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THE ALTAR SERVICE

by Rev. Beverly Carradine

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THE ALTAR SERVICE

A SYMPOSIUM

COMPILED BY

BEVERLY CARRADINE

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PREFACE

We offer this symposium from the most prominent and successful altar workers in the field. This compilation contains the wisdom and experience of half a century of successful revival work.

When Rev. J. S. Inskip, that prince of altar workers, died, many of the leaders of the holiness movement felt that there was scarcely any one to carry on the work of the altar successfully. The work had been largely conducted by him in the great National meetings. Since that time God has raised up a host of successful altar workers, amidst many who are bunglers.

God has greatly blessed the altar service both in the past and present. We have noticed that as a rule those who say the altar has become antiquated and not up-to-date, fail to deliver a message that makes men feel the need of immediate decision. An urgent gospel demands an immediate decision.

It has been said by those who do not wish to be disturbed in their spiritual sloth, that the truth we preach is all right and that they believe in it, but do not "like the methods." When questioned closely, it is discovered that it is the altar and its line of separation that is objectionable. It makes men take sides and God sent his ministry in all ages to make men take sides. "Who is on the Lord's side?" said Moses, "let him come unto me." "Choose you whom ye will serve," was the startling demand made upon the people by Joshua. The Galilean carpenter has made the altar his "work bench," where he has turned out some of the finest specimens of his work.

Let those who have no message of immediateness decry the altar, but until some method is found that will clinch and rivet the truths of the sermon into more immediate results, thousands of happy, successful Christian

workers will find in the altar the same glorious success which attended the labors of our fathers.

Until something is found that works with better results the altar will remain.

Great caution, skilled adaptation, and divinely imparted wisdom are necessary to properly conduct the altar service. On the one hand a certain class make it mean nothing. On the other hand another class make it mean too much, and still another do not get enough out of it. We have long felt a crying need for better altar work generally and for this reason this book has been compiled.

CHAPTER 1

BY

REV. B. CARRADINE

In every religious service there are the distinct features of prayer, song and preaching. In the regular revival meeting each one of these means of grace is emphasized and strengthened with a view to immediate results. So there is first a volume of prayer, followed by a succession of Gospel hymns, while the sermon is prepared and delivered with the desire and expectation that souls shall be illumined, convinced and persuaded; and then through the surrender of the sinner, and the consecration of the child of God, a free and full salvation will come upon the people.

After the sermon follows the altar service; that is, if the preacher or evangelist really desires and expects souls to be converted, reclaimed and sanctified.

The importance of this part of the meeting is far from being realized by most of the people, and many of the preachers. But to fail to follow up a Gospel sermon with a call to the altar, whether the discourse be one of invitation or warning, whether it melts, convicts or horrifies, is a most amazing and lamentable oversight of opportunity and advantage, and an actual neglect of duty to Christ and immortal souls. It is equivalent to getting the net full of fish and then failing to draw the capture to shore. It is like putting a division of troops into confusion by heavy and effective cannonading, and then neglecting to send a sweeping cavalry charge upon the broken ranks to secure thousands of prisoners and obtain a decisive victory.

We are led to make two observations concerning the altar service.

First, what it is to those who come to it in search for help, deliverance, and salvation for the soul.

And first it brings the benefit of the public and open seeking that Christ demands of all who would find and be blessed by him. It is significant that Nicodemus, who came at night to interview the Savior, got nothing, and was a cipher among the disciples. It is equally noteworthy that those who became eminent in grace and usefulness were those who sought and followed Christ before the gaze of the world. All that were recovered of leprosy, or healed or saved, came out of the crowd, forced their way in the sight of men to Jesus and with loud cries asked for mercy. And they always got it!

The Savior lived, taught, suffered, and was crucified publicly to bring us salvation, and now demands that we seek him as openly. His religion is nothing to be ashamed of, and he says himself that if we are ashamed of him he will also be ashamed of us, and if we do not confess him before men, neither will he confess us before his Father.

A second help of the altar is that it is a kind of death blow to one's pride.

It is no little thing for the moralist, the Pharisee, the socially prominent, and the inwardly proud spirit to come forward out of a cold, critical congregation and kneel down humbly at what is called the altar rail. And yet this is the very best thing that could happen to the haughty heart of the unconverted and unsanctified. It is part of the confession that a man must make before God will bless. It is an admission of weakness, sinfulness, ignorance and helplessness, that is most gracious in its reflex action upon the heart, no matter how painful the position is to the body, and how mortifying the confession is to the soul.

A third benefit of the altar is that it brings the man into a certain kind of loneliness that is more favorable for hearing and receiving from God.

As the convicted being kneels, and bows his head upon his hands or arms with closed eyes, a sudden sense of isolation rushes upon him, a great chasm seems to have been dug not only between him and the audience, but between his soul and the whole past life of idleness, uselessness and sin. The world recedes — and a better one begins to wheel into sight.

In this lonely, reflective, prayerful moment, the man hears conscience, and the voice of God as he did not while surrounded with others in the pew. He is outside the camp. He has gone without the gate. Like Jacob he has

sent flocks, herds, servants, business, Leah, the children, and finally the Rachel of his life over the brook and he is left alone.

God has now a good chance at him. The ears of the soul seem to be opened, and he is hearing now from his Creator and Redeemer as he never did before.

A fourth help of the altar is that it brings the penitent or seeker to the point of immediate decision.

All of us well know that multitudes of people are lost through procrastination. They defer the moment of spiritual choice. They will call for us another time. The season is not yet, they say. They are almost persuaded, but will think of it again tomorrow, or when they are married, or settled in business, etc., etc.

Upon such will come one of two disasters. Sometimes it is a calamitous, unexpected death, and of course the soul is lost forever. Then there are many cases where the grave is not the trouble, but the steady resistance of the Holy Spirit has led to the blunting and deadening of the moral sensibilities, the throttling of conscience, and the final departure of the Holy Ghost from the heart and life of the man forever.

