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ARTICLE II.

CONSECRATION.

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM H. BATES, D.D.

WITH the organization of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, the Epworth League, the Baptist Young People's Union, the Westminster League, etc., with their accompanying Consecration Meetings, the subject of CONSECRATION has come to have a popular prominence and importance that it never had before.

While not a little has been spoken and written upon it, it, nevertheless, does not seem to stand in the clear-cut outline, nor to have the inward lucidity and intelligibleness, which are desirable. The attempt is here made to present a clear and complete view of it as it lies in the entire Scriptures.

A SURPRISE.

A surprise greets us at the outset, in finding that there is almost nothing explicit upon the subject in the New Testament!

The word "consecrate" is used there but twice.

Once it is the translation of the Greek word *εγκαινίζω*, *egkainizo*, which is also used but twice: once translated by the word "dedicated" (Heb. ix. 28: "Whereupon neither the first testament was *dedicated* without blood"); and the other time translated "consecrated" (Heb. x. 20: "A new and living way *consecrated* for us"). And here it might just as well be rendered "dedicated," as the Revision has it, so far as signification is concerned.

The second time it is used, it is the translation of the Greek word *τελειῶ*, *teleioo*. This Greek word is used twenty-four times. Seventeen times it is translated "to perfect," four times "to finish," twice "to fulfill," and once "to consecrate" (Heb. vii. 28: "The Son who is *consecrated* forevermore"). Here the margin and the Revision give it "perfected," the more accurate rendering of the two.

Very little help, therefore, to an understanding of the Bible idea of *Consecration* will we get from the New Testament.

AN OLD TESTAMENT DOCTRINE.

We must look to the Old Testament, for there the idea had its origin and unfolding. It belongs to the initial stage of religion, though it cannot be separated from religion at any stage. In fact, it is inseparable from the Christian life all through the earthly state.

I find four¹ different Hebrew terms rendered by our English word "consecrate"; and, while referring to the same thing, they in part cover different spaces of meaning. The first refers rather to the consecrating act; the second and third refer to the state of the thing consecrated; the fourth refers to the result of the consecration.

קֹדֶשׁ *Qadash*.

1. The first term (Ex. xxx. 30: "Thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and *consecrate* (*qadash*) them") has reference to the act, or rather series of acts, by which men were inducted into the priesthood, and so were consecrated, or set apart, to God's service. The twenty-ninth chapter of Exodus and the eighth chapter of Leviticus tell the story.

The old garments of the candidates were laid aside. Their bodies were washed with clean water, and anointed with the

¹A fifth term will be referred to (see p. 431); but it will not need separate treatment.

perfumed oil, which was prepared after a prescribed formula, and which was to be used for no lower purpose. The new garments belonging to their office were put upon them. The truth that those who intercede for others must themselves have been reconciled, was indicated by the sacrifice of a bullock, as a sin-offering, on which they solemnly laid their hands; thus typically transferring to it the guilt that had attached to them. The total surrender of their lives was represented by the ram slain as a burnt-offering, a "sweet savor" to Jehovah. The blood of a third victim, the "ram of consecration," was used for another purpose. With it, the officiator sprinkled the tip of the right ear of each of the candidates, the thumb of his right hand, and the great toe of his right foot, indicating that all the powers of reception and of action were to be entirely under the control of God, and to be used for him. Lastly, their hands were to be filled with the cakes of unleavened bread and portions of the sacrifice, which, as indicating the completeness of their service, they were themselves to present before the Lord as a wave-offering. The whole of this ritual was to be repeated daily for seven days, during which time they remained within the tabernacle, separated from the people; and not till then was the consecration perfect.

The consecrated condition, or character, thus imparted, did not need renewing, but continued through life. The priests came to the office voluntarily; but, having consented to undertake it, or having chosen it, it is to be noted that all the acts, save the last, belonging to the consecrating ceremonial, were performed upon them, or done to them. By these consecrating acts they were set apart to the service of God.

נָסַר *Nasar.*

2. The second term (Num. vi. 12: "And he shall *consecrate* (*nasar*) unto the Lord the days of his separation (*nasar*),

and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass-offering; but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation (*nezer*) was defiled," has to do with the Nazarite ordinance.

The primary idea of the word is "to separate." Of the ten times the verb is used, it is nine times rendered "separate," and once "consecrate"; and of the thirteen times the noun *nezer* is used in Numbers, it is translated "separation" eleven times, and "consecration" twice.

There were those who were consecrated, or made Nazarites, from birth,—as Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, Jesus. There were those who became Nazarites, separated, consecrated, for a limited period; and it is for temporary, not perpetual, Nazariteship the ordinance was given.

