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Mysteries, Real and Imaginary—No. 2.

DEATH.

God has seen fit not to tell us much on this subject that we should like to know. He has made it clear, however, that death does not mean extinction. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," means that there is something in man that survives physical dissolution. Then we are told that the spirit returns to God who gave it; Christ committed his spirit to the Father and assured the thief that he should be with him that day in Paradise. Stephen called upon the Lord to receive his spirit, and Paul declared, just before his death, that it was far better to depart and be with Christ, and said, moreover, that for him to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord. I know some try to explain away Christ's assurance to the thief by what he said to Mary on the morning of the resurrection; but it is evident he meant by this, that he had not ascended since his resurrection. That man is a spirit is involved in the fact that he was made in the image and likeness of God. The body, all through the Scripture, is recognized as only the temple in which the man dwells. Then God declares that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that he is not the God of dead men but of the living, and Jesus said of little children that their angels do always worship before the face of my Father in heaven. Add to these facts: the friends and brethren of Peter thought Rhoda had seen his spirit; the experience of millions of believers who have seen their loved ones on the other shores as their souls were leaving their bodies; the parabolic teachings of our Lord, and the evidence is overwhelming. It is, therefore, apparent that all Scripture which refers to dead men as silent and ignorant, speaks of their bodies. Take, for example, "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." It may throw some light on this subject to look at man from a Scripture standpoint. He is a dual being, namely, body and spirit. The soul is simply the life of this dual being and refers to his animal or spiritual life, and sometimes to both.

This leads us to the discussion of the next subject:

HELL.

There is a disposition, just now, to blot this place out of God's universe, but the tendency proves its existence. We not only find it in revelation and in nature, but in every human breast. There is something deep down in each of our hearts that says, if there is not a hell there ought to be. If sin is a fact, then hell is a reality, for hell is only sin run to seed. Our translators have greatly mystified this subject. There are two words in the original, one referring primarily to the grave and secondarily to the place of the departed, whether heaven or hell, the other referring primarily to a place outside of Jerusalem where the filth and waste of the city was burned, and secondarily to the unquenchable fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Some theologians have made much of the literal meanings of these words, but to handle the word of God in this way is to destroy it, and, indeed, to render all language meaningless. It is like taking an instrument to pieces to find the music, and then swearing there is no music, because this process does not reveal it. Some have asked, "Do you believe in a literal fire?" Yes, or something worse, for if fire is only a figure, God deliver us from the reality! Others ask, "Do we go to our final place of abode immediately after death?" Yes, so Jesus taught in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and in his assurance to the thief on the cross. Objectors ask, "Why, then, the general judgment?" Because God wishes the assembled universe to see that he has been just in the condemnation of the wicked and the justification of the righteous; and standing there in our resurrected bodies, we shall be witnesses for or against ourselves according to the character we carry out of this world. And it seems to me the most awful hell that can ever horrify any soul is to stand there unwashed by the blood of Jesus. Once more, we are asked, "Is the

punishment everlasting?" Yes, because sin is continuous, and evil men and seducers wax worse and worse. Dives neither desired nor promised to do any better, only prayed for a little relief and did not go to God for this. He plead that Lazarus might be permitted to do as much for him there as he had done for Lazarus here. Abraham reminded him that he was abiding by his own choice, and that the fixedness of that choice was the hopelessness of his condition.

HEAVEN.

