

How Is Entire Sanctification Received?

by Charles Ewing Brown

The sermon explores the relationship between consecration and faith in receiving entire sanctification, emphasizing the importance of a definitive commitment to God.

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Consecration And Faith"

Description

Charles Ewing Brown preaches about the importance of entire sanctification through consecration and faith, emphasizing the need for a clear and definite commitment to God. He discusses the distinction between faith alone and the combination of consecration and faith, highlighting the necessity of perfect consecration as an integral part of faith for entire sanctification. Brown addresses the challenges and misunderstandings surrounding the concept of consecration for sanctification, urging believers to separate these elements for a deeper understanding. He emphasizes the need for believers to continually reaffirm their consecration to God, viewing consecration not as a loss but as a wise investment for unmeasured gain in the Christian life.

Transcript

For two hundred years Wesleyan theologians have taught with almost monotonous unanimity that entire sanctification is received through consecration and faith. This is the true and correct formula, by which millions of people have swept into the glory of an experience that made life stronger, more victorious, and more joyful than they had ever before imagined possible. Nevertheless, use has worn these words to a point where for many they no longer embody clear-cut and definite ideas. My purpose here is not to deny or to change these great principles, but to expound them in order to reveal their true meaning.

ARE THERE TWO CONDITIONS?

First of all we must ask, Are there two conditions or just one condition? Is the true formula consecration and faith, or faith and consecration? Or, in conformity with the Protestant theory of justification, should we merely say faith alone? Wesley was hostile to any limitation of the conditions of justification or sanctification to faith alone. He regarded such a formula as conducive to antinomianism (moral anarchy). He thought it tended to make people neglect their duty and imagine that their thinking would save them. It must be admitted that this is a real difficulty; nevertheless, I would hold with Luther, even against Wesley, that faith alone is the sole condition of salvation and of entire sanctification. This expression makes sense and agrees completely with the language of Paul. This fact endears the expression to us even though it should be liable to misunderstanding and abuse.

As has been previously pointed out, [46] faith for salvation includes repentance as one of its component elements, without which it cannot be saving faith. And this is the way we must interpret faith for entire sanctification. Such faith must include perfect consecration as an integral part of its nature, and this seems reasonable and right. There can be no consecration without faith; there can be no vital faith without consecration in this area of the Christian life. Anybody who has been through high school should understand that such colors as green and red are component elements of the nature of white light. Wherever there is white light, there is green light and red light among the other colors of the spectrum. Likewise, there must be consecration and faith combined together in the heart that seeks the glory of entire sanctification

Nevertheless, for clearness of thought it is necessary for us to separate these two elements in order to give each its proper treatment. And perhaps here it is better to follow the time-honored formula -- consecration and faith. Our prism of doctrine separates the rays for further study.

CONSECRATION FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

At this point, the earnest student of the subject finds himself confronted with many baffling difficulties. First of all, the Modern English New Testaments nearly always translate the Greek word *hagiazō*, or sanctify (make holy), by the English word "consecrate." Young people, finding the word shuffled before their eyes in the manner of a slight-of-hand performer, are baffled utterly; for in common church usage the word "consecrate" is taken to mean what a person does for himself and "sanctify" refers to what God does for a person. There is no question that these translations have misled millions of people into thinking that the New Testament teaches sanctification to be a process of endless repetition of a never-completed consecration of the Christian believer.

If it were the intention of the translators to concoct a doctrine of sanctification that, after all, is the old, traditional Catholic doctrine, then they have taken very effective means of doing so. In this case they are guilty of wresting the Word of God, because a large portion of these texts refer to what God does for a person and are not susceptible of such an interpretation. In this connection we must remember that the Greek word has never been changed; and that word, commonly translated "sanctify" in the Authorized Version, is the Greek word *hagiazō*, which means "to make holy."

No scholarship can change this fundamental fact, as it is not the business of scholars to change facts but to discover them and explain their relations. However, "consecrate" can be used as practically a synonym of "sanctify." They are both derived from Latin words and may be understood to mean the same thing. To think of them in this way is the simplest way to read the New Testament in modern English. Nevertheless, in this connection, I shall use the word consecrate as signifying the dedication which a person makes of himself to God and the term sanctify to indicate that work which God, by his Spirit, performs in the soul.

HOW SHALL THE HOLY BE SANCTIFIED?

The next difficulty which meets the casual reader is that in numerous instances throughout the New Testament even justified Christians are called holy. The church is composed of all Christians, and the church is holy. How can we consecrate to God that which is already his and how can that be sanctified which is already holy? These points have already been discussed briefly elsewhere. The old Wesleyan theologians taught that sanctification begins in conversion. The second crisis experience is the reception of entire sanctification. I have shown also that in our common thought we make a distinction between the private possessions of a man -- such as his watch and shoes -- and his general possessions, such as the

grass that grows on his lawn. This is a valid distinction because it is rooted in our common experiences of life. One cannot deny that all Christians do belong to God and that all Christians are holy in a sense, but I have tried to show that all Christians are holy partly in a ceremonial or objective sense, not entirely in the experience of moral purity. Moreover, our common experiences indicate that sinners who come to God have no call to consecration and no conception of it as a general rule. They come surrendering as persons seeking mercy and not as friends offering service.

