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CONSECRATION THE NORMAL ATTITUDE FOR GOD'S INTELLIGENT CREATURES

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." – 1 Cor. 2:14.

BY THE EXPRESSION "natural man" we understand the Scriptures to mean all who have not experienced a change of nature in the begetting of the Holy Spirit. All mankind, including Adam himself, are natural men. Even a perfect human being cannot receive the deep spiritual truths which God reveals to His consecrated children through the Holy Spirit.

Whoever is desirous of being in harmony with God and is endeavoring to become so, even though he be not justified, is looking forward to full justification. If he continue in this course, he will eventually become justified – if not at the present time, then during Messiah's reign. But in this Age, none can attain to full justification except by faith in the blood of Christ, which leads its possessor to make a complete consecration of himself to God, by the intervention of our Lord Jesus as Advocate, who imputes to him a sufficiency of His merit to make up for his deficiency.

Since our Lord imputes His merit only to those who make a full consecration of themselves, one who merely believes in the Savior and wishes to do right, cannot at this time enter into full peace with God. He receives only a *measure* of peace and justification; for those alone who are fully absolved from sin and presented by the Advocate can be accepted by the Father – these alone are fully justified in the Father's sight.

Some speak of the *sanctified* as if these were no longer *justified*. The fact is that only the sanctified can be said to be fully justified; and

they must maintain their justification with God, else they could never make their calling and election sure.

It is very important to observe the sharp outlines and distinctions which the Scriptures establish. According to these outlines, the Holy Spirit is given only in a very special manner, during a very special Age, for a very special purpose. The distinction is absolute and positive in every sense of the word. Only those begotten of the Father have His Spirit, which is the Spirit of the Son; and those alone who have that Spirit are begotten to the new nature.

GOOD TRAITS OF CHARACTER NOT A PROOF OF CONSECRATION

In times past we did not clearly distinguish the Lord's people from the world. Whenever we met a man with kind, gentle manners, whether an infidel, a Brahman, a Mohammedan, a Presbyterian, a Methodist or merely one of the world, we said to ourself, "Here is a man who has the *Spirit* of the Lord." Then, we did not know what we were talking about; now, we can recognize the difference. We are certainly glad to acknowledge good traits of character in heathen as well as Christians, but we are not to accept gentleness and kindness of manner as evidence that their possessor has the Holy Spirit.

We have all seen people who have very proper sentiments of justice on some subjects, who are yet manifestly not God's people, begotten of the Holy Spirit. Such persons are usually fine characters. Nevertheless, their conscientiousness causes them to admit that they are sinners and have need of Divine forgiveness. We are glad that there are such people, and we should encourage rather than discourage them.

The explanation of this condition of affairs is that these fine characters are not so fallen as some others. God made man in His own image and likeness. With the fall of man came the impairment of that godlike disposition, but the image of God is not altogether lost. For our part, we wish to show that our Redeemer is the only channel for that

forgiveness, the need of which they recognize, and that the only condition of their full acceptance with God is the entire consecration of all that they possess to the service of the Lord.

On one occasion our Lord said, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which sent Me draw him." (John 6:44.) No one will receive the Holy Spirit *without having been drawn* to Christ, but some may be *drawn* without *receiving the Holy Spirit*. Possibly in these persons that endowment which God gave to Adam and pronounced "very good" has been less impaired by the fall than it has been in others. Such naturally desire to have God's approval and the blessings which He is willing to give to those who seek Him.

Having this disposition, such persons are said to be drawn of God. But the Father points them to the Son, through the knowledge of simple truths. For instance, they may be influenced through hearing a hymn sung; such as,

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

These words contain the truth of God to any one who is in a right condition of heart, and are a very valuable hint as to the way to approach God. If those who are seeking to know God desire to inquire further on the subject, they will probably be led to consult with some of the children of God.

Upon the inquiry of those under the conviction of sin as to what must be done to be saved, we tell them, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31.) Make a full consecration of your life unto God, and thus you may become a son of God. If any one is obedient to the drawing, the next step for him to take is to say, "I give myself to the Lord and trust Him fully, for I realize how unworthy I am."