We know as little here as other-where, but what little we do know is exceedingly precious, aye, a very heaven on earth; as little as it is, we cannot tell it. Words tremble and break down under the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that overwhelms us as we view from afar the third heaven where God resides—that holy, happy place, that glorious city whose builder and maker is himself. But it is not so much the place as the condition of its inhabitants. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when we shall see him we shall be like him." Then I have thought, or have tried to think, of the ecstasy that will fill our souls when we see Jesus. Words fail me here, for to utter my soul would lift me into glory. Some have never felt the joy of which we speak, they neither hope to know the Saviour, nor themselves, nor their loved ones and friends in that world of bliss, for not to know each other is not to know one's self or the Saviour. The long list of names in Scripture, and the register in heaven, are meaningless unless we retain our identity. What is the use of my going to heaven if I am going to be something other than myself, knowing nobody and nobody knowing me? "But," the objector says, "how could I be happy to know that my loved ones are damned, or to know those I had wronged?" You do greatly err, my friend, not knowing the Scriptures. Our sins are blotted out, and as to our loved ones who are lost, we see them as God sees them. They have lost all that we loved in them, are spiritual corpses that are at once repulsive to themselves and to us. This is why they call upon the rocks and hills to fall upon them and hide them from the presence of him who sitteth upon his throne, and to whom all hearts are revealed. If Christ can be happy who died for them, you need not be uneasy about yourself. If his compassionate heart is not troubled, you can rest assured about yours. Bear in mind that a soul can never be damned till it has rotted, till it has lost all of the image and likeness of God, and is of its father the devil—in his image and likeness. To go to heaven means to be like God, to go to hell means to be like the devil. To go to heaven you have to crucify the body, to go to hell you have to crucify the soul which means the loss of both body and soul in unending agony.

R. E. PEELE.

Feeling in Religion.

Feeling is of just as much use in religion as steam is in an engine—if it drives the engine, it is good; but if it does not, it is not good for anything but to fizz and hiss and buzz. There are some people that seem to be like yard-engines, that never go anywhere, but keep puffing and blowing and hissing, and running up and down side-tracks, doing nothing, going nowhere. Feeling in religion is of no value at all if it does not propel us along the track of duty toward our final destination—God. Fine feelings, glorious feelings—we all have them after our measure; but fine feelings, quick responsive sensibilities—do you not know that they have been the occasion of the ruin of some of the greatest geniuses that God ever gave to the human race? Feeling is a miserably cheap substitute for duty. It takes more than being happy on Sunday in church to be religious.

My friends, religion never stops short of holiness. It means that, first and last. Religion does not stop at feeling; religion does not stop at tradition, or at respectability, or at ecclesiasticism, or at painted windows, or at spacious cathedral aisles, or eloquent preaching, or delicious music; religion means, always has meant, always must mean, the actual communion of the human soul with God in righteousness and holiness. And that kind of religion costs; it takes the best there is in a man to be religious that way.—Joseph Parker, D. D.

What is the Bible to You?

Tell me what the Bible is to a young christian, and I will generally tell what he is. This is the pulse to try—this is the barometer to look at if we would know the state of the heart. I have no notion of the Spirit dwelling in a man, and not giving clear evidence of his presence. And I believe it to be a signal evidence of the Spirit's presence when the word is really precious to a man's soul. When there is no appetite for the truths of Scripture, the soul cannot be in a state of health. There is some serious disease. Reader, what is the Bible to you? Is it your guide, your counsellor, your friend? Is it your rule of faith and practice? Is it your measure of truth and error, of right and wrong? It ought to be so. It was given for this purpose. If it is not, do you really love your Bible?—The Sunlight.

Govern your thoughts when alone and your tongue when in company.—Kempis.

Consecration.

"Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord." Ex. 33: 29.

Fill your hands to the Lord. According to the Jewish ritual when a person was dedicated or consecrated to the Lord, his hands were filled with some present suitable to offer unto God. Hence the term consecration signified "filling up." It was an orientalism also, for every inferior when he appeared in the presence of his ruler, to bring a present in his hand.

The doctrine of consecration, as it progresses in Scripture, takes on a complex aspect. In the New Testament it reveals several distinct phases. Not apprehending this great truth in its full symmetry has led to many extravagances in christian experience.