Here we must return to the greatest paradox in religion. Augustine said, "I would not have sought thee, had I not found thee." In other words, no man would ever seek for God unless there were some revelation of the divine beauty to lure his soul onward in its zealous quest. Elsewhere reference has been made to sanctification as an act of man giving his assent and conforming his will to that holiness of God which he cannot increase or diminish but which he might insult by ignoring. The Christian believer undertakes the work of entire consecration because he would confirm by the deep consent of his own will that ownership of God which is already implicit in his acceptance as a Christian.

Similar experiences of human life are too numerous to mention. Millions of men have found themselves actually in conditions more or less similar to, or even contrary to, what they had expected. Then by an act of the will they have mentally adjusted themselves to the new condition which was already a fact. People move into a new home in a faraway country. They came there through their own will, but as they settle down they find conditions they never anticipated. Sometimes they perform an act of will by which they gradually and slowly adjust themselves to the new surroundings and live there afterwards in peace. Many married people mentally adjust themselves to marriages months and sometimes years after the objective adjustment has been made. These are legitimate figures of the adjustment of consecration which the justified believer makes to an objective experience entered into at the time when he was saved and this consecration is of that which already belongs to God objectively.

This use of the words "sanctify" and "consecrate" is not tortured out of a theological state of mind but is drawn from the Word of God: "Sanctify unto me all the first born . . . it is mine" (Exod. 13:2). One can easily see that in the strictest sense it is impossible to give anything to God; for our lives, and all the earth, and nature belong to him. Consecration of the Christian is accomplished by a deep, heartfelt recognition of the fact that he belongs to God and by rights ought to belong to God; it is a heart adjustment of his will to that way of life. Nonetheless, it is the solemn duty of the justified believer to make this solemn dedication and consecration of himself to God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

Against this monumental New Testament text (Rom. 12:1) pointing definitely to a crisis experience in the life of a Christian there has been directed for generations the constantly weakening effect of the Catholic tradition. That tradition tends to melt the definite into the indefinite, the certain into the uncertain. It makes the one positive, irrevocable dedication melt into a million pious prayers of consecration to be repeated over and over again. Against the sharp, clear-cut, definite experience of the death of an animal stricken at the altar in an act never to be repeated, this tradition brings a fallacious theory of "dying daily." What the Apostle meant by "dying daily" was not that he died to sin daily, but that he daily faced the danger of physical death, in the actual realization of his once-for-all consecration to Christ on the altar. This dissolving, repetitious theory of consecration is one of the most dangerous features of our present-day religious life, because after it has destroyed and cut away like acid the clear-cut doctrine of sanctification as a definite once-for-all consecration to God, it will continue to destroy the definite experience of

conversion and the witness of the Spirit to salvation. It covers the whole Christian life with a fog of uncertainty and makes every text of the Bible a mere approximation which might mean anything.

PRESENT YOUR BODIES

One of the most disastrous consequences of the entrance of the world of sinners into the historical church and the acceptance of the life of sin as the normal Christian life has been this cloud of defeat and discouragement which has thereby been thrown over multitudes of professed Christians. This defeatism has become a tradition in historical Christianity, being manifested in one respect by a continuous repetition of confession of sin and prayers for forgiveness. Millions of Christians consider that no prayer is acceptable to God unless it contains both these elements; whereas the fact is that a confession of sin which a person does not sincerely realize is a sin in itself. This repetition has permeated the whole religious life of a vast section of Christendom. People pray repeatedly thousands of times for forgiveness without ever being conscious of sin or sure of forgiveness. This same tradition of repetition has recently sought to force itself upon the interpretation of the text in Romans 12:1: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. We are told that this consecration is an act of worship which is to be repeated over and over ten thousand times, just as often as we have occasion to remember it. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that this consecration is said to be "your reasonable service," which might be translated "your rational or spiritual worship." The Greek word here is *latreia*, which originally meant "to serve for hire"; as a noun it is translated "service" everywhere in the New Testament. The verb is generally translated "to serve," although it is rendered "worship" in four places. In the present text the reference is not to occasionally interrupted and repeated acts of worship, but to the continuous ritual of the Temple. This ritual did not consist of occasional or seasonal ceremonies, like the convening of modern assemblies, but was carried on continuously from age to age, as long as the Temple stood.

In the spiritual temple, of which the earthly Temple was a type, all Christians are priests: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:6); "Ye . . . are . . . an holy priesthood" (I Pet. 2:5); "A royal priesthood" (vs. 9). These priests do not merely visit the spiritual temple occasionally; they "serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:15). In other words, the worship of the Christian is not merely something he takes up once a week or once a month; it is a continuous service of his life. He worships God in spirit and in truth continually, not occasionally. Paul expressed it "instantly serving [*latreuo*] God day and night" (Acts 26:7).