The altar with its imperative call, its urging to immediate action, and decision for God, has been the means of the salvation of vast numbers of men and women, who otherwise would never have been saved.

The second observation we make is concerning those who are inside the altar, and are called its leaders and workers.

First, they should be proper people.

We do not believe that we ever will or can have a band of Gospel laborers who will be perfectly satisfactory to a carping, criticizing world. We are not expecting or striving after such an impossibility. But without harshness or arbitrariness, or affectation of omniscience, we should endeavor to have individuals of right hearts, sensible heads and correct lives in this vital, all-important, hand-to-hand conflict.

All of us know the harm done to a meeting, and indeed to the cause of Christ by the sight of persons inside the altar posing as instructors and

workers, who ought to be on the outside of the altar in the capacity of penitents. The inconsistent and even sinful lives of such parties is a great stumbling block to the people. Men are disgusted and repelled who otherwise would draw near. They want their food in clean vessels. To fully grasp the situation, let the reader imagine how he would enjoy receiving spiritual counsel from one whom he knew to be a corrupt man or woman.

Then besides this element there is always a sprinkling on hand of individuals with a screw loose in their heads; with an assortment of nonessential or false doctrine; with some kind of hobby; or with manners coarse, offensive and repulsive in the highest degree.

We owe it to God, and the people who place themselves in a helpless condition at the altar, to deliver them as far as possible from all such trials, afflictions and impertinences.

Second, it would be wise to find out whether the seeker at the altar wished to be spoken to by any one. Some people have an abundance of light, and come forward not for that kind of assistance, but as a final act of surrender, and desiring only to speak to God. To any such, a rambling set of questions, a scattering fire of remarks, missing the case by a thousand miles, works no good, but simply distress, and possibly much harm.

Third, if the penitent or seeker desires verbal help, then we should endeavor to spiritually locate him.

What is the use of urging consecration on one who has never been regenerated; or of telling a person to repent who is an accepted child of God and now sighing and praying for holiness?

Our readers would be amazed if they knew what silly and irrelevant things are often said at this solemn, critical time to the mental bewilderment and spiritual distress of those at the altar.

“Why, my sister, you have never been born again,” we once heard an ignorant and over-zealous woman say to a child of God whose face was stamped with the seal of heaven. The calm, gentle countenance of the attacked, full of patient endurance, was a perfect and most convincing contrast to the becrimsoned, swollen face of the excited altar worker at her

side. She had simply said that she had been troubled with doubts when before she could give another word of explanation, she was assailed with this remarkable rejoinder. We could not have wondered if the lady had arisen and returned to her pew.

Fourth, there is a time to stop talking to seekers. There is no doubt but the occasions are frequent when entirely too much is said, conviction is actually chatted away, and the unspeakable blessings of heaven are missed.

As for discussion and controversy, they are simply unallowable and abominable at such a time. The seeker should not be permitted, much less drawn into, argument of any kind. The grace of God is not to be received that way. The deepest truths of Redemption are not intellectually but spiritually discerned. We should simply show the way in tender, humble, earnest love, and then withdraw, leaving the soul with God.

The writer has led many hundreds into pardon and sanctification by a series of verbal steps that the Holy Spirit smiled upon and blessed; but the fact remains that in many cases there is entirely too much conversation.

If, then, the talking of one worker is not best at times, what shall we say of four or five speaking at the same moment to the seeker, and yet this is a scene that many of us have beheld again and again to our amazement and sorrow.

Think of four or five physicians all talking at the same time to an agitated patient, and get some idea of the confusion and distress some people are subjected to at our church and camp meeting altars. Neither do these vociferators agree in what they say, but one cries one thing, and another, another, until it would require a high grade of grace to endure the medley of sound, much less be benefited by the Babel of conflicting tongues and speeches.

Fifth, the leader full of prayer, should constantly study the mind of the Spirit, and be guided by him throughout.

It is wonderful to read about and witness the victories given to such men by the Holy Ghost, where He is thus recognized, honored and obeyed. His illuminations, suggestions and movements amount to a leadership that invariably leads to victory.

Sometimes it is the prayer of a worker that brings down the holy fire. Sometimes it is the supplication of the seeker that carries relief to himself and introduces a general melting down and breaking up. Again it is some holy song about the Blood or the Spirit which does the work. Still again a succession of hymns seem to be required to lead souls up to a full surrender and consecration, and to the reception of pardon and holiness. And still again some plain, practical advice or teaching from the leader has swept a whole company into the Fountain.

It is remarkable that a proposition which succeeds one night, fails to win on the night following. A method that is full of gracious results at one service does not seem to take at all in another service.

In all this we are taught our helplessness, as well as driven to the Holy Ghost to deliver us in our extremity, save us from the constantly changing combinations of the world and the devil, and give us renewed victory over anything and everything, and over anybody and everybody.

Sixth, an indispensable factor of success is the faculty if not grace of "holding on."

We do not advise the prolonging of an altar service in the first period of a protracted meeting. But as the truth takes hold, interest deepens, and the people become troubled; it is the part of wisdom, then, to sing on, pray on, work on, wait on, and in a word hold on, until penitents and seekers fairly die out at the altar and get through into the kingdom, and into Canaan, clearly, powerfully and gloriously.

Some people die harder than others. Some are slower to give up the last thing, take the last breath and straighten out for burial. Some have to be dealt with very patiently and tenderly and for quite a while. There are people who receive light slowly and come to conclusions very gradually, tremblingly and fearfully. And there are others who, whether in sullen silence or visible agony, take a good time to surrender the last idol, and to send Rachel across the brook, where Leah the children and the property had preceded quite a while before.

So here is beheld the benefit, the power and the victory of "Hanging On," as it has been termed.