Desire to be free from the dominion of sin is surely to be coveted more than the love of sin; and striving after holiness more to be desired than indifference towards it. Nevertheless, the soul seeking an experience of decided consecration is exposed to many serious dangers. The subtle foe is ever on the alert, ready to supply base imitations for genuine experiences. Therefore we should try every spirit, and test every confession of a professedly surrendered soul with the unerring word of God. Nor need we hesitate to condemn as false any theory or experience which makes self the prominent factor in consecration. Thinking about self, speaking of self, and glorying in self, are fruit which grow on other trees than those of the divine Husbandman's planting. Nor are we far from dangerous ground when emotions or ecstasies, produced by whatever cause, become the soul's pursuit. When such is the case, we probably shall soon drift into the spirit of comparing ourselves with ourselves, and of secretly rejoicing in our supposed attainments. Nay, more, we shall be apt to compare ourselves with others, and esteem ourselves better than they. Pride thrives on our seeming superior holiness. The truly holy man is one who is ever ashamed of himself, and would fain dismiss every thought and calculation about self from the heart; because as a real disciple he is exercised in heart and thought with Christ, his Lord and Master. His soul hungers to know more of him, to be engrossed with his varied perfections, to realize his wonderful adaptation to every need of our whole being, to lose himself in the ocean of his love, and realize the sovereign free grace of God in his exceeding kindness to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. The seraphic Rutherford, the holy Bengel, the devoted McChyne, the earnest Brainerd, were truly consecrated men; peculiar in denying and not extolling self; exulted in Christ.

There are many things which scriptural consecration include, amongst which we may mention:

I. SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL.

The seeking and doing of one's own will is a hereditary evil in the rebellious flesh of man. It is, therefore, contrary to nature to submit to God's will, the carnal mind being enmity against God. So it is entirely of grace when one is brought not only into acquiescence, but into joyful submission to God's will. For it is possible to submit with resignation and exclaim, "Thy will be done," without rising into the higher experience of delight in the will of God. There may be a joyless philosophy in acquiescence, and a sorrowing faith even in submission, but these lie below the plane of full consecration. Nor does the sentimental spirituality of Faber, expressed in the line, "I worship thee, sweet will of God," of necessity attain to the height of actual consecration. An enlightened understanding will be occupied with God himself as the object of worship, and not with any impersonal attribute or perfection of the Godhead. And the intelligent believer will seek to know the will of the Lord through his word, not to worship it, but to obey it. "I delight to do thy will, O my God," (Ps 41: 8), was the glad confession of the truly consecrated man and no more sobering experience is there than this, correcting our flippant boasting of things beyond our measure. The soul that cannot truly say, "My delight is to do my Lord's will," knows as yet, experimentally, but a partial consecration.

II. THE YIELDING UP OF SELF.

Full consecration includes whole-hearted yielding up of life to its rightful owner. We do not like the word "surrender." It is too rough, and savors of the highwayman exacting, or the enemy demanding. It places God as in a threatening attitude with his exactions and penalties. Nor is it happily expressive of the believer's own action in the matter of consecration. The word is "yield;" a word frequently employed of trees bearing fruit, yielding all that is in them to the husbandman. In Hezekiah's letter to Israel and Judah, calling on them to observe the Passover, he exhorted them to yield themselves unto the Lord; and in Paul's letter to the Romans he urges the same duty. 2 Chron. 30: 8; Rom. 6: 13, 16, 19. Not indeed to an enemy, but to a friend do we yield, in joyful recognition that we are not our own, having been bought with a price, and are thereby called to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are his. 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.

III. HUMILITY.

Full consecration begets humility. In fact the soul is thoroughly humbled in reaching thereunto. Brusqueness of manner, haughtiness of bearing, inconsideration

of others' feelings, and expectation of honor above our fellows, are forms of pride endangering a close walk with God. Our God is a consuming fire, and the nearness of his presence would utterly destroy these evil things. Who would not exchange these and every rag of the far country for the sweet pure garment of humility? This is a robe which imparts to the wearer a true sense of personal unworthiness, leading such to esteem others better than themselves, and forever destroys all highmindedness. Courtesy, gentleness, patience, contentment with mean things, and willingness to be accounted unworthy, are characteristics of humility, and therefore of consecration. The spike-nard will shed abroad its fragrance, and the devoted disciple, like his master, cannot be hid. He need not therefore proclaim himself.