Now the noblest duty, the most important act, of the priest is to offer himself, that is, present his body; and the verb used here is in the aorist tense, which indicates an act which is completed at one time. The same language is used in Romans 6:13 where Christians are exhorted to "yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Here the aorist tense indicates completed life and death consecration. The verb here is the same as the one translated "present" in Romans 12:1. And the meaning of the tense is very beautifully brought out if we observe that the yielding to unrighteousness is in the present tense and the yielding to God in the aorist tense, so that we might read: "Neither repeatedly yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but once for all yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead." In other words, most people keep on repeating their acts of sin even though they express a desire for reformation. This course Paul forbids and commands a once-for-all, life-and-death consecration. We notice the same idea in I Peter 2:5, where "to offer up spiritual sacrifices" is in the aorist and signifies sacrifices made once for all. However, there are sacrifices which the Christian offers repeatedly, for

example, "the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). There the verb is in the present tense. We are commanded: "To do good and to communicate forget not" (vs. 16). "Forget not" is in the present tense, indicating continuous repetition. Likewise the "well pleased" of the Father. Support of this interpretation is found in the opinion of Dean Henry Alford, formerly dean of Canterbury and a famous commentator, who writes on I Peter 2:5: " . . . to offer up (no habitual offering, as in rite or festival, is meant, but the one, once-for-all, devotion of the body, as in Romans 12:1, to God as His) " [47]

DANGERS OF REPEATING CONSECRATION

Repetition of consecration is quite fashionable today. There is a popular idea that consecration can be made stronger by constantly repeating it, but that idea is open to question. Do we believe in a man's truthfulness any more on account of his repetitious claim to be telling the truth? Does not the repetition sometimes awaken doubt? Peter repeated the assertion that he did not know Christ and finally tried to make it more secure by an oath, but repetition did not make his story true. Christ's standard is: Let your Yea be yea, and your Nay, nay. That is also the standard of wise men everywhere. Does anyone believe that people are strengthened and made better by going through an ordeal of making and breaking a set of New Year's resolutions each year? Do you have any less confidence in the people who consistently live right by habitual inclination? The vows of consecration are like the vows of marriage, and do we really think that anything could be gained by repeating the marriage vows every few months? Most of us have known people who divorced and re-married each other repeatedly, but we never thought that that was the mark of a successful or happy married life. Constant making and breaking of habits is detrimental to the formation of a strong will, and a continuous repetition of the vows of consecration is likely to unsettle a person in his Christian experience and dim the witness of the Spirit in his heart. The work of Christ is final: "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14); "This is the will of God even your sanctification" (I Thess. 4:3). "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10).

Similar in spirit, though different in words, is the following exhortation of Paul: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). Here, too, we only spoil the meaning when we cover it up with the fog of uncertainty and repetitiousness. This is a definite act which Christians are to do, in which they denounce the carnal mind and consecrate themselves for the experience of entire sanctification. The "filthiness of the flesh and spirit" here reminds us of the "superfluity of naughtiness" in James 1:21, which even a truly great scholar, Theodore Zahn does not hesitate to translate "residue -- remainder," following Mark 8:8. He adds: "The writer means the old, hereditary faults which still cling even to those born of God." [48]

Fresh light on the meaning of consecration may be drawn from the Hebrew word translated consecrate in the Authorized Version. The renderings of these are as follows: (1) to devote (used once); (2) to separate (used three times); (3) to set apart (used seven times); (4) to fill the hand (used eighteen times); (5) filling up (used eleven times).

The expression "to fill the hand," used so often in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and translated consecrate in the Authorized Version, is a reference to the custom of placing a sacrificial offering in the hands of the new priest, to symbolize his authority to offer sacrifices and his consecration to the work of the priesthood. This suggests to us that the Holy Spirit must give the seeker for entire sanctification the spiritual conception that he has something to offer. In other words, it is the Spirit who consecrates him by

giving him the consciousness that there is an offering in his hand. This word is also a suggestion of the two sides of sanctification: the consecration which the individual makes in the dedication of himself; and the enduement of power and the investment with authority which God gives at the same instant, honoring the consecrated priest with the fullness of his priestly authority and spiritual power.

The man who thinks that his hands are empty is naturally not prepared to make the consecration. He needs to tarry in prayer until he reaches the point when this consecration becomes a reality in his experience and a definite crisis in his life. Consecration is the answer which love makes to God's claims of a complete personal ownership and devotion. This love, of course, is the "love of God . . . shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 5:5), without which no real Christian life can ever exist. "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 10:12).

I. The commandment of the entire Scriptures, from beginning to end, is that of perfect consecration to God; and the spring and energy of that consecration is love.