Who has not witnessed some of its remarkable results. The great crowd grown weary of looking on at the limp forms and lack luster faces about the altar, and thinking nothing will happen that night, had retired to the sleeping tents. Even most if not all of the preachers had departed. As they looked back in leaving, at the scene of twinkling lights and bowed forms, they saw the leader leaning wearily against a wooden post, looking down at the kneeling figures about him, while he raised for the tenth time that night, the hymn,

*“Here I give my all to Thee,
Friends and time and earthly store,
Soul and body thine to be,
Wholly thine forevermore.”*

Fully thirty minutes elapsed after this, perhaps an hour. Quiet began to steal over the camp. Many were asleep. The wakeful ones could hear the leader lifting his voice in counsel, encouragement and exhortation. And then again,

“Here I give my all to Thee.”

When suddenly the fire fell from heaven! In the same instant full, clear, rapturous, thrilling shouts of regenerated and sanctified souls rent the air and filled the grounds. The cyclone had come! The Holy Ghost had fallen again as of yore! The doors and windows of heaven had been opened over the heads and hearts of that faithful leader and patiently seeking band around the altar, and the pitiful God had poured them out such a blessing that there was no room to receive it. Pentecost had come!

Figures came flying and rushing from the tents in every direction to the battlefield they had forsaken, which now in the glory poured out on it from the skies, looked like a vision of the Upper Room, if not a sparkling section of Heaven itself.

In the company of faithful workers, patient waiters, successful leaders, and mighty prevailers with God and man at such a time and place, we have counted for years as being pre-eminent among their brethren, Milton L. Haney, of Illinois; C. W. Ruth, of Indiana, and John Norberry, of New England.

No doubt that some men are peculiarly gifted by Nature, as well as anointed of God, for leadership in this most difficult of labors and greatest of battles. But all of us who love Christ and souls, can be successful and efficient and be among the “thirty” even if we do not attain unto the first “three.” Only let us live in prayer, keep a clean soul, a level head, a tender, sympathetic heart and let the Holy Ghost have right of way and perfect control of us and over us; and we shall see the fire fall, the Spirit answer to the Blood, and salvation free and full roll like bellows upon the people.

CHAPTER 2

BY

S. L. BRENGLE

Lieutenant Colonel, The Salvation Army

When during their mighty four years' soul-saving campaign in Europe, Dr. and Mrs. Palmer came to Glasgow, Scotland, and after speaking in the Wesleyan Chapel, found three hundred convicted people before them, but no altar to which to invite them, they concluded that they were in the presence of a great dilemma.

She writes, "I earnestly sought unto the Captain of the hosts of Israel for wisdom," and the only light she got was that at all costs and at once an altar must be arranged, and she argued those hard-headed Scotchmen to her way of thinking before she left the church that night. Then the revival swept on with such power as Methodism had never known in Scotland.

The altar is the best known supplement to the pulpit, and its service following the preaching of the word, is to that of the pulpit, what the assault on fortress walls is to the cannonading which has preceded.

Some of its advantages are:

1. It helps to discover those who have been wounded by the truth, and with whom the Holy Spirit is striving.
2. It presents an invaluable opportunity of dealing with such convicted souls personally.
3. It breaks the ice for the seeker, aids him to immediate decision, and when he kneels there it is a kind of public testimony and confession of his sins, his needs, his purpose, and puts him on record before all his friends and acquaintances as a seeker and servant of the Lord.

The successful conduct of an altar service requires wisdom from above, knowledge of the word, and of God's ways of dealing with the soul, sympathy, patience, courage, faith and quick understanding of the leadings of the Holy Spirit; in short, it requires a deep, rich, living, intelligent experience.

Its character will depend largely upon the preaching which has preceded. If the preaching has been clear, scriptural, convincing and warm and tender, the altar service will often almost run itself; the seekers will need but little help. If it has consisted principally of exhortation and touching stories, they will probably need much deep probing and plain, faithful instruction before they can intelligently grasp God's plan of salvation.

Wise altar workers will seek to find out where and how the Holy Spirit is at work and then they will work together with him. Their efforts will be directed to removing the hindrances that prevent him having his way. Sometimes the seeker is ignorant and needs instruction; sometimes it may be that there is sin covered up that must be uncovered and confessed; or maybe restitution for some wrong must be made; or an enemy must be forgiven; or some pet sin must be surrendered, or some bad habit broken off, or some cross taken up; the wise worker will seek to discover the difficulty, whatever it may be, and kindly but firmly aid the seeker at that point.

Sometimes seekers are so deeply convicted that they, like the publican, dare not look up, but are consumed with their own anguish; they must be affectionately helped to take their eyes off themselves and fix them on Jesus, who was made sin for them. The sinner must be pushed up to the point of complete renunciation of all sin and an affectionate, unconditional and eternal surrender to and acceptance of all the will of God and a child-like faith in the promises and assurances of God in Jesus Christ. The seeker after holiness must be led to an utter abandonment of himself and a hearty, loving, glad consecration of himself and all he has or ever hopes to have, to the Lord Jesus Christ, in simple faith that the blood does now cleanse and that the Holy Spirit will at once come in and take entire possession of his temple thus yielded to him.

For such a work as this upon which hinges the destiny of souls for eternity, picked men and women should be chosen, men and women wise in the will and ways of God, and full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.

Young converts and newly sanctified souls are often very effective in helping their friends at the altar, but inexperienced and irresponsible people should generally be guarded against most carefully at this service.

The altar service must not be allowed to languish and die for want of fervent prayer, earnest exhortation and hearty singing on the one hand; nor be allowed to run itself into wild, incoherent, hysteric confusion for want of wise, firm, calm direction on the other hand. It must be kept in the middle of the way and out of the ditch on either side.

The object is to get seekers to Jesus for pardon or purity, and they must not be allowed to lose interest and go to sleep for want of attention and help, nor be distracted by injudicious talk and meaningless noise.

For a seeker to have a self-constituted helper on either side pouring well-meant but fruitless and often contradictory advice into each ear, some one behind pounding him on the back, another in front praying at the top of his voice, and a number of others singing a song that is not suited to his case, is, to say the least, confusing.