IV. SERVICE.

Consecration is a condition of service. Indolence, as one hath expressed it, "is the rust of the soul." There may be the service of waiting, but there will be no sluggishness, nor inertness in the life of a believer whose eye is ever on the Lord. Intellect, emotion, love, conscience, will all operate in their own departments, and co-operate under the guidance of the Spirit to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. The inquiry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" will be appropriate on our lips as the acknowledgment of our submission in confessing "Thy will be done." Ever remembering whose we are, and by whose grace we live, may it be ours to respond to the inquiry, "Who will go for us?" "Here am I, send me." Isa. 6: 8. But, in order to enter upon this experience, we must first recognize the fact that all believers are already consecrated by the purpose of the Father, by the blood of the Son, and by the sealing of the Spirit. For consecration is separation or devotedness. And as we have been already separated by the sovereign, distinct, and written action of the Father, Son and Spirit, we should ever aim at the purpose for which we are thus set apart, in cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh; in putting off the old man with his deeds; in avoiding every evil way; and in walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

Thus consecration becomes reduced to a few simple practical propositions. I cannot consecrate my old nature, for that is a dead corrupt thing, which God in receiving me, on the ground of Christ's merit, has judiciously set aside. I cannot consecrate my new nature, possessed by virtue of my union with Christ, for that from the beginning was and ever will be perfectly holy unto God. But this I can and must realize: that I have been called out from the world, and all its sin and death, to be wholly set apart and devoted to the Lord's special ownership. Thus the measure of my practical, manifest consecration will be exactly in proportion to the measure with which I apprehend God's sovereign act of consecration already accomplished upon me.—Rev. Geo. C. Needham's "Bible Briefs."

This and That.

This has reference to the State Sunday-school Convention held at Marion, S. C. Request was repeatedly made that some one write a brief account of the meeting to various newspapers. The Convention was called inter-denominational, but the name seemed inappropriate, if not a misnomer, as there were so few denominations inter (into) the thing. So few, in fact, that it strains the truth to speak of it in the plural number. In the closing exercises when requests were made to write an account of the meeting to denominational papers—rather paper—the singular number was used, as if there were only one such paper in the State, and the one mentioned is the one that so caustically scathed another denomination about a year ago. But that was not so mortifying an omission as was made during the meeting by one of the best speakers, who said "we have one Lord and one faith," but omitted to use that important word without which we cannot be loyal or faithful to the one Lord. But as there was emphasis placed upon the terms essential and non-essential, possibly that other word is what they term a non-essential—to obedience. To be sure they did not suppose that anyone thought it essential to salvation. But then, people don't usually tell of their own wrong, and as some christians do not comply with that condition of obedience—not salvation—it was necessary for the sake consistency (if) to omit the omission.

But worse than that! They not only omitted some things, they committed the egregious—shall I say mistake!—of saying that the inter-denominational convention had stimulated and originated the denominational conventions that are being held in different places! It was stated by one of the imported speakers that four years ago there was not a denominational Sunday-school convention in North Carolina, and that now the Baptists of the State have a convention, stimulated thereto by the inter-denominational convention.

Now the writer knows from personal knowledge—for he was a delegate—that the North Carolina Baptists had a Sunday-school convention ten years ago, and has now in his possession a copy of the minutes of 1882. Why will men commit such blunders by omitting to give honor to whom due?

It is on record, too, that there was a Sunday-school convention of Baptists held in South Carolina in 1861. The idea was con-

ceived by Col. W. H. Duncan of Barnwell, S. C. The convention was held at Barnwell C. H. the second Sunday in May, 1861, with J. L. Shuck president, and W. H. Duncan secretary. Three of the original members of that convention still survive. The president was the Dr. Shuck of African missionary fame.