1. The love of God is the same in the Old Testament and in the New. It is not a sentiment of the mind alone, nor an affection of the sensibility alone, nor an energy of the will alone; but it is the devotion of the man, in the integrity of all these, to God as the one Object and Rest and Center and Life of the soul. "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?" (Deut. 10:12). Here perfect love stands between perfect fear and perfect service as the bond and complement of both. Our Lord has not even changed the words, which he quotes; he has not said of this: "A new commandment I give unto you" (John 13:34). It is the old commandment which ye had from the beginning, the universal law of all intelligent creatures: to make God their only Object, the Supreme End of their existence; the neighbor and all other things being objects of love only in him, hid with Christ in God. This commandment is the measure of evangelical privilege, which the believer has only to accept, and wonder at, and believe, and attain.

2. Its perfection is simply its soleness and supremacy. It is not in the measure of its intensity, which never ceases to increase throughout eternity until it reaches the maximum, if such there be, of creaturely strength; but, in the quality of its unique and sovereign ascendancy, it has the crisis of perfection set before it as attainable. In the interpretation of heaven that love is perfect which carries with it the whole man and all that he has and is. Its perfection is negative, when no other object, that is no creature, receives it apart from God or in comparison of him; and it is positive when the utmost strength of the faculties, in the measure and according to the degree of their possibility on earth, is set on him. Thus interpreted no law of the Bible is more absolute than this of the perfect love of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10:27). Omitting the last, "with all thy mind," this was the ancient law, concerning which the promise was: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God" (Deut. 10:6). The quaternion of attributes -- or the heart as the one personality, to which the understanding and affections and will belong -- as our Lord has completed it, leaves no room for imperfection. However far this may go beyond our theories and our hopes and our attainments, it is and must be the standard of privilege. We are now concerned only with the privileges of the covenant of redemption as administered by the Holy Ghost.

II. The Spirit of God, as the Spirit of perfect consecration, is poured out upon the Christian church. And he discharges his sanctifying office as an indwelling Spirit: able perfectly to fill the soul with love, and to awaken perfect love in return.

3. The last document of the New Testament gives clear expression to the former. We love [him] because he first loved us. The Divine love to man in redemption is revealed to the soul for its conversion; and it is shed abroad in the regenerate spirit as the mightiest argument of its gratitude. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (I John 4:16): this revelation received by faith was the secret of our return to God. But John again and again speaks of this love as perfected in us: that is, as accomplishing its perfect triumph over the sin and selfishness of our nature, and its separation from God, which is the secret of all sin and self. "In him verily is the love of God perfected" (2:5): this ensures its being individual, and contains the very utmost for which we plead. The love of God, as his mightiest instrument for the sanctification of the spirit of man, is declared to have in him its perfect work. The "verily" rebukes our unbelief and encourages our hope.

2. He also speaks most expressly of the return of love to God in us as perfected. This expression occurs but once in the Scripture in so absolutely incontestable a form. Whereas in the previous instances the Apostle meant that the love of God is perfected in us, in the following words he can have no other meaning than that our own love is to be, and is -- for these are the same, in our argument -- itself perfected. It is of course the same thing whether God's love is perfected or ours made perfect in return; but the combination gives much force to the statement of privilege: "Perfect love casteth out fear..... He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:18). As John is the only writer who says that God is love, so he is the only one who speaks of a Christian's perfect love. This solitary text, however, gives its meaning to a multitude. It is the last testimony that glorifies all that has gone before.

3. The Holy Ghost uses the love of God as his instrument in effecting an entire consecration. This is that unction from the Holy One which makes us all partakers of the Savior's consecration, Who received the Spirit not by measure for us. As the Supreme Christ was perfectly consecrated in the love of God and man, so it is the privilege of every Christian, who is by his name an image of Christ, to be perfectly consecrated. And there is no limitation of the Spirit's office in the reproduction of the Christly character in us. This was the lesson of that great and notable day of the Lord, the Pentecost. On the morning of that day the Spirit's elect symbol was fire. First he appeared as the Shekinah glory, without a veil, diffused over the whole Church, and then resting upon each. The light which touched every forehead for acceptance entered as fire each heart, "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:2-4): filled literally for the time being; and, if we suppose that indwelling permanent, we have our doctrine substantiated. That in this there may be continuance we are taught by Paul: "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Lastly, as a tongue, the symbol signified the sanctification of the outward life of devotion to God and service to man. Hence there is no limit to the Spirit's consecrating grace. "I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified" (John 17:19). This is the Savior's example where it is perfectly imitable: the methods of our sanctification, and its process in the destruction of alien affections, find no pattern in him; but the result shines clearly in his example. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [we] are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:18). We receive unto perfection the glory which we reflect. [49]

THE PROBLEM OF RECONSECRATION

If a finite creature like man can be possessed of an infinite hunger and unmeasured yearning, then the human heart certainly possesses such a yearning for God, and undoubtedly the deepest saint would not dare to spurn the opportunity to pray for more of God. If a public call is made, asking: "Who desires to get nearer to God, to become more spiritual, to live closer to God?" undoubtedly it will be the most spiritual and the most deeply consecrated who will respond to such a call. This fact has made appeals to reconsecration very popular among us, and the response to such appeals is usually so satisfactory that no afterthought is ever given to the significance of such an appeal. But I believe that the whole subject deserves more consideration in the light of the doctrine of entire sanctification.

