness and expression; and when these are in a depressed condition, the spirit shares in the depression. And as the spirit of man is our point of contact with the Spirit of God, and so becomes the medium of our possession and enjoyment of spiritual realities, a depressed spirit results in fainter spiritual perception of divine things. Hence also arises a most important reason for the preservation of bodily health.

We shall now suggest some practical methods which true Consecration should always attend to in matters 'needful to the body.'

REST.—In all work of every sort, whether bodily or mental, professional or domestic, there must be seasons of rest, not only during the hours of sleep, but during the period of wakefulness. Neither mind nor body can healthfully work without regular cessation. Our Lord so considerably pressed it upon His disciples, while much work was before them at the very moment (Mark vi. 31). He ‘remembered that they were dust’ (Ps. ciii. 14), when they were tempted to forget it. Sanctified rest is as much a part of religion as sanctified toil. It is the greatest mistake to suppose that an hour of absolute rest is an hour wasted, even though nothing whatever seems to have been done to show for it. In such a rest, one has *not done nothing*. The rest itself has accomplished a great work both for mind and body, in repairing both for future exertion. To a sanctified judgment, the hours of rest are not thrown away; but, rightly viewed, they give energy for better work while we *do* work, and they lengthen the period of the natural life. People who ‘have no time for rest,’ will sooner or later be obliged to take it, during a period of sickness, or else will end by dragging out a weary and languid existence, doing badly all they do,



until exhausted nature hurries them to the grave.

**SLEEP.**—Very much of what has been said about rest, applies equally to sleep. Strictly speaking, sleep is the only real opportunity for *mental* rest, and for the repair of the daily loss of brain power. During wakefulness the body may be at rest, but the rest of the *mind* can only be comparative. Its actual repair can be scarcely any at all. But sleep does for the mind what nothing else can do, and it is a sin to neglect it. Many Christians, however, do so. They sit up late at night, and often only to exhaust themselves further by conversation, writing, or work of some sort; and so they lose the precious hours of mental repair. They often try to make it up by late hours in the morning, but with little success. The half-wakeful dozing of the morning hours is no substitute for the refreshing sleep of night. Some authorities say that it does more harm than good. And late hours in the morning result in the loss of the best hours for healthy working, and generally throw out the whole day, not only for ourselves, but for others also.

But, on the other hand, too much sleep is a mistake to be guarded against. As a general

rule, we should take about eight hours, and prefer to begin at an early hour of the night, so as to rise in good time in the morning.

**MEALS.**—Referring again to Mark vi. 31, we notice that our Lord invited His disciples to ‘rest awhile,’ because ‘they had no leisure so much as to eat.’ He knew the importance of the meal to their exhausted frames. But it is very common to see Christians who pay little attention to food. They seem to think it almost unworthy of spiritual people. They forget, however, the place of food in the bodily system. The engine-driver might as well neglect his supply of coal.

Our food supplies the new blood from which is repaired the momentary waste of the various tissues of the body, and it is of the utmost importance to the health that these should be well repaired. The food, too, supplies the force and heat so essential to bodily life; and it is a grave mistake to imagine that it matters little what or how we eat. Not only should we take a sufficient quantity of food, but we should take our meals at regular times, and eat them slowly, if we would preserve our health; and if we can accompany them with cheerful conversation, so much the better. After meals,

a time of quiet recreation should be taken, if possible.

Nothing is so common as to see Christians neglecting their meals, taking them at any odd times, and hurrying through them to get over more work of one sort or another, as if time spent at meals was little better than wasted. But we believe that the meal-time is to a Christian as religiously sacred as the prayer-time, and that each in its proper place should receive its proper attention.

**DRESS.**—Dress has more to do with health than many imagine. It is not only for a covering, but, in a climate like ours, is to keep up the heat of the body by protecting it from the inroads of external cold. Clothing should be adapted to the time of year, but should always be sufficient to keep the body comfortably warm. Few things are so injurious to the health as the tight dressing so fashionable among ladies. It compresses important organs of the body, and lays the foundation of disease for future years. And special care should be taken to avoid *damp* clothes. Few things are more dangerous. It is troublesome at times to change our clothes after a shower of rain, or our boots after a wet walk; but it is not lost

time. Many a week of useful work, to say nothing of many a valuable life, has been sacrificed through neglect of precautions like these, which a consecrated heart will regard as absolutely necessary.

This volume is not intended as a 'Manual of Health,' and we do not therefore follow out the subject any further. But as so many useful little books are published, describing the wonders of the human body, and the laws of diet and health, none need be in ignorance on these important matters. Our object has been to point out the bearing of Consecration on the whole subject, and to suggest its further study, with a view to living out in this respect, as in every other, the consecrated life.

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\* See page 128.

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