But notwithstanding this adverse criticism, good was done. Prof. Hamill of Illinois fully demonstrated that the normal method of teaching is superior to many of the old stilted styles of teaching.

The writer was surprised to hear many of the preachers say they never saw that style of teaching before, and earnestly and sincerely hopes that they and the superintendents and teachers will adopt the method as far as possible and practicable. Hon. J. M. Johnson of the Marion Baptist Sunday-school has long used the normal method efficiently, and if he could devote more of his time to the work, could greatly improve his method.

Prof. Hamill is a very efficient and magnetic teacher, a pleasant and forcible speaker. Though now of Illinois, he is a native of Alabama. He wore the gray in the late war, and bears the marks of warfare upon his person.

That refers to the "erratic" foreign missionary and his colleagues. About a month ago the writer received a tract from China written by T. P. C. He thought it a little strange that a tract should be mailed direct to him from China. Now it turns out that his personal friend and school-mate is a colleague of the "erratic" brother. T. P. C. visited this place a few years ago sowing his seeds of error. But I am glad the seeds were not fertile. It seems strange that such sensible men should do such strange and "erratic" things. But then I take it that most of the other brethren, at home and abroad, have more sense than to be fooled and led astray. The King's Mountain Association and the Foreign Mission Board have acted wisely. Most of the brethren will do to depend upon. Suppose the erratics are not returned to the foreign field, will they do for home work? Would they not cripple missions if they were home pastors? Is it not evident to these brethren that no church nor Association can possibly build up the credit or claim the confidence, financially, which our Foreign Mission Board has at home and abroad? It has this credit because the great Baptist brotherhood is back of it. Certainly we all believe in the independence of our churches, but these individual and independent churches must organize, as any other army, if we would accomplish anything worthy the time or worthy of the cause. These "erratic" brethren have extreme views of what they call independence. But brethren, is it not insubordination instead of independence? It is the same kind of trouble Washington had with the colonial soldiers at the beginning of the Revolutionary war. Are we not brethren, and can we not work together? M. J. W.

The Devil's Call.

Is it not true that sometimes the devil calls a man to preach? And when he does, he calls a man whom God would never call. And for this reason he calls him—because God does not need him as a preacher. God knows he is not adapted to the work for various reasons. He will make a much better farmer, mechanic or merchant, and in these spheres he may be pious, useful and modest; but as a preacher he will be a failure, or tame, indiscreet, or full of self, seeking reputation or personal aggrandizement to the detriment of the church and loss of souls. In order to establish a reputation for success he may fill the church with easy-made converts, with a ruinously superficial experience. With this the devil is well pleased, for the man is fulfilling his calling. Besides, the devil may persuade a good, godly, useful class-leader to become a preacher; for if he cannot induce him to sin flagrantly, he will seek to curtail his usefulness by getting him out of the proper sphere.—N. C. in Richmond Advocate.

The Power of Example.

If you live in the full sunshine of Christ and have him not merely playing upon the surface of your mind, but sunk deep down in it, transforming your whole being, then some men will, as they look at you, be filled with strange longings and say, "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."—A. MacLaren.

I am told by men who have been in the Indian country that very often you will find a trail over a mountain, and you will find only one footprint, as if but one man had trod the path; and I am told that the Chief goes on and the tribe follows, and they put their feet into his footprints. Our Chief has gone on before us and left us an example. We are to follow in his footsteps; and we would have continual blessing if we did not go out of the path; the trouble with most of us is that we think our way is better than his, and we are not willing to follow in his footsteps.—D. L. Moody.

We are never without help. We have no right to say of any good work, it is too hard for me to do; or of any sorrow, it is too hard for me to bear; or of any sinful habit, it is too hard for me to overcome.—Elizabeth Charles.