We often hear it said that there are unconsecrated areas in the life of every Christian, and it is his business to consecrate these areas as he discovers them. To say the least, this is an unfortunate way of expressing whatever truth there is in the theory, because it is, in form at least, a complete surrender of the doctrine of entire sanctification as a crisis experience, once for all, in human life. This theory of unconsecrated areas of life is simply a statement of the doctrine of gradual sanctification, and is fully consistent with such a theory. If the unexplored regions of life are therefore unconsecrated, it is simply impossible for any man to be wholly consecrated at any time before the moment of his death, because who knows what regions of life lie around him as yet unexplored.

The doctrine of entire sanctification teaches that when the center and core of a man's heart is consecrated, then all of these outlying regions are likewise consecrated, too. When a Christian sets up the flag of Immanuel on the continent of his soul he means that all the areas of that continent belong to the King Immanuel, whether he ever makes an intellectual discovery of them or not.

Sometimes a theory of reconsecration may cover a false view of a Christian's mission in life. It is possible, for example, to think of a Christian duty to master every possible phase of living and fill it with success. This, however, is a false view of the meaning of life, as a little reflection will show anyone. It is the work of Christian asceticism to give up the good things of life in order that the best may thereby be cultivated. We cut off a dozen good roses in order that the best rose may flower to its finest development. This is a commonplace of natural life. A boy destroys his possibilities to be a doctor, a musician, a lawyer, or a skilled mechanic in order to be an expert accountant. He actually sacrifices all these other possibilities in order to realize this one which he prizes most. The idea of the Christian life is not to be a Jack-of-all-trades, but to be a master of one, a specialist in some spiritual realm of divine service. At least such a spiritual specialism is just as worthy as an attempt to develop all the possibilities of life. A Christian young man gives up, let us say, the possibility of developing his talents in any one of a dozen different ways in America in order to give all his strength to the development of his talent as a missionary in foreign lands. St. Francis of Assisi was, according to the record, a marvelous saint but he had no experience in life as husband and father, or in the joyful fellowship of a Christian in a modern evangelical church.

How a consecrated man should regard these areas of life, these potential personalities, which he has no call or duty to develop in himself, is well stated by a modern theologian, Dr. Leonard Hodgson, Regius Professor of Divinity in Oxford University. He writes: [50 -- The copyrighted quotation that Charles Ewing Brown next used by permission has been omitted. Nevertheless, I have the reference to his source as Endnote number 50 at the end of this document. -- DVM]

Let us suppose that a young Christian discovers an area of life in which he feels it is his duty to work, and yet he finds himself unequal to his responsibility. Here the proper method is not to reconsecrate, but to reaffirm his consecration, and then begin the slow and sometimes tedious task of acquiring spiritual skill in

the realm of Christian life where he would labor. A young man consecrates himself, let us say, to be an artist, but he finds that his hands are unskilled. The pictures he draws are crude. He does not need to consecrate again, but he needs to devote himself, to train his hands, until the vision of beauty in his brain gradually masters the clumsiness of his hands and the skill of his hands comes to match the vision of his heart.

And so it is in making new and fresh advances in hitherto unexplored fields of Christian living.

THE FUNDAMENTAL DECISION CALLS FOR MANY SMALLER DECISIONS

This fact probably expresses the truth in our frequent reiteration of the term "reconsecration."

In his able exposition of the thought of Soren Kierkegaard, Dr. Eduard Geismar writes as follows: [51 -- The copyrighted quotation that Charles Ewing Brown next used by permission has been omitted. Nevertheless, I have the reference to his source as Endnote number 51 at the end of this document. -- DVM]

I admit it is possible to call these constant minor decisions of the Christian life by the name of consecration or reconsecration. Under such a view a man is obligated to reconsecrate possibly several times a day, but I insist that it is just as logical to call these minor decisions conversions as it is to call them consecrations. The point is that the original consecration was a dedication of the self which commits a Christian to make every one of these decisions, each in its turn, as he comes to them just as the original vows of marriage bind a conscientious man or woman to repeated acts of devotion and fidelity to the companion in marriage.

Here is an illustration. A young man volunteers to serve in the Army. Some months later he finds himself on board a landing craft under command to leap out into the water in a hail of bullets. It is true that he will have to make a new decision, but he certainly will not have to join the Army again. The last decision he makes is simply an accessory to the original decision, which he made when he joined the Army. So I maintain that the smaller decisions of the Christian life are auxiliary to the one essential act of consecration which the believer made when he entered the experience of entire sanctification.