Some time ago I slipped into an early morning meeting and found the altar filled with seekers, while behind them was a great number of earnest praying people, and in front, within the altar rail, was a score or more of workers. The din was awful. Seekers were groaning, some almost screaming, while indiscreet friends and advisers were shouting instructions at them. The leader called on dear old Comrade Smith to pray, and by dint of much straining of my ears I managed to hear prayer, and O, what a prayer it was! just calculated, it seemed to me, to bear every seeking soul right into the presence of the Father and to help them into the blessing sought, but I don't think one at that altar heard it, for the roar of noisy, ineffectual instruction that thundered and boomed right on. When such a soul-winner as Amanda Smith prays during an altar service, others should keep quiet and let her voice the needs and desires of the seeking souls before her. "Let all things be done decently and in order."

On the other hand, the altar service may be conducted with such decorum and formality and utter lack of the spirit as to destroy conviction, quench faith and send the seeker away worse than when he came.

A wisely selected verse or chorus will often help the seeker more than all the advice that can be given.

*“Was it for crimes that I had done,
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown
And love beyond degree,”*

sung in the spirit will turn the seeker's eyes to Jesus, and then

*“Nay, but I yield, I yield, I can hold out no more,
I sink by dying love compelled, And own Thee conqueror,”*

will help him to the point of decision; and then,

*“I do believe, I now believe,
That Jesus died for me,
That on the cross he shed his blood,
From sin to set me free,”*

will help to bear him over the bar of unbelief into the ocean of love and perfect assurance.

Finally, there should not be too much haste to “get seekers through,” and “clear up the altar” on the one hand, nor too much delay and feeble, nerveless dealing on the other.

One of my own altar services was almost ruined on one occasion, while I was dealing with a seeker, by a zealous worker rushing the seekers into an expression of faith and then on to their feet before one of them had really grasped the blessing sought. I turned around just in time to see the situation, pointed out to them their mistake, got them down on their knees again, and soon there was the shout of a King in our midst and a number of souls swept into glorious victory that morning.

But on the other hand, many a soul is allowed to keep coming to the altar, dragging along in unbelief, that ought to be dealt with so vigorously and firmly and yet affectionately as to compel him to believe.

Truly,

“he that winneth souls is wise.”

CHAPTER 3

BY

REV. B. S. TAYLOR

Every successful revivalist, whether pastor or evangelist, must be a success in work at the altar. If he fails here he fails altogether. For the sole object of preaching the gospel is to save men. Much apparent success overlooks this, but it is fictitious. The New Testament Apostles laid their hands on seekers and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke with tongues and prophesied (~~and~~ Acts 19).

Some of the most successful work in bringing men to Christ may be here briefly noted:

1. To bring your hearers to a decision to accept the Savior and forsake all else. The preacher must have, like the Prophets of old, a “burden” of souls. After giving the message he has received from God, the last five minutes must be hortatory. He must exhort with fire in his bones. He must feel his message with a deathless energy take hold of his own soul. The Holy Ghost must breathe on him power from on high. He must plead, weep, shout, cry, laugh, groan, whatever the Spirit gives him, whatever will manifest and reveal this message to the dying men before him, must be poured out in a flood of burning, earnest, tender pleadings, urging men to “come to Jesus” then and there and to act on their convictions at once.

When one or more have come forward to the altar, and the altar call, the pleading, the singing of invitation hymns, the personal urging are all evidently completed, then the real work of the altar begins. At this point I always suggest:

2. Now for earnest prayer. Let the blessed Spirit have full charge. No talking to the seekers, but clear, definite prayer for the present blessing. Let the leader and those workers whom he has chosen to assist in this work, avoid exhorting the seekers to “believe,” “give up,” “obey God.”

They have done that the best they know already by coming forward. Pray with them and for them, but, I beg of you, do not talk to them. It confuses their minds; it gives them no intelligent ideas. Lay your hand of love on the shoulder and in earnest prayer plead with God to show them what to do, what is the hindrance, what must be given up, but never make any suggestion yourself as to what you may think is the particular sin for the sinner to forsake, nor the thing the believer must consecrate, which has been kept back. Use Scriptural language, general terms and prayer to God, so as to let the Spirit of God apply the necessary instruction. They did not come forward to talk to you, but to God. So give them a chance. Encourage them to lay hold of the promises in prayer for themselves. In some cases this will be ready, prompt, earnest, and successful. The seeker will pray through speedily and come out clearly shouting, weeping, laughing or rejoicing. But in many and perhaps most of the other cases there will be a struggle. This will usually focalize about two points — consecration or faith.

3. When all is consecrated faith is easy, though often a seeker needs instruction. Let the leader do this; do not all talk at once. He must first seek by general or particular instructions to make clear to the seekers just what is now to be done. I prefer always to make this general, generic and not specific. Ask simply, “Do you consecrate all? Give up all to Jesus? If so, raise your hand.” Some cannot get the hand up. This helps locate the trouble. Further exhortation and teaching will help some out of their difficulties. Others will rebel and draw back and refuse to pay the price and they cannot enter into the Kingdom; cannot “get through.” It is just as well to tell them so and let these cases go over to the next meeting.

4. Consecration brings an end of struggle. The prayers and groans and tears and struggles are over. The will is wholly yielded up, and the soul knows it. There is no more burden of prayer nor pain nor trouble on the heart. The seeker has done all he knows to do, given up his time and talent and earthly store, soul and body, to the whole will of God. He needs no more light, help, nor teaching on this point.