The course which we are describing is that which one must follow in order to be acceptable to God. But first of all, he must desire to approach the Lord. If we should find any one who is totally depraved, there would be no use to attempt to draw such a one toward righteousness, [R5134 : page 358] Truth and God. Even those who have the right attitude of mind may not be equally impressed at all times. It may be that some circumstance must awaken them to the need of consecration before they will take the step which will enable them to become sons of God. – Rom. 12:1,2.

THE HIGH CALLING NOT FOR ALL

No man, however, takes this step of consecration unless he is called of God. There must be the call, or invitation, as there was with Aaron and with our Lord Jesus Christ. (Heb. 5:4,5.) This call comes through the proclamation of the Gospel. Each must hear for himself before he can accept. "And how shall they *hear* without a *preacher?*" (Rom. 10:14.) So then, it is for God to begin the work with the unjustified by drawing them to Christ for justification; and it is for our Lord Jesus Christ to continue this work with the consecrated. Furthermore, it is the privilege of all who come into God's family to proclaim these truths to others, to set forth the terms by which those who receive the call may accept it, while still "it is called today," before this Age of sacrifice ends. – Heb. 4:7; 2 Cor. 6:2.

None come to God in this Gospel Age except those who make a sacrifice. Others may *turn* toward God; they may *look* toward God; they may be converted from a wicked life to a better one. But none except the class who are adopted into God's family are begotten of the Holy Spirit. The invitation of this Age is NOT an invitation to do *the best one can*; we are all called in the *one hope* of our calling. (Eph. 4:4.) "Gather My saints together unto Me, saith the Lord, those who have made a Covenant with Me by *sacrifice.*" – Psa. 50:5.

It is good not to do wrong. But more than a righteous life is required of those who would be *sons of God*. *Consecration* has *always* been

proper; it is the *normal attitude* for all of God's intelligent creatures. The Creator is the One to whom all are properly under obligations for every blessing which they enjoy; and heart, mind, tongue and hand should be ready for consecration to do the Father's will. Whether angels or men or New Creatures in Christ – all should be in this attitude.

Since consecration is the only reasonable attitude, then, when the one hundred and forty-four thousand of the Elect Church shall have passed their testing it will still be appropriate for God to permit people to consecrate, and to be pleased with their consecration. Therefore, we may expect that, in the end of the reign of Christ, all the worthy ones shall have made consecration to God. It was thus in the Jewish Age, although there was no "high calling" then, nor privilege to understand the deep things of God.

The privilege of becoming joint-heirs with Christ will end as soon as the Elect number is completed. During the thousand years of Christ's reign, those who consecrate will come to understand all human things; but not being begotten of the Holy Spirit, they cannot understand the things of the Spirit.

KNOWLEDGE OF DEEP THINGS A GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT

We believe that there are some now living, perhaps a good many, who are consecrated to God and whose consecration has been accepted, but who are not in the light of Present Truth. This number may include some who are what the Scriptures term "babes" in Christ, and others to whom the Scriptures refer as the "great multitude." (Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2; Rev. 7:9.) The "foolish virgin" class are probably in very large number all around us. The fact that there are some of these in Babylon seems to be indicated by the command, "Come out of her, My people." (Rev. 18:4.) If they are in Babylon, their presence there shows that they are not yet well developed; and if they are God's people, they are not enjoying the full strength of Present Truth, although Spirit-begotten.

This fact does not signify that they may not receive Present Truth. On the contrary, we think it quite likely that some may be helped out of Babylon and into a better understanding of the Divine Plan; for some of the babes may be strengthened, built up, to a full appreciation of the things of the Spirit. We are to have in mind the fact that God has so arranged that "the deep things of God" cannot be known instantaneously; this knowledge comes gradually as an evidence of faithfulness to God.

Those who have not yet learned fully to reverence God and who have not yet made progress in the development of the graces and fruits of the Spirit cannot expect to understand the deep things of God. It is our duty and privilege, not only to assist these brethren, but to build one another up and to strengthen one another. Let us see that we do these things.