Nevertheless, these fresh new decisions of sacrificial devotion are not only inevitable if a man is to maintain his Christian integrity, but they are also very necessary, as Kierkegaard has indicated, in order to put fire and passion into the Christian experience. I am persuaded that any Christian life will be enthusiastic which daily faces up to the challenge of the cross, and constantly brings itself face to face with the risk and the danger of sacrificial decision for Christ in the constant everyday business of living the Christian life.

The danger of constant, formal reconsecration is that such a practice can create doubt as to the certainty of the consecration previously made. It infects the religious life with the repetitiousness of modern traditional religion and tends to create a doubt of the definite reality of our covenant relation with God.

I am ready at any time to join with other Christians in reaffirming my consecration, in restudying its implications, and in praying for a fresh outpouring of the spirit of holiness and power, but I cannot reconsecrate that to God which has already been consecrated to him, that which I have not withdrawn from his hands previously.

FORMS OF CONSECRATION

While I have never favored written prayers or anything of a mechanical nature in religion, it is possible that some people may derive benefit from the suggestions which they receive from reading well-written prayers or vows of consecration. These might have value by putting into definite words the inarticulate thoughts of the heart. In no case do I recommend them for mere mechanical memorization and repetition. First, here is the form of consecration written and signed by D. S. Warner, on December 13, 1877, though it is important to remember that he had already professed the experience of entire sanctification on June 6, 1877. What is given here is simply his attempt to give in itemized form the solemn covenant that constituted his consecration to God. He writes: A covenant is an agreement of two parties in which both voluntarily bind themselves to fulfill certain conditions and receive certain benefits. God is the party of the first part of the contract, and has bound himself.

1. "I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts."
2. "And I will be their God."
3. They "shall know me from the least to the greatest."
4. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness."
5. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Oh, thou Most High God, thou hast left this covenant in thy Holy Book, saying, "If any man will take hold of my covenant." Now, therefore, in holy fear and reverence I present myself as the party of the second part and subscribe my name to the holy article of agreement, and following thy example will here and now write down the conditions on my part. "They shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). Amen, Lord, I am thine forever. The vow is passed beyond repeal; Now will I set the solemn seal. Lord, thou hast been true to thy covenant, though I have been most unfaithful and am now altogether unworthy to take hold of thy most gracious covenant. But knowing that thou hast bound thyself in thy own free offer to "be merciful to their unrighteousness," I take courage to approach thee and would most earnestly beseech thee to fulfill thy wonderful offer to BE MY GOD; and I do most joyfully yield myself entirely TO BE THINE. Therefore this soul which thou hast made in thine own image is placed wholly in thy hands to do with as seemeth good. This mind shall think only for thy glory and the promotion of thy cause. This will is thy will, O God! The spirit within this body is now thine; do with it as thou wilt, in life and death. This body is thy temple forevermore. These hands shall work only for thee. These eyes to see thy adorable works and thy holy law. This tongue and these lips to speak only holiness unto the Lord. These ears to hear thy voice alone.

These feet to walk only in thy ways.

And all my being is now and forever thine.

In signing my name to this solemn covenant I am aware that I bind myself to live, act, speak, think, move, sit, stand up, lie down, eat, drink, hear, see, feel, and whatsoever I do all the days and nights of my life to do all continually and exclusively to the glory of God. I must henceforth wear nothing but what honors God. I must have nothing in my possession or under my control but such as I can consistently write upon, "Holiness unto the Lord." The place where I live must be wholly dedicated to God. Every item of goods or property that is under my control is hereby conveyed fully over into the hands of God to be used by him as he will and to be taken from my stewardship whenever the great Owner wishes, and it is not my business at all.

She whom I call my wife belongs forevermore to God. Use her as thou wilt and where thou wilt, and leave her with me, or take her from me, just as seemeth good to thee and to thy glory. Amen. Levilla Modest, whom we love as a dear child bestowed upon us by thy infinite goodness, is hereby returned to thee. if thou wilt leave us to care for her and teach her of her true Father and Owner, we will do the best we can by thy aid to make her profitable unto thee. But if thou deemest us unfit to rear her properly or wouldst have her in thy more immediate presence, behold, she is thine, take her. Amen and Amen.

And now, great and merciful Father, thou to whom I belong, with all that pertains to me, and thou who art mine with all that pertains to thy fullness and richness, all this offering which I have made would be but foolishness and waste of time were it not for what I have in thee obtained to confirm the solemn contract. For were it not that thou art my God, my promises would be but idle words. I could fulfill nothing which my mouth has uttered and my pen has written. But since thou, Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Eternal God, are mine, I have a thousand-fold assurance that all shall be fulfilled through thy fullness.

My ignorance is fully supplied by thy own infinite wisdom. My utter weakness and inability to preserve myself from sin are abundantly supplied by thy omnipotence, to thy everlasting praise.

Glory to thy holy name! Though I have solemnly pledged all things to thee, yet, as thou art my "all and in all," I have nothing to fear. Now, O Father! my God and Savior, I humbly pray thee so to keep me that all my powers of soul, body, and spirit, my time, talents, will, influence, words, and works shall continually, exclusively and eternally glorify thy holy name through Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen and amen.