5. Faith must now be exercised. At this point carry the seeker’s mind, by careful teaching, directly to Jesus’ blood; urge him to trust now in the blood and the blood alone, for the cleansing of his heart. Put your mind

into the same logical relation to his own mind. Lead him step by step to take the mental steps of faith. These are three: First, "Do you believe Jesus is able to do this?" Second, "Believe he is willing to save you?" Third, "Believe he doeth it? Not that you are saved because you believe you are saved, but because you believe in Jesus. Not that the object of your faith is your own feelings, but Christ." The mind often is blocked at this point, by a failure to realize the faithfulness of God. His promise is true. Quote some promises at this point; clear, definite and applicable to the case and point in hand. Urge the seeker now to exercise faith; that is, apply the mind to those three things — "Jesus is able and willing to fulfill this promise to you now; do you believe that he does it, or does he fail you, does he lie, does he reject you and cast you off?" No? Then rest on his promise till the Witness of the Spirit is received. Rest on his Word, and say so; say it to yourself, to Satan, to God! Declare to all you believe (not feel) you believe, because it is the word of God and he cannot lie; you believe without a particle of "feeling" that "the blood of Jesus cleanseth you now." You must believe this fact before you can "feel" it. You must eat your dinner before you can feel it. Your mind must first consent to rest wholly on the Word of his promise before you can feel the Witness of the Spirit to your consciousness." At this point I urge seekers to raise the hand, stand on the feet, give expression to the actions of faith now going on in the mind. "Speak it out! Testify! Tell us what you 'believe' the Lord has done; no matter (at this point) whether you have any 'feelings' or not. The best of all feelings when you are cleansed, are the total absence of sinful, hateful feelings and the calm and peace of soul which now fills you if your faith is genuine. Use your reason. Jesus is able; Jesus is willing; therefore he does cleanse my heart. Say this over and over; bring your attention to this alone; exclude all else, 'Jesus saves me!' Rest there. Drop all else! Get used to being quiet! Praise God, now, for this new sweet peace." And within a few moments or hours after the seeker reaches this point he will receive the Witness of the Spirit. This time depends on his clearness of vision, prompt obedience, entire consecration and quiet, steady, implicit faith in Jesus' Word. If he has not been confused by a lot of talkers, has been clearly taught, and promptly followed the leadings of the Spirit, it will not be long till the witness shines out clear and bright. This usually comes when the seeker is testifying, definitely, testifying to his faith in the blood of Jesus. When his soul (i. e., conscience, affections,

will) goes all over to God in implicit consecration and trust the rest of faith enters. When testimony is clearly, strongly, explicitly given to that fact (not to your feelings) the Witness is received. When the Witness is received it may be manifest in various different ways. One will shout, another faint, another weep, another break out into laughter or song, or leap for joy. It is no matter how this is made manifest to the world, but the clear, sweet presence of the Comforter cannot be retained unless there is a prompt obedience to the inward impulse to testify; tell it to help others; tell it to show others the way, exulting in God. No one can help seekers (when not at the altar) in any way so well as by personal testimony; “what the Lord has done for me!” A few young, new, fresh witnesses will start a revival. This was Pentecost. This is Pentecost repeated today.

CHAPTER 4

BY

REV. C. W. RUTH

The public altar is a means to an end. Its advantages are numerous, if not innumerable. First, it presents an opportunity for an immediate, public surrender to Christ, after the preached Word has been applied to the hearts by the Holy Ghost in convicting power. Having lived in rebellion and sin openly and publicly, it is meet and proper that the surrender and confession of sin should be made just as publicly.

Second, it brings the seeking soul where it may receive at once the instructions necessary, and where it has the helping of the prayers and faith of those who have experience and so know the way to God. An atmosphere of prayer and faith is of incalculable value and help to an earnest seeking heart. While the altar is not essential, it certainly is a most blessed and convenient method for helping souls into the Kingdom.

In dealing with souls at the altar great care and sanctified wisdom should be used lest the seeker become confused and diverted. Generally speaking, I do not regard it wise to engage a seeker in conversation while at the altar; nor will a wise and trained worker multiply words. A few words of instruction along general lines — urging the seeker to a compliance with conditions, and then calling his or her attention to some promises of God adapted to the particular need, is usually all that is necessary.

Indiscriminate and random talk and instructions are certain to confuse and hinder. The first thing the intelligent worker will do, in seeking to help souls at the altar, is to ascertain clearly and definitely just what the individual is needing and desiring; what the real object of their seeking. If the invitation has been given for seekers for some specific experience, or if the seeker is praying aloud, it may thus be known what is needed. But if there are seekers of different classes — possibly some for pardon for sins, others seeking reclamation, and still others seeking the blessing of entire

sanctification, so that the worker does not know definitely what each is seeking, he must always first ascertain the desire of the soul before there can be intelligent instruction. In such a case, when it seems proper that I should speak personally to a seeker, I usually approach them by saying, "What is it you want Jesus to do for you?" When there is deep conviction and much earnestness, it is common to hear them say, "Oh, I want Jesus to forgive my sins;" "Oh, I want Jesus to cleanse my heart," etc. Having gained this necessary information, I would simply urge them to an unconditional surrender, and if there is reason to believe that the surrender is complete, and that the conditions have been complied with, then they may be urged to trust God; to believe his promise. But all this should be done in such a way as not to divert the seeker.

It is never wise nor proper for two or three persons to speak into the ears of a seeker, or try to give instructions all at the same time. Such a course is certain to hinder rather than help a seeker.

It is never wise nor proper for workers to place arms about seekers, or even to lay hands on seekers of the opposite sex. Keep at a proper distance, lest your undue familiarity will repel, and distract, and give occasion to the devil. Keep your hands to yourself, and do not manifest undue familiarity; it is not in good taste and will grieve the Spirit.

It is not wise nor proper to make conditions and present tests to seekers at the altar which the Spirit has not presented to the seeker. We have known workers to call the attention of seekers to matters that pertain wholly to the individual conscience — questions of dress, etc., when there were questions of far deeper importance presented by the Spirit, that yet remained unsettled. Urge the seeker to an unconditional surrender; insist on the abandonment of all sin; urge and insist on obedience to God, but trust the Holy Spirit to impress and direct the seeker along the lines of duty and conscience. When a man or woman gives up tobacco, or dress, or the lodge, etc., simply because the preacher or worker has insisted upon it, when the Holy Spirit has not presented the matter to the individual conscience, there are no deep heart convictions, and there can be no permanent good and no blessing in pursuing such a course. If men are honest the Holy Ghost will lead and direct in such matters.