Consecration, then, according to this word, is separation unto God. What, in the unconsecrated state, might be legitimate and allowable, in the consecrated state may become illicit, and is therefore prohibited. The Nazarite, because of the restrictions of his condition, was seen in family and society refusing things in themselves innocent (Num. vi. 3-8), that he might exhibit a spirit of devotedness to God even in the smallest details of daily life. In his person and habits, he was to be a living object-lesson of signal and sincere devotion to the Lord.

If the obligations of the Nazarite's consecration were violated, "the days that were before" went for nothing. Violation did not release him; but he had to go back and begin anew, the same as at the beginning. It is related that Helena, queen of Adiabene, when converted from heathenism to Judaism, assumed the vow of Nazarite consecration for seven years. At the end of that period, going to Jerusalem, she was informed by the Jewish religious authorities that every such

vow taken in a foreign country must be taken again when the person visited the Holy Land. Accordingly, she assumed another seven years' consecration; but near the expiration of the time, she contracted some ceremonial defilement, which obliged her to commence her vow anew for another period of seven years.

The state of the consecrated person is one of complete separation unto God.

חֵרָם *Charam.*

3. The third term (Micah iv. 13: "I will consecrate (*charam*) their gain unto the Lord") also refers to the state of the thing consecrated.

According to Gesenius, this word means "to shut up," and when applied to things or persons in relation to God, to shut up utterly from a common to a sacred use, and so "to consecrate." The vow of *cherem* was the most comprehensive, intensive, inexorable, of all the Hebrew vows.

That which was consecrated by *charam* became so entirely the Lord's that it could never be recalled or redeemed. In the last chapter of Leviticus (xxvii.), verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine, we read: "No devoted thing that a man shall devote [the Hebrew word here rendered "devote" is the same as that in Micah translated "consecrate"] unto the Lord of all that he hath, both of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold, or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death"; or, as some construe this last clause, the signification simply is that the living thing, thus devoted, should remain in that devoted state until death. That which was rendered unto God by a simple vow was "holy"; but that which was conse-

crated according to this word was "most holy," or "holy of holies."

Whatever was thus yielded to the Lord was consecrated completely, irrevocably, eternally.

מָלָא יָד *Mala¹ yad.*

4. In 1 Chronicles xxix. 5: "Who then is willing to *consecrate* (*mala¹ yad*) his service this day unto the Lord," appears the fourth term, the meaning of which, correctly given in the margin, is simply to "fill the hand."

As a part of the consecrating service to the priesthood, it is said in Exodus xxix. 9: "Thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons," i. e., according to the Hebrew, "Thou shalt fill the hand of Aaron and his sons,"—the full hand signifying that the whole individual service was to be for God; no room for anything else. Such service was to result from the consecration.

Thus we see CONSECRATION in its (1) act; (2) state; (3) result.

The foregoing, it is believed, presents all the Greek and Hebrew terms in the Bible rendered "to consecrate," and it is hoped that their meanings are correctly and intelligibly given. If so, we should be able to attain not only a clear-cut outline of this important subject, but also an intelligent understanding of its inward contents.

But the question may be raised, "What has this Old Testament idea to do with us in New Testament times?" The answer must be, "Much every way." Consecration belongs to

¹The noun *milluim*, rendered "consecration" eleven times, (first in Ex. xxix. 22), is derived from the verb *mala*, "to fill," and literally means "fillings." Flesh of the "ram of consecration" (*milluim* "fillings"), was used with the bread for "filling" the hands of the candidate. As it gets its rendering "consecration" from its relation to the consecrating service, it does not need separate treatment.

Christianity the same as to Judaism; to New Testament Christians the same as to Old Testament priests. Aaron, the high-priest, was a type of Christ; his sons, the body of the priesthood, a type of Christians. Accordingly, it is written in the New Testament, speaking of Christians, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ. . . . Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1 Peter ii. 5-9). (See also Rev. i. 6 and v. 10.) This matter of consecration, therefore, belongs to us as much as to those of old.

In the light of this study, it will be easy to judge of the validity of the following

DEDUCTIONS:

1. *Those who are consecrated are chosen to it of God.*

The Israelites were a chosen nation. The Levitical tribe and the Aaronic family were chosen to the office they filled. As it is written in Hebrews, "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (v. 4). And Jesus says to his disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John xv. 16). Saint Paul, writing of the body of believers, says, "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4); and also, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you" (2 Thess. 13, 14). Chosen to consecration.

2. *God performs the work of consecration and preparation for service.*

Our study verifies the correctness of Webster's definition of consecration as "the act or ceremony of separating from a common to a sacred use, or devoting and dedicating a person or thing to the service and worship of God." In Exodus and

Leviticus, Aaron and his sons were the subjects of the acts: the acts were performed upon, or done, to them, all save the last,—this the connecting link between the Divine and the Human; and from this point, thus prepared of God, they went on their way of ministration.

