

A.B. Simpson:

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12: 1.)

The twenty-first chapter of Joshua gives us an account of the inheritance of the Levites. They were the official tribe in ancient Israel, and entrusted with all the services of the sanctuary, the work of education, and the religious culture of all the tribes. They were the types of Christian service, and represented the principles of true consecration.

REDEMPTION

They represented the principle of redemption as the basis of consecration. In the eighth chapter of Numbers and the seventeenth and eighteenth verses, we read, "For all the first-born of the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast; on the day that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the first-born of the children of Israel."

They were thus substituted for the first-born who had been doomed to death, and saved by the blood of the Paschal lamb. The Levites stood for these, and thus represented the idea of redemption. They were as men who had been bought with a price and whose lives were not their own. But God did not require their death, but took their life instead.

Our service as consecrated Christians and our consecration should likewise spring from the redemption of Christ's blood. This is the basis which the Apostle presents as the ground of our surrender to God. "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body, which is God's."

There is no credit or merit in our consecrating ourselves to God, because we already belong to Him and have no right to retain ourselves. He has purchased every power of our being and every possibility of our existence, and when we yield ourselves to Him, we simply recognize the fact that we are already His, and that He has a right to all that we can give or be.

"When you have done all, say we are unprofitable servants, for we have done what was our duty to do." Let no man think, therefore, that because he has made a complete surrender of himself to God, he has put God in any sense in his debt, or has aught whereof to glory. He has simply paid his honest debts and taken his true place in the divine economy, that is all. And he may well say with David, "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of You, and of Your own have we given You."

SEPARATION

The Levites represented the principle of separation as the element of consecration. We read again in Numbers 8:14, "You shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel; and the Levites shall be Mine."

Our consecration separates us from the world and sin, and brings us out from our natural life to be exclusively the Lord's. Therefore, we read in the twelfth chapter of Romans immediately after the command, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, "Be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." It is not merely an outward separation, but a separation which transforms us by a new spirit and a disposition which separates itself from evil, by natural detachment.

The Pharisees separated themselves outwardly from sinners, but in spirit they were identical. Christ Jesus mingled with sinners, but in spirit, He was as distinct from them as from darkness, and oil from water. The little plant may grow out of a manure heap, and be surrounded by filth, and covered very often with the floating dust that is borne upon the breeze, but its white roots are separated from the unclean soil, and its leaves and flowers have no affinity with the dust that settles upon them; and after a shower of summer rain they throw off every particle of defilement, and look up as fresh and spotless as before, for their intrinsic nature cannot have any part with these defiling things.

This is the separation which Christ requires and which He gives. There is no merit in my staying from the theater if I want to go. There is no value in my abstaining from the foolish novel or the intoxicating cup, if I am

all the time wishing I could have them. My heart is there, and my soul is defiled by the desire for evil things. It is not the world that stains us, but the love of the world. The true Levite is separated from the desire for earthly things, and even if he could, he would not have the forbidden pleasures which others prize.

DEDICATION

The Levites represented the principle of dedication, as the essence of consecration. The Levites were presented to the Lord by Moses as a living sacrifice. "You shall set the Levites before Aaron and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the Lord. You shall cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. For they are wholly given unto Me, from among the children of Israel." (Num. 8: 13, 15, 16.) And again, Numbers 3: 6, 13: "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. Mine shall they be. I am the Lord."

And so it is required of us, as God's spiritual Levites, that we shall present our bodies a living sacrifice. We are already the Lord's by right of purchase, but now we must acknowledge that right and make a personal surrender, and when we do this He is pleased to accept it from us. It should be unconditional, unreserved and irrevocable, giving Him the right to own us and control us as He shall see best, and renouncing the right to self-control and self-ownership forever. And not only so, but we must do it gladly, and without regret or apprehension.

What would you think of a girl who was shrinking and hesitating whether to commit her life to the man she loves, and saying: "How can I leave my mother and go with this man?" If she loves him, she is only too glad to go with him. She loves to put herself entirely under his control, and trust all her happiness to his keeping, for she knows that he will only seek her good, and she feels safer in his hands than in her own, if he really has her affection.

And so God requires of us not only perfect surrender, but joyful surrender. If we hold anything back in our spirit, He will not accept us. He does not need us. He could create a million souls in a minute that would serve Him better. He only takes us because of what He can do for us. He only wants us unreservedly, so that He can be able more fully to bless us, and true consecration counts it an honor and a privilege to be able to give all and receive all in return.

It is because He wants to do so much for us that He demands the absolute control of all our being, as the foster-parent who adopts a child insists on having it take his name, and give him its full control, because he wants to make it the heir to his fortune. So God demands that we shall be His, and His alone, and then He gives to us as wholeheartedly as He expects us to give to Him.

Have we accepted this claim? Have we responded to His call? Have we made this unreserved, unconditional surrender? Have we presented our bodies a living sacrifice, our reasonable service?

SERVICE

The Levites represented service as the fruit of consecration.

The ministry of the Levites is thus described: "I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation."