It is never wise nor proper to approach a seeker at the altar and urge them to “believe;” “only believe;” “can’t you trust,” etc. It is well to remember that the soul must come on believing ground by fully meeting all conditions and requirements before it is possible to exercise an intelligent faith. And when conditions are fully met, faith is spontaneous. So long as it seems to require an effort to believe, it is reasonably certain that all conditions have not yet been fully met. To urge persons to simply “believe” is often misleading and confusing, as the seekers may not know what to believe. To believe they feel something they know they do not feel; or believe they have something they know they do not have, is certainly a very difficult and erroneous thing to do. When there seems to be the complete and unconditional surrender and yielding up to God, it may be well to quote some promise from the Word of God applicable to their particular need; and if the seeker is really on “believing ground” faith will naturally and quickly lay hold upon the promise. It is not wise to argue and reason with the seeker, saying that since God said thus and so, it must necessarily be so in their case, as thus there may be a mere intellectual assent to truth, without the exercise of a real appropriating heart faith. We would insist on the spontaneity of faith when all conditions have been fully complied with. I have found that so long as it is not easy and natural to believe the promises of God, there remains yet some “unfinished business” that needs attention. The worker, and even the seeker, may not at once understand what the difficulty or obstacle is, but the Spirit will soon indicate it to the honest seeker.

Never say to a seeker at the altar, “Don’t you feel better?” and thus divert their attention from Christ to themselves. Their feelings will take care of themselves. Never say to a seeker “You are expecting too much,” for such is seldom, if ever, the case. God has said he will “satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with goodness.” Never say to a seeker, “You are good enough.” Each heart knows its own hunger and need best. And never tell a seeker that they are converted or sanctified or have the blessing sought. That is dangerous, for if they should believe you, while they are not yet right with God, you have been the means of deceiving them. It is never the worker’s duty to tell a seeker they have the blessing. That is the work and office of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit himself will witness

when the work is done. Always insist on the seeker praying until he knows the work is done, and until the longing of the heart is fully satisfied.

Do not hurry seekers, but give time for deliberation and praying through. If at the close of the service the seeker is not fully satisfied, it is proper to urge them to continued prayer at their home, and to exact the promise that in case they are not fully satisfied by the time of the next service, they will again present themselves at the altar. Insist that they continue seeking until fully satisfied. We fear that by hurrying seekers through, there is often much harm done. While it is true that continued struggling and agonizing does not commend them to God, may it not be true that by their continued wrestling they may bring themselves into the attitude and position where God can undertake for them. A drowning man will naturally struggle; and a person in a burning building will naturally become somewhat exercised, and scream for help; and it would be folly to expect or demand anything else; it is even so with a soul upon whom the pains of hell have taken hold; the soul fully awakened to a sense of its desperate condition cannot do otherwise.

After the soul has obtained the blessing sought, and has come to the place where there is confidence and assurance, it is always well to have the seeker make definite public confession and acknowledgment of what Christ has wrought in them. Not to tell so much how they feel, but rather what they believe Jesus has done. Faith drives the nail; public testimony clinches it so the enemy cannot draw it. "They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (~~Rev~~ Revelation 12:11).

Whenever it is practicable, it is always desirable and preferable to have only trained workers in the altar; to simply urge seekers to pray for themselves, and to let them feel the helping of the united faith and prayers of the saints of God; and then to leave them to settle matters for themselves with God. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

BY

REV. C. J. FOWLER

The method of “The Altar” has come to be too universal to need explanation, and too useful to need apology. All methods in dealing with souls that are public and pronounced have not had the sympathy of a certain class of good people, not to say that they have had their criticism.

People in sin are on the wrong side; in public and in private are wrong. If they do not feel this, and know this, and are ready to confess this, no method will aid them; certainly some private, easy-going plan which aims mainly to getting them into a church will be of no service for good. Nothing short of an earnest, outward confession will help that soul to better things.

And Christians who have sin in them have a condition of wrongness from which they need deliverance; and genuine Christians want it.

The altar service is particularly for those two classes. It is an act of commitment; it is an outward acknowledgment of need.

Sin is very subtle. While no test should ever be made, from which those even the most sensible and sensitive have a right to draw back, the sin of the heart will ever enter earnest protest to any method which exposes it.

Here is the decided advantage which the open method of the “mourners’ bench” has always had above the Inquiry Meeting, or the After Service, which is generally conducted with the select few present, and practically with closed doors.

In relation to sin there are but two sides — those for it, and those against it. To bring a serious soul to take a stand against sin, is a good and, indeed, a long step towards getting rid of it.

We would not antagonize any method that helps souls; but we cannot but feel that the altar method has proved itself of such value that it should be yielded for none of which we know.

But this service has its approach; this is the use of truth calculated to produce a condition of soul that makes the altar a fitting place. This leads me to say that too much emphasis is placed, oftentimes, upon the altar, both upon the part of the pew and the pulpit. If the altar service is regarded as the only time and place that definite work is expected to be done with the sinner or the saint, then it is emphasized out of all proportion to its intent or its historic value.

If the service preceding the altar call be as definite and determined as it should be — the preaching and all connected therewith as explicit and expectant as the situation demands — there should be results, as the more general service is going on. “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.” “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”

I can but feel that this phase of the subject has had too little attention. While it can, likely, never take the place of the altar, the altar should never so fully become a substitute for this.

We should expect greater results under the ministry of the word than we do. The principle of receiving what faith claims, obtains here; we get all we expect. What do I mean? I reply we do not expect people to be converted and sanctified while we are preaching; if we did they would be, for generally there is value enough in the sermon to secure this, and the Spirit of God certainly is ready to savingly apply it.