Some one has said: "The first and most fatal mistake made by men generally, is that they can prepare themselves for sacred work, without depending entirely upon God to do it for them." God says: "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 1); "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord" (Jer. xxiv. 7); "For we [i.e. Christians] are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. ii. 10). Man cannot consecrate himself. God performs the consecrating work upon the human soul.

But should it be urged, in view of such texts as Exodus xxxii. 29: "Consecrate yourselves"; 2 Chronicles xiii. 9: "Whosoever cometh to consecrate himself"; Ezekiel xliii. 26: "They shall consecrate themselves," that consecration is something of our own doing, it is to be replied that in these texts, and all others like them, the original is *mala yad*, which, as we have seen, has reference to the results, in service, of the previous consecrating acts and consecrated state.

3. *God performed this work upon the condition that man submits himself unreservedly to it, and consents to do, willingly, faithfully, and continuously, just what he may reveal to him, as his will, that he should do.*

The human will is competent to stay, or prevent, the divine operation. Abraham was chosen and set apart to be the founder of the Jewish nation: he freely accepted the choice, submitted to God's direction, and willingly obeyed. Aaron and his sons were selected for the priesthood: they accepted

the choice, submitted themselves to the consecrating acts, and went on in obedience to the divinely given Levitical ritual. It is at this point of unreserved submitting and consenting, that God begins to work in consecration. It is just here that the true religious life commences. Consecration belongs to the initial stage of religion, though it cannot be separated from it ever.

It is related that when the people of Collatia were negotiating a capitulation to the Romans, Egerius, on the part of the Romans, inquired of the ambassadors: "Are the people of Collatia in their own power?" An affirmative answer being given, it was next inquired: "Do you deliver yourselves, the people of Collatia, your city, your fields, your boundaries, your temples, your utensils, all property divine and human, into my power and the power of the Roman people?" "We surrender all," was the reply. "And so," said he, "I receive you."

There must be a surrender to God, both of one's self and what one has. He will not accept a person who does not make a full surrender. There must be no uncommitted remainders. When that yielding is made, he always accepts, performs the consecrating work, and prepares for service. The voluntary surrender and consent to obey, constitute a condition of God's performing the work.

4. *The consecrated state is the only normal and true Christian state.*

According to the third Hebrew term, that used in Micah iv. 13, that which was consecrated or devoted, could never be recalled or redeemed; and not only so, but it was to be destroyed, or regarded as dead. A person, in becoming a Christian, becomes dead,—i. e., dead in regard to his old state, its purposes, its impulses, itself. So far as the old is concerned he is as though he had ceased to be,—destroyed, blotted out; dead to

the old, but alive to the new. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, we should serve in newness of spirit" (Rom. vii. 6). "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be indeed dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 11). What the Church needs is more dead men and women!

It is when thus dead that we truly begin to live. Says a writer: "A complete consecration is an easy life to live, a rest to the soul; and a partial consecration is the very opposite—a hard and difficult life." Massillon, the famous French pulpit orator and bishop, in his "Sentiments d'une Ame Touché de Dieu," says: "You can serve God with pleasure only when you serve him without reservation. From the moment that you have made him the entire master of your heart, hope and confidence and joy will spring up in the depth of your soul." As the author of the "Schönberg-Cotta Family" urges, this should be regarded as "the ordinary Christian life."

Some one has said that there are no words which express consecration on the human side more clearly than the two words "altar" and "sacrifice." This quite accords with what is written in Romans xii. 1: "I beseech you, therefore, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God." When the sacrifice was put upon the altar, that was the end of it, so far as the giver was concerned. It was no more his, but all God's. "Ye are not your own," verily. That is the only normal and true Christian state.

How this idea accords with the average Christian idea, i. e., the idea that passes as Christian, and is practically accepted as such, is a question perhaps not difficult to answer.

5. *Consecration results in service.*

That is the idea of the fourth Hebrew term, *mala yad*, to "fill the hand." This peculiar expression occurs in the Old

Testament eighteen times. Says Plumptre, writing on the Jewish priesthood: "This appears to have been regarded as the essential part of the consecration; and the Hebrew, 'to fill the hand,' is accordingly used as a synonym for 'to consecrate.'" While by no means allowing that this is the essential part of consecration,¹ doubtless, so far as concerns our relation to the church and to men, service is the design of our consecration. "Go work to-day in my vineyard," says Christ. Not, simply, get into the vineyard: not, go where you can lie in the shade of the vines, or devour the grapes; but *work*. Consecration that does not result in service is no consecration. Saint Paul sums it all up in these words: "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31).