They were divided into several families; the sons of Gershon, Kohath and Merari. The Gershonites had charge of the tabernacle, the tent, the covering, the hangings, the curtains and the cords. The Kohathites had a still more sacred ministry; they had charge of the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars and the vessels of the sanctuary, the most sacred things. The Merarites had charge of the boards of the tabernacle and the bars, the pillars, the sockets, and the vessels thereof. These ancient Levites set up the tabernacle, took it down, carried it from place to place and guarded it and waited upon the priests in their ministry. Later they were the teachers of the people, and looked after all the educational and social work of the tribes, and especially had charge of the cities of refuge and the reception and protection of the manslayer that fled from the avenger.

Thus they represented our Christian service in all its varieties as we are called to build up the spiritual house of the Lord, and to carry forward His Kingdom in all places and among all nations, bearing the burdens of His sanctuary and ministering in sacred things. The high inscription on the crest of many a noble family consists of the two words, "I serve." No nobler dignity can be conferred on a man than to make him a servant. The minister of the Gospel is just a servant, and this is the true meaning of the word.

James and Paul loved to call themselves "the servants of the Lord, and your servants, for Jesus' sake." Moses and Joshua were servants in the Lord's house, and David "served his generation by the will of God." The general commanding the army is but the servant of his country and his sovereign. The statesman bears the insignia of public service. The Lord Jesus Himself loved to say, "I am among you as he that serves"; and God is ever ministering to the whole creation.

We are called to be the servants of God, and our ministry is to set up the true sanctuary, and to wait at the unseen altar whose incense reaches within the veil. In the ages to come, we shall have still higher service. The present is but an apprenticeship for the more glorious future, and God is but schooling us for higher and nobler employments in the new earth and new heaven that are to come. This is the purpose of our consecration, that God may use us, and that we may be a blessing. It never was intended that one tribe out of twelve should do all the service of the house of God. They were but types of all the rest, and today, under the Gospel, we should all be Levites. "He has made us kings and priests unto God." There are no proxies in this army, and no substitutes accepted in this draft, but each must take his place, and God expects service and fruit from every follower of Christ. "Herein is My Father glorified," He has said to every one of us, "that you bear much fruit. So shall you be" -- wonderful disciples? No; but shall be "My disciples." We have no reason to consider ourselves His disciples, unless we are bearing "much fruit."

There are great varieties in the service of God. A few are called -- like the Kohathites to enter the sanctuary, and bear the more sacred vessels of the Lord, to take the holy ark and touch the sacred symbols of the mystic Cherubim. Theirs is the ministry of prevailing prayer, and theirs is to hear the secret of the Lord, to know His highest thought, and catch the very whisper of His will. Others are called to bear the boards and the rougher and heavier burdens. But to all it is enough to know that they are bearing the burdens of the sanctuary, and ministering to Him upon whom the angels wait, and at whose bidding the heavens hasten to obey.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teaches, on teaching; or he that exhorts, on exhortation; he that gives, let him do it with simplicity; he that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

PRACTICAL WORK

The Levites represented the principle of practical service in all the ordinary walks of life.

They were not shut up in Jerusalem in the tabernacle, but we find them distributed throughout every portion of the land, for the obvious purpose of diffusing the principles which they represented among all sections of the people. Beautifully this represents the application of the principles of consecration to all the ordinary occupations and walks of life. God does not want consecration bound up with our prayer book, folded away in our Bagster Bible, left in our pew between Sabbaths, or brought out for an airing at the weekly prayer meeting. He does not want our religious phrases and tones for holy days and special times. He wants every place sacred, every time Sabbatic, and everything inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord." He wants us to sit at our dinner table, and eat and drink to the glory of God, to talk with our families in simple happy fellowship, having our speech always "seasoned with salt." He wants all our life to be as holy as our communion services, and even our buying and selling to be like a sacrament of sweetness and sanctity.

In the coming age, every pot will be inscribed with "Holiness to the Lord," every cooking utensil will cook for Christ, and even the bells on the horses will chime out Glory to Immanuel's name.

I heard the other day, of a company of Christians who came together for a season of waiting upon the Lord, in which they would not allow any of the party to talk on any ordinary subject, or go out to purchase any article in the stores, or to engage in any business which could be avoided. Every moment was supposed to be set apart for some sacred exercise. This is essentially the idea of monasticism, and it is unwholesome. It is just as holy to laugh as to cry, and to use your handsaw as your prayer book. We can bring Christ into common things as fully as into what we call religious services. Indeed, it is the highest and hardest application of divine grace, to bring it down to the ordinary matters of life, and therefore God is far more honored in this than even in things that are more specially sacred.

Therefore, in this wonderful chapter of Romans which is the manual of practical consecration, just after the passage that speaks of ministering in sacred things the Apostle comes at once to the common, social and secular affairs into which we are to bring our consecration principles. We read : "Be kindly affectioned one to

another with brotherly love in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

God wants the Levites scattered all over the cities of Israel. He wants your workshop, factory, kitchen, nursery, editor's room and printing office, as much as your pulpit and closet. He wants you to be just as holy at high noon on Monday or Wednesday as in the sanctuary on Sabbath morning, and to have your consecration as much in Wall Street's whirlpool of trade and business, as in the Cathedral aisle or the quiet closet.