But the altar is here to stay; but only is it here to be used. One of its important features is

THE ALTAR CALL

This should be definite and well-defined. It should be radical, in that it goes to the root of things, but at the same time so reasonable that intelligent and serious people would not have grounds to complain.

Of course a call may be made, and oftentimes is, that looks toward a definite end when the call itself does not immediately include it. A meeting may not have come to that degree of conviction that warrants a call as close as the end the leader has in view, which he hopes to realize by this more general invitation. For instance, he wants to reach the recovery of backsliders and the sanctification of struggling Christians, in a given service; or, he wants to commit all the people, possible, to the work in hand, and his call may be as general as "All who have any salvation or who want any let us gather about the altar." Or, he may say, "All who want to see these special meetings promote the salvation of the people, gather for prayer about the altar." Then during the prayer service at the altar he can seek to draw out any who may be ready to acknowledge a particular need, which may result in the general quickening of all present not only, but the definite helping of serious ones.

Of course meetings will not advance far, before invitations should be given that will closely test the situation, and determine who just then are ready for advanced ground.

I have said that the call should be well defined, whatever the end is in view, and should be reasonable.

The other day we shared in a service where the leader of the meeting evidently wished to ascertain who had already come into the gracious fullness of entire sanctification, in order to open the way to seekers of that grace. But he gave the most awkward call; he said, "All who now have the Christ-burden on you — who especially feel the inward groaning for souls — stand." The only interpretation we could give to the language was that only those who then were in "soul travail" could get to their feet. This possibly might be a reasonable call at some rare exigency, but it was a strange one at that time.

And then calls must not be extravagant. Things may be true which it would not be becoming to incorporate in an altar call.

The call includes a confession. If a meeting be divided in order to the creating of conviction, or unto the helping of hesitant ones, it simply draws out a confession as to the obtainment of the people; this confession

should be as modest as should it be by word of mouth, in an individual way.

I am sure we would hesitate to have people say, "I am holy, I am filled with the Holy Ghost, I am free from sin;" for while this ought to be true with all living people under this gospel dispensation, this would not be the way to put it. Is it needful for me to say why? Then I answer, It is no direct and definite confession of the grace of God; it is rather what "I" am. That will not do. And, thank God, we are not afflicted with these forms of expression sufficient to emphasize them, save as they are more liable to appear in an ill-advised call than in an individual confession: "All who have a holy heart; all who are filled with the Holy Ghost rise." This we regard as objectionable. How should it be put? "All to whom God has given the Holy Ghost; all whom God has cleansed from all sin, stand;" this form of expression magnifies God and his grace, and the person that much retires.

"Dividing the house" may be overdone. I am sure it is — but it must not be given up. It creates a "stir." It brings to pass, again, a fact realized earlier, "At that time there was no small stir about that way." It makes certain ones nervous; they need to be. Not a few "sort of claim holiness," who never were, nor are definite, and this way of putting it causes a timely and tumultuous disturbance. I know from experience. It bothered me; but it brought me. Perhaps no one thing was more used of God to bring me out than this. Multitudes will not like it; if they were right they would; there is nothing unreasonable in the method. But it hurts the old man. A preacher of this class lately got up under a test, but with not a little hesitation, and said aloud, "I have the Holy Ghost, but do not like your formula." But the formula was of God; and a little later, at the altar, he came to like it.

Now at the altar itself! Oh, how great a task and grand is this! How much there is to be said. If God were not here to rule and overrule, to work in spite of human blunders, to bring things to pass though we, in our unwisdom, had hedged up all the way, how could there be expectation of good results?

There are, bless God! wonderful results at the altar. While much is done that is crude and crooked, the most at the altar "come through" blessedly. While much is done that should not have been; while not a little is said that

should have been unsaid, yet souls are blessed; not because of these things, but in spite of them.

I have taken the liberty to write of that lies around the subject proper. Others more experienced and more wise will discuss the means and measures that have to do with best altar services. I am glad to contribute this much to an important question in this great business which has to do with the building the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 6

BY

REV. M. L. HANEY

Question 1: Why an altar service?

ANSWER:

- 1.** The seeker is thus furnished with the best aids to real yielding to God.
- 2.** The altar is a wide open door to confession of sin, and the need of salvation (~~1883~~ Proverbs 28:13; ~~600~~ 1 John 1:9; ~~618~~ Luke 12:8,9).
- 3.** It is a most effectual way of separating men from their associates, hence the wicked consider when one of their number goes to an altar as an earnest seeker, that he has left their society. "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you."
- 4.** This places the seeker where he secures the widest helps of all God's people.

(1) It concentrates the attention of all real Christians upon him as a seeker. How could their attention be thus centered upon him without such presentation of himself?

(2) It combines their prayers for his salvation as they could not be combined were he with his associates in the congregation. "The fervent, effectual prayer of righteous men availeth much."

(3) It greatly increases faith for his salvation. Two young men in an audience of a thousand men have equal chances, and are in a like condition. One of these, in response to the altar call, goes quickly forward and kneels down before God; but the other remains seated with his old companions. Who, either saint or sinner, is expecting the

conversion of the latter, but who out of the thousand is not looking for the salvation of the former? The altar service is a great faith producer.

(4) The altar service helps mightily to that act of the will which decides destiny. There is a pivotal point from which men go to heaven, or hell. When a man has risen up before the public, turned his back on his former associates and practices, and deliberately throws himself down at the altar of God, he is thereby in the valley of decision, and but little is left; place him as a completely surrendered rebel at his Maker's feet. In my own case, as I fell at the altar of God, I felt that there was now a gulf between my soul and the world, over which I would never pass! Sixty-two years have come and gone, but I have never passed it!

5. If there were no other reasons for the altar service, the fact that Satan is ever in bitter antagonism to it, and God always owns and blesses it; puts me in its advocacy till the world is on fire.