In covenant with the God of all grace and mercy, who has become my salvation, my all, and whose I am forever, to the praise of his glory. Amen.

Entered into by the direction of the Holy Spirit and signed this thirteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy-seven. Daniel Sidney Warner. [52]

The idea of a written form of consecration did not originate with D. S. Warner. George Whitefield, the famous colleague of John Wesley, said:

I can call heaven and earth to witness that when the bishop laid his hands upon me, I gave myself up to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the cross for me. I have thrown myself blindfolded and without reserve into his Almighty hands.

Dr. Philip Doddridge (died 1751), famous English Independent Divine, author of many books, among them *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, wrote out the following form of consecration:

This day do I, with the utmost solemnity, surrender myself to thee. I renounce all former lords that have had dominion over me; and I consecrate to thee all that I am, and all that I have; the faculties of my mind, the members of my body, my worldly possessions, my time and my influence over others; to be all used entirely for thy glory, and resolutely employed in obedience to thy commands, as long as thou continuest me in life; with an ardent desire and humble resolution to be thine through the endless ages of eternity; ever holding myself in an attentive posture to observe the first intimations of thy will, and ready to spring forward with zeal and joy to the immediate execution of it.

To thy direction also I resign myself, and all I am and have, to be disposed of by thee in such a manner as thou shalt in thine infinite wisdom judge most subservient to the purposes of thy glory. To thee I leave the

management of all events, and say without reserve, NOT my will but thine be done. [53]

The famous Baptist evangelist, Rev. A. B. Earle, prepared a blank book, which he called his consecration book, and on bended knee slowly and solemnly wrote in it the following dedication:

Andover, February 10, 1859

This day I make a new consecration of my all to Christ. Jesus, I now and forever give myself to thee; my soul to be washed in thy blood and saved in heaven at last; my whole body to be used for thy glory; my mouth to speak for thee at all times; my eyes to weep over lost sinners, or to be used for any purpose for thy glory; my feet to carry me where thou shalt wish me to go; my heart to be burdened for souls or used for thee anywhere; my intellect to be employed at all times for thy cause and glory; I give to thee my wife, my children, my property, all I have, and all that ever shall be mine. I will obey thee in every known duty.

I then asked for grace to enable me to carry out that vow, and that I might take nothing from the altar. [54]

A helpful form of thoughtful consecration and pledge of faith was drawn by Rev. Isaiah Reid as follows:
FORM FOR CONSECRATION FOR HOLINESS

Text: Rom. 12:1-2. O Lord, in view of this thing thou hast besought me to do, I hereby now do really consecrate myself unreservedly to thee for all time and eternity. My time, my talents, my hands, feet, lips, will, my all. My property, my reputation, my entire being, a living sacrifice to be and to do all thy righteous will pertaining to me. ... Especially at this time do I, thy regenerate child, put my case into thy hands for the cleansing of my nature from the inherited taint of the carnal nature. I seek the sanctification of my soul.

Then he added the following:

Pledge of Faith

Now, as I have given myself away, I will, from this time forth, regard myself as thine. I believe thou dost accept the offering that I bring. I put all on the altar. I believe the altar sanctifieth the gift. I believe the blood is applied now as I comply with the terms of thy salvation. I believe that thou dost now cleanse me from all sin.

Vow

By thy grace, from this time forth, I promise to follow thee, walking in the fellowship of the Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Name_____

Date_____

These forms of consecration seek to make the vows more vivid by particularizing all of the items of a man's possessions, and doubtless this may be helpful as a plow going to the roots of personality, but it is well to remember that in reality the thing that is consecrated, is one's self. His soul, his personality and, as Prof. Dougan Clark has said, "The essence of consecration is in the sentence, 'yield yourselves unto God.' If you yield yourself, you yield everything else. All the details are included in the one surrender of yourself. Yield yourself unto God. Consecration is not to God's service, not to his work, not to a life of obedience and sacrifice, not to the church, not to the Christian Endeavor, not to the missionary cause, nor even to the

cause of God. It is to God himself. Yield yourself to God and your work, your service, your obedience, your sacrifice, your right place and your allotted duty will all follow in good time. Consecration is the willingness and the resolution, the purpose to be and to do and to suffer all God's will. Consecration being a definite transaction and made once for all does not need to be repeated unless we have failed to keep it. We consecrate just as we are married. The vow is upon us and in the force of that vow we walk all of our days." [55]