May God give to us this holy priesthood, and make us the light of the world and the salt of the earth!

ALL IN GOD

The Levites represented the principle of finding all our resources in God Himself.

In the thirteenth chapter and thirty-third verse of Joshua we read: "Unto the tribe of Levi, Moses gave not any inheritance; the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance, as He said unto them." This is very significant, God gave the land to the other tribes but He gave Himself to the Levites. There is such a thing in Christian life as having an inheritance from the Lord, and there is such a thing as having the Lord Himself for our inheritance.

Some people get a sanctification from the Lord which is of much value, but which is variable, and often impermanent. Others have learned the higher lesson of taking the Lord Himself to be their Keeper and their Sanctity, and abiding in Him they are kept above the vicissitudes of their own states and feelings. Some get from the Lord large measures of joy and blessing, and times of refreshing from His presence that are very gracious. Others, again, learn to take the Lord Himself as their Joy; and then it is true, as He promised: "That My joy shall remain in you and that your joy might be full." Some people are content to have peace with God, but others have taken "the peace of God that passes all understanding, to keep the hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Some have faith in God, while others have the faith of God. Some have many touches of healing from God, others, again, have learned to live in the very health of God Himself, and to say: "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh." Some are always wanting to be strengthened and helped by the Lord, others have learned to take the Lord Himself as their strength, and to find His strength made perfect in their weakness. Some are trying to serve God and to use His Holy Spirit as their Helper and Strength for service. Others have so yielded themselves up to God that He just uses them, and they are the channels and vessels of His life and strength.

Such a life leads us constantly to the end of ourselves, and as we grow less He increases and becomes our All in All. True Levitical service is to be lost in God, and find in Him our wisdom, our faith, our love, our power, our peace, our joy, our portion, and our all. Such a life lifts us above surrounding circumstances, and even inner states, and connects us with the Infinite Source of all supplies, the heart of God Himself, and we are like the old Norwegian knight, who drank from a horn that was never dry, because a little tube connected it with the river, and as fast as he drank it kept full from its unfailing source. Happy they who can sing:

I have come to the Fountain of life,
A fountain that never is dry;
A life that never can die;
And I drink of the boundless supply
In God, my Fountain of life.

GOD IN ALL

The Levites represented the principle of finding God in all. We read in one place that they had no inheritance, and yet we read in the twenty-first chapter of Joshua, that God gave them the choice cities among all the twelve tribes. They gave up all, and they received more than any of the tribes.

Ephraim had but one inheritance, Judah had but one; but Levi had the choice cities in every one of Israel's estates. This is very wonderful and instructive. The tribe that let all go, and chose God alone, received in return the fairest cities in every corner of the land. Hebron, in the tribe of Judah ; Gibeon and Anathoth, in Benjamin; Shechem and Bethhoron, in the tribe of Ephraim; Aijalon, in Dan; Taanach and Golan in Manasseh ; Kishon and Jarmuth in Issachar ; Rehob in distant Asher, Kedesh out of Naphtali, Jokneam and Kartah in Zebulun, Bezer and Kedemoth in Reuben, Ramoth, Heshbon, Mahanaim and Jazer in Gad, and many others in the north and the south, the east and the west -- forty-eight in all -- of the choicest cities of the land, including all the cities of refuge, were given to the tribe of Levi. Who will say that they lost by giving up all for God?

Yes, Lot can have his choice. Take the best, Lot, even all the valley of the Jordan. But wait! "Lift up now your eyes, Abraham, and look from the place where you are northward and southward; look to all the valley of the Jordan, too, Lot's chosen inheritance. Abraham, it shall all be yours. All the land which you see, to you will I give it." Because you gave it up for God you shall have it back in God, and more.

Ah, friends, it is a great thing to learn to take God first, and then He can afford to give us everything else, without the fear of its hurting us. As long as you want anything very much, especially more than you want God, it is an idol. But when you become satisfied with God, everything else so loses its charm that He can give it to you without harm, and then you can take just as much as you choose, and use it for His glory.

There is no harm whatever in having money, houses, lands, friends and dearest children, if you do not value these things for themselves. If you have been separated from them in spirit, and become satisfied with God Himself, then they will become to you channels to be filled with God to bring Him nearer to you. Then every little lamb around your household will be a tender cord to bind you to the Shepherd's heart. Then every affection will be a little golden cup filled with the wine of His love. Then every bank stock and investment will be but a channel through which you can pour out His beneficence and extend His gifts.

The day is coming when God will "add all these things unto you," and you shall have the riches of the universe at your feet, and perhaps be able to create a world, in the power of Christ; but you would not exchange for all the glory of your kingdom one throb of His loving heart or one glance of His countenance.

Yes, "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," on one condition -- not that Christ is yours, but that you first belong to Him. "You are Christ's and Christ is God's."

Beloved, shall we learn the twofold lesson, and ask God to translate it into every moment of the coming days and years; first, to have ALL IN GOD and then to have GOD IN ALL!