Question 2: Is it important that leaders should be definite in making calls to the altar?

ANSWER:

It is, because indefinite seekers never find salvation. They may seek for years, but never find, till they strike a crisis and get just one thing before them. Nobody succeeds in anything while dealing in generalities.

There may be general calls, to break the stiffness of God's people and to prepare the way for real seekers; but a man can not be much of a seeker if you put nothing before him to seek!

Question 3: When a definite call is made for sinners to seek pardon, and believers to seek holiness, which meets with no response, should the call cease with an empty altar?

ANSWER:

No, I would fill the altar with other classes, and thus break the devil's power to charge defeat. In such cases Christians who are not ready to be sanctified because of prejudices, or for want of light, could be asked to come to lay their hearts open for inspection from God, or who are

conscious of any need, or who have dear ones who do not yield and want now to pray for them; let them be asked to come quickly together and pour out their souls. Such a movement will often inspire some timid seeker and he will come along. If not, there will be an added inspiration given instead of a failure of faith, because of defeat. If God's people would always act quickly in concert with requests of the leader, great victories could thus be brought out of apparent defeat.

Question 4: Is it good to have the Lord's people called near to the seekers, before going to prayer?

ANSWER:

Yes, it is ordinarily best to invite the whole body of Christians to center as near the altar as consistent.

1. This will indicate their interest in the salvation of those who are seeking, and the act of coming near will increase that interest.
2. By this process the sympathy, prayer and faith of all who are spiritual will be confederated in behalf of the seekers.
3. If the whole body will thus move, it will tend to encourage other inquirers and to convince the unbelieving that the church is in earnest and God himself will be pleased with it.

Question 5: Should indiscriminate talking to seekers be permitted?

ANSWER:

No, unless you want many of them confused and hindered. Much of the talk thus given will tend to take the seeker right out of the hands of the Holy Ghost. Our very love for the seeker may lead to this. It will be found true as a rule that a mother is rarely a safe guide for her wicked boy at the altar. Her gush of love disqualifies her for the right counsel just now. The Holy Ghost is aiming to break the boy's heart, by showing him how wicked he has been and is; but mother can't endure that bitter cry of her agonized child, and hastens with her soothing syrup to quiet his disturbed soul. She meant all right, but she has taken her boy right out of the hands of the Holy Spirit, and her misplaced words of human sympathy may cost

his soul! There are persons especially gifted in helping seekers at the altar, who often injure them by continued talking. Successful helpers are often injured by their successes, and become elated by what they have done. Not knowing that they are shorn of their strength, this leads to more talk with less meaning, while both teacher and pupil are left in the dark. While God's children are in devout prayer and a careful attitude before him, the Holy Spirit will suggest some one thing to be said to the seeker. This being so, that thing should be said; but it does not follow that the Holy Spirit has ordered a whole hour's talk after his message has been delivered! Then, care should be taken to distinguish between a gush of our feelings and the voice of the Holy Spirit. It is a beautiful thing to say to the seeker the right thing at the right time, and then cease from speaking!

Question 6: Should all seekers be urged to pray at the altar, irrespective of their needs and condition?

ANSWER:

No. Some should be urged to pray, and others to stop praying. If the seeker is stupidly lying at the altar under a devil spell, waiting for something to occur, urge him to pray. If he can be gotten to pray with a loud voice for help, it will probably break that spell, and result in his salvation. If another has clear light as to God's will in a given matter, and it wholly unwilling to do it, he would gladly substitute months of praying instead of submitting to God. He needs to stop praying and go to obeying. The writer put in years of that sort of praying and does not encourage any one to follow his example. Where prayer is used to help the soul to yield to God, it will be a blessing. Where it is offered as a substitute for obedience, it will be a curse. Much of so-called "dying to self" is a desperate effort to have our own way. Such struggling is similar to the struggles of a rebellious animal fastened to a gate post. Its floundering is not made up of acts of yielding at all, nor an effort to yield, but of sheer rebellion! Yet it is nice to think, if the rope is strong enough, it will bring him to yield after his struggles are ended! There is much of so-called agonizing prayer, which is simply a desperate effort to bring God to our terms! In such cases it is usually better to leave the subject alone, rather than encourage his rebellion, by helping to nurse it. The writer has stayed many a night with such crying rebels, and unwittingly helped them to have

their own way. He now insists on their yielding to Divine authority, which, if they persistently refuse to do, he quietly retires, in hopes the rope won't break till their rebellious neck has yielded; and when he comes again he finds a well-whipped, passive, loving child!

Question 7: Is there danger of the penitent stopping short of the new birth and the believer getting blessed, but not wholly sanctified, in obeying the order now so generally given by many blessed workers to “pray through?”

ANSWER:

There is danger in both cases, but especially in the latter. God has made provision to pardon the guilty and to sanctify the unclean, without any one asking him to make such provision. He was offered pardon and holiness through the ages, and brought to bear the mightiest agencies in earth and heaven, to induce us to accept the one and the other; but has always, of enlightened men, exacted compliance with his conditions. There is an attitude reached by the penitent, where it is always safe to say to him, “Fear not, only believe;” but is that true, or right, or safe, when applied to an impenitent sinner? There is a point which can be reached by every seeker of pardon, and each seeker of entire sanctification, when either can have what he wants for the asking; when he gets there it is safe to tell him to “pray through.”

Question 8: What are the conditions upon which a sinner may be born of God?

ANSWER:

Repentance toward God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; or submission to God and receiving Jesus as his personal, present, Almighty Savior. Every sinner who meets these conditions is born of God, and every responsible and enlightened man, or woman, who fails to comply with these conditions, under the gospel, is not born of God (~~4115~~ Mark 1:15, 6:12, ~~4138~~ Luke 13:3, 24:47, ~~4112~~ John 1:12, 13, 3:36, ~~4150~~ Acts 16:30, 31, 17:30; 20:21; ~~4101~~ Romans 5:1).

Question 9: What