Nor does service stop with the work of one's hands: it includes his substance also. Said one to a professing Christian: "Whose pocket-book is that you are carrying?" "My own," was the reply. "Oh! I thought it was the Lord's!" innocently rejoined the first. Consecration that does not reach the pocket, and embrace Christ's law of stewardship, fails in the test point. As a religious editor well says: "Gold was the first offering laid at the feet of Jesus. Its use is the divine test of character. Afflictions, sorrows, losses, test us; but they are involuntary. Prides, conceits, professions, forms, fellowships, and even ecstasies—all these are on the skirmish line. The purse is the citadel. Armies that do their fighting on the skirmish line are raiders, not conquerors. Baptisms that do not reach the pocket are like creatures born without souls.

¹"The consecration of the priests consists of two classes of acts: (1) Washing, robing, and anointing; which three acts form the real consecration of the person to the priestly office; (2) A threefold offering, by which the persons thus were put into all the functions and rights of the priesthood" (Oehler's *Old Testament Theology*, §95, p. 210).

They may be fine animals, but they are not men. Works, not words, are the measure of devotion. When God would build a tabernacle or a temple, his people were asked for the material. 'Tithes in the treasury' touch the springs that open the windows of heaven." Genuine consecration reaches not only the services of a man's hands and lips, but of his substance.

6. *Violation of the obligation belonging to the consecrated state does not release from the obligations: they remain binding evermore.*

Charam is irrevocable. And when the Nazarite, or consecrated one, defiled his consecration, "the days that were before were lost, because his separation was defiled." He was not released: he must go back to the beginning, and fulfill all requirements the same as though he had not transgressed. The longer he delayed to assume again and discharge violated obligations, of course the greater his guilt became.

It is to be feared that many of our young people, when their consecration-obligations have been violated, or their pledge has been broken, consider that they are released from their obligations, and that their pledge is no longer binding. A most serious mistake! The will of the sovereign, the superior, not the pleasure of the subject, the inferior, gives to obligation its binding force. Sanction works from above, downward; not from below, upward. Only God can grant a dispensation from the obligations that belong to the consecrated state. Demission of duty he nowhere provides for. Self-release is self-condemnation. The duty-delinquent, the pledge-breaker, must go back (and he should go at once, instantly), take up the duty laid down, revive the pledge broken, and from that point pursue the way of complete obedience. Church-covenants, Endeavor or League

pledges, vows of every sort, should be scrupulously regarded as most sacred things, "holy of holies," and honored accordingly. "There is no discharge in that war."

Such is our Bible study upon CONSECRATION, with the consequent deductions.

To recapitulate the latter, they are:—

1. Those who are consecrated are chosen to it of God.
2. God performs the work of consecration and preparation for service.
3. God performs this work on condition of man's unreserved surrender and fully intended obedience.
4. The consecrated state is the only normal and true Christian state.
5. Consecration results in service.
6. Violation of consecration-obligations does not release therefrom, but they remain binding evermore.

As we have seen, our consecration, once made, is made once for all, and, so far as God is concerned, it can never be recalled. We see, therefore, how utterly erroneous is the expression so often heard in the young people's Consecration Meetings: "I desire to consecrate myself again to the Master's service." This is an error which grows out of a misconception of what the Bible idea of consecration is, and who effects it. The expression should be corrected. God consecrates, not we ourselves. The beloved young people should understand that, if they are Christ's true followers, they are consecrated,—entirely consecrated. This is a fact which they should evermore recognize and hold in lively appreciation. What they should, the rather, say, is: "I here recognize anew God's consecration of me, and I earnestly desire more of his grace that I may better live the life of separation and service which my consecration requires."

While it is true that, so far as God is concerned, our consecration can never be recalled, still it is no doubt true that, owing to the coexistence of the old and the new in us, owing to the mingled play and interplay of forces good and bad in our experience, there may be to our consciousness a sense of our withdrawal, more or less, from the consecrated state. Those who are in this condition, are like Noah's dove: it left the ark, but found no rest for the sole of its foot till it returned to the ark. Such find no rest wherever they roam, or into whatever state they come: they will not, they cannot, find it till they return, consciously, to the dear altar of God, where their sacrificial self-surrender was first made. Return: recognize, with mind and heart, God's full, abiding consecration.

Let it be emphasized, in conclusion, that our part in the consecration is simply to submit ourselves to God, to bring ourselves to the altar and lay us upon it. He does the rest.

The proof that we are consecrated is, that we are fitted to do the work appointed by him for us to do. The particular experimental evidence is, a sense of willingness to do his will, and to let him do with us as seemeth good in his sight.

"Consecrate me now to thy service, Lord,
By the power of grace divine;
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
And my will be lost in thine."