

Christ Manifesting Himself to His Disciples.

THREE IMPORTANT LESSONS ON SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.

Luke xxiv. 13-36.

II. "Following on to know the Lord." An additional word of Counsel.

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For the Presbyterian Review.

We hear much in these days about *consecration* and *full consecration*, as distinguishing one class of Christians from another. It seems almost to be assumed that, as in the Church of Rome there is *le Chretien religieux* and *le Chretien non-religieux*, so with us, there is the *consecrated* and the *unconsecrated* Christian; the distinction being, at the same time, of such a superficial character, that John the Baptist would occupy a far higher place than our Lord himself. Would it not be better and safer to remember that according to the teaching of scripture, consecration is characteristic and distinctive of the Christian as such. The unconsecrated man is not a Christian. The only real Christian is the man who, constrained by the love of Christ and the mercies of God, presents himself a living sacrifice to God, and not merely once for all, but every day of his life.

That there are Christians whose daily life presents a very imperfect exhibition of Christian principles, compared with the life of some other Christians is not to be questioned. But we cannot allow the propriety of using the term *consecration* to express the difference between the two classes. We admit the consecration of the one is very imperfect but it is *real*. And its imperfection may be such, or so great, as to make its reality very questionable. A follower of Christ may, like Peter, "follow Him afar off," and so far off, as to make it very doubtful if he is following Him at all.

This may seem a digression. But it is not. For when treating, as we are now doing, of Christ's manifestation of Himself, we are at the root of the Christian life. According to interest in Him—our tried and proved interest in Him and desire of His presence, will He manifest Himself to us, as He will not do to those whose interest is so divided between Him and the things of the world, that it is hard to say which is *supremo*, or hard to say whether we are living to Him or dividing our service between Him and Mammon. There are very many who know what it is to have an interest about Divine things awakened in their minds, but who never attain the full satisfaction of mind that is attainable. They never rise above the region of uncertainty and perplexity, and this for no other reason than that they do not follow up, in the way we have indicated, the interest that has been awakened in them. It would seem that they have not become alive to the fact that the interest they feel is of immense value, chiefly as being preparatory to the full manifestation of Christ which leaves no doubt of His gracious presence and agency. For, such manifestations are not to be expected, except as the gracious reward of tried interest about the Saviour. Those only may warrantably look for them, whose souls are possessed with such an interest about the Saviour as will not yield to the allurements of pleasure, or the fear of man, or the urgency of the cares of this life. There is indeed no inconsistency between a due attention to the duties of any lawful vocation and our spiritual interests. But it is only reasonable to expect that He who claims our hearts, and who cares for nothing else in comparison, will put the state of them to the test, so as to prove what is really supreme in our regard. And therefore it is that there are times in our spiritual history that are *very critical* times, that is, when Christ is testing us, with the design of proving whether our desire after Him is such, that we would rather obtain satisfactory assurance of our interest in His love, than secure any other advantage or comfort, however lawful, valuable, and important. Many, we fear, have not learned, and many never learn, to be observant of such *crises* in Christian experience; so that when Christ comes very near to them, and is just about to give them a glimpse of Himself that would fill them with joy unspeakable, some earthly interest diverts them from "following on to know the Lord." Instead of following up their advantage, they forfit it by letting Christ go, for the sake of some earthly advantage or comfort, losing perhaps a most precious opportunity that may never recur.

There are probably some who when they pursue these thoughts, will see in them the description of their own experience. And they may perhaps fear that, having been guilty of the error and folly of allowing Christ to withdraw, after He had enlightened their minds and warmed their hearts they may come short of

salvation. While it is an awful thought, it may be to them a salutary one, that there are some in whose cup, the most bitter of all ingredients will be the reflection that they were so near the kingdom from which they are forever shut out. For, fearing as they do that such may be their own case, if their fear but urge them to deplore their error and folly, at the feet of Christ, they will find that He is more than ready to forgive all their neglect of precious opportunity. But let them not forget that while He is so forgiving, He takes it ill that His approaches should be thought nothing of and disregarded; and let them be careful not to repeat their sin.

[FROM A SPEECH DELIVERED LAST SUMMER AT EDINBURGH BY THE MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.]

A temporary fall of revenue is not a matter to be lamented, as if it were of vital moment. It may be a blessing in disguise, if it teaches us a lesson of the wise and cautious stewardship which looks "before and after." No concern, secular or sacred, should ever be administered on principles or methods which from a transient defalcation, infer a permanent disaster, and do not provide for the natural fluctuations of sufficiency or of short coming. There are two ways of conducting a mission, either at home or abroad. The one is to obtain sufficient funds, organize a staff whose expenses will not exceed these funds; supervise their work and their accounts carefully, deal with them generously and encouragingly, but never induce or allow them to run into debt. The other is to adopt the principle of trust in the Lord, acted on with a success which has justified it by Mr. Mullen of Bristol. He asked nobody for subscriptions and yet found that these were always forthcoming. He took what was given him, and used it sagaciously, and made his outlay square with his receipts. Even where the mission is a work of faith its managers should be heedful to keep within the bounds of their income. This caution is all the more necessary when the mission or christian enterprise, whatever it be, avowedly depends for its finances on the free-will offerings of the members of the church. Be these gifts great or small, they ought to define the limits of expenditure. If we do not profess to conduct our missions on the principle that "The Lord will provide," we must conduct them on the principles of ordinary business. And these principles forbid our running into debt. The end does not justify the means. People not only get tired of hearing appeals for more money, else the mission operations must be curtailed, or the interest on the loan, or the advance must accumulate, or some other embarrassment must arise; they disapprove of the policy which incurs these risks. And their disapproval is a proof not of their indifference to the success of the missions, but of their own rectitude. It is possible to approve of a mission and yet to object to the method on which it is conducted. Probably the financial support given to all the various missions and agencies of the church would be augmented were more information about these conveyed to our people in an interesting way congregations should never be asked to contribute for an object unless it has been fully explained to them why their money is needed and how it is to be spent. Their lack of interest is often the mere result of their lack of knowledge.

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Helpful Bible-Readings.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON B.D., TH.D., GALT.

Believers Joy.

The Joy of Faith—Acts 16. 31.
 Joy at the Conversion of others—Acts 15. 3.
 Joy at Grace given—Acts 11. 23.
 Joy of Divine healing—Acts 8. 8.
 Joy in suffering—Acts 5. 41.
 Joy in fellowship—Acts 2. 46. 47.
 Joy in life and ministry—Acts 20. 24.
 Joy of welcome—Acts 21. 17.
 Joy of witnessing—Acts 23. 11.
 Joy of self-defence—Acts 24. 10. 26. 2.
 Joy in human favor—Acts 27. 3.
 Joy in cheering others—Acts 27. 22. 25.

"The Anointing."

Of power—Acts 1. 8; 10. 38.
 Of gladness—Heb. 1. 9; Ps. 45. 7.
 For preaching—Luke 4. 18.
 Of knowledge—1 Jno. 2. 27.
 Of tongues—Acts 10. 45.
 Of faith—Acts 10. 45.
 Of liberty—Isa. 10. 27.
 It is of God—2 Cor. 1. 21; Ps. 23. 5.
 The Anointed are Gods—Ps. 105. 15.
 And are seen in Christ the Anointed One—Ps. 84. 9.