CONSECRATION AS INVESTMENT

No doubt the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification has suffered much persecution because it is such a high and precious spiritual truth that the devil would bankrupt hell in order to destroy it. Nevertheless, one cannot help feeling a suspicion that the preachers of the doctrine and many who claim the experience have, by wrong presentation and imperfect living, done an injury to the doctrine that could not have been accomplished by Satan in direct attack. One of these mistakes has been that so many preachers and workers have stressed the negative side of sanctification and of consecration. We have preached about giving up and of dying, until many careless listeners have thought that perhaps that is about all there is to it -- that sanctification is a doctrine of negation, a kind of asceticism, a kind of denial of life. Nearly all thoughtful Christians have seen the danger of overemphasizing any part of the Christian religion as self-sacrifice, whereas its true meaning is privilege. On two occasions I have visited Palestine and walked through old Jerusalem near the place where the Son of God bore the heavy cross and the burden of men's sorrows and sin; and when I stood in that sacred spot, it seemed to me altogether unsuitable any more to talk about "my sacrifice" in view of his sacrifice for me upon the cross. It seems to me that every Christian ought to begin to pray God to help us see more clearly and preach more powerfully the sacrifice of Christ and say less about our own small sacrifices.

In saying this not one word is retracted about giving up, dying out, and consecrating as part of the act of faith which accepts the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of power. But I see this consecration more and more, not in the light of loss, but of investment for unmeasured gain. Every young man who is to attain any kind of prominence or success in the world will find it necessary to invest his life in one certain kind of effort. Sometimes this decision is reached merely through what the world calls the force of circumstance, or what Christians call Providential direction -- a certain kind of work opens up to a man and he goes along with it without much consideration. Those who attain great distinction usually make their choice in a crisis of stern, earnest, sober thought. Young men who wish to be doctors must consecrate themselves to long years of strenuous toil, and the same may be said for those preparing to be engineers, lawyers, or to follow other professions.

A boy's decision to study science when he would like to be playing ball or having fun with the other boys might be called a kind of consecration; but those who make this kind of consecration never seem to ask anybody's pity. They feel that they are investors and that the returns will be satisfactory. All Christians who seek a deeper work of grace should take the same view of consecration. Not sacrifice, but privilege is the key word of this experience.

Many years ago there was a famous Negro woman evangelist, Amanda Smith, who traveled nearly all over the world and enjoyed a fame and success very few scholarly ministers could match. She reached this glorious privilege by the road of consecration, and this is the way she told it: "You must make your consecration complete and you must make it eternal. No experimenting by temporary consecration will answer. It must be complete and eternal. I gave everything to God. All that I had was my black self and my

washtub and my washboard, but I gave all, and the Spirit came and sanctified my soul."

Consecration strikes the rock from which the waters of success flow. It is not loss, but wise investment

THE FAITH THAT ACCEPTS HOLINESS

Entire sanctification is not so utterly different from justification by faith that its reception by faith should require a different set of principles and doctrinal proof. Once we have established the fact that entire sanctification is a definite crisis experience in the work of human redemption we should require texts to prove that faith is not necessary rather than to prove it necessary. It is an axiom of evangelical theology that all the redemptive work of Christ is a gift, and as such is not attainable as a reward of merit or pay for the vast labor of painful work, but is a gracious favor given into the receptive hands of active and childlike faith. This ought to be apparent to every convinced believer in New Testament Christianity. No justification without faith, no sanctification without faith, no justification by works, no sanctification by works. "By grace are ye saved through faith," and we cannot be saved otherwise. In the New Testament the principle is made for every simple, earnest, Christian heart that faith is the condition of all the blessings of the atonement. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life" (John 5:24). In these texts faith is the condition of accepting the benefits of the atoning work of Christ.

The only work which God requires for the reception of his redemption blessing is faith. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). "Thy faith hath made thee whole" (Matt. 9:22). "According to your faith be it unto you" (vs. 29). Paul was an entirely sanctified man, and he testified: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).

"And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Here the purifying baptism of the Holy Spirit is credited to the receptive act of faith. "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:3). The man with hope in him is a Christian man, and this Christian man purifies himself by the faith which accepts entire sanctification. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (II Thess. 2:13).

For two hundred years saints have sung with captivating melody, preached with prophetic power, and witnessed with seraphic life to the glory, the joy, and the power of this uttermost salvation. The gospel of perfect love and full salvation cannot be destroyed any more than men can destroy geometry, trigonometry, and calculus. Men may forget these sciences until they have sunk into barbarism, but if ever they enjoy noble buildings, complicated machinery, and modern civilization they must revive these sciences; and if the church will ever know, or wish to know, the glory and the power and the victory of New Testament Christianity it must revive the gospel of full salvation.

46 Charles E. Brown, *The Meaning of Salvation*, p. 97

47 Henry Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. IV, p. 800

48 Theodore Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Vol.1, p. 96

49 William Burt Pope, A Compendium of Christian Theology, pp. 51-53

50 Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine of the Trinity, pp.185-186. Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

51 Eduard Geismar, Lectures on the Religious Thought of Soren Kierkegaard, pp. 46-47. Used by permission of Augsburg Publishing House.

52 A. L. Byars, Birth of a Reformation, pp.145-147

53 Philip Doddridge, The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, chap. 17

54 A. B. Earle, Rest of Faith, pp. 67-68

55 A. M. Hills, Holiness and Power, p. 252

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