

The Lost Message of Consecration

From reading some old books I've discovered a missing spiritual dimension. The Lord is inviting us to reclaim it.

A few months ago I went on a special diet. I put aside all newly published books and limited my reading to a small collection of Christian classics, mostly devotional works by Andrew Murray, Watchman Nee, E.M. Bounds, Charles Spurgeon, A.B. Simpson and Corrie Ten Boom. I knew God had a message for me in those musty pages.

I had noticed a similar theme in all these books, but it took me a while to crack the code. These writers from the 19th and 20th centuries wrote from a spiritual depth that I rarely see in the church today, and I wanted to know their secret. I slowly began to figure things out while reading A.B. Simpson's book, *A Larger Christian Life*, which he wrote in 1890 when the Holiness Movement was at its zenith in the United States.

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Simpson often preached about Abraham's offering of his son Isaac on the altar at Mount Moriah, and he called Christians to the place of self-sacrifice. Mount Moriah, Simpson wrote, "signifies the deeper spiritual experience into which the fully consecrated person must come. In this act of obedience, the sanctified self is laid on the altar just as Isaac was."

I read similar comments about consecration, or full surrender, in Watchman Nee's *The Release of the Spirit*, which was first

published in China in 1955. Nee taught us that the path to spiritual fruitfulness—and to true, intimate knowledge of the Lord—is the brokenness of the outward man. He explained that God uses tests and trials in our lives to break our selfish nature so that Christ's nature can flow through us.

Nee wrote: "No life manifests more beauty than the one who is broken! Stubbornness and self-love have given way to beauty in the one who is broken by God."

Perhaps the reason I find so much nourishment in these old words is that I don't hear much today about the crucified life, suffering, brokenness or surrender. We rarely talk of altars and we avoid altar calls. We don't invite people to a deeper spiritual realm because few even know about such a place; often even our leaders are too busy using God to boost their egos or to amass personal wealth.

Today's shallow, "evangelical lite" culture focuses on self, self and more self. Christian books today are mostly about self-improvement, not self-sacrifice. We teach people to claim their "best life now"—and to claim it on their terms. Our message is one of self-empowerment: God wants to make you happy, so just add a little bit of God to your life (on your terms of course) and He will bless you, prosper you and make all your dreams come true.

How strange that message seems when contrasted with the old hymns Christians used to sing back in the days of holiness revivals. This song written by Adelaide Pollard in 1907 seems eerily foreign today:

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the potter, I am the clay;*

*Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting yielded and still.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.*

The woman who penned those words was an itinerant Bible teacher who was discouraged because she didn't have the funds to make a missionary journey to Africa. She found great comfort when she put all her plans and desires on the altar and freshly surrendered to God's will for her life. The song that sprung from her anguish blessed millions, but today it has lost its popularity because we simply don't relate.

I believe we must reclaim the forgotten message of consecration. It is not enough to know Christian doctrines or to paint a nice Christian veneer on the surface of our lives. God wants our hearts. We must embrace the cross daily. It is not enough to simply avoid the sins that our Christian culture says are the "worst"; we must also allow God's knife to slay the pride, the self-will, the self-confidence and the self-glorification that our backslidden Christian culture encourages.

I invite you to reclaim this lost message by praying a "dangerous prayer" of consecration. Let God assume the throne of your life while you abdicate. You can pray something like this:

"Lord, You are the potter and I am the clay. Forgive me for my selfishness. I consecrate my life to You afresh today. I give You permission to break me, mold me, bend me and make me according to Your perfect will. This is all the work of Your grace. I choose to embrace whatever circumstances You must send into my life in order to rid me of pride and self-will. I choose to live on Your altar. As I empty myself, I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Amen"

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Twitter at leegrady. On Sept. 11 he will be participating in the National Sacred Assembly, held near Ground Zero in New York City. Local Christians are gathering that day at county courthouses to pray for the nation. For more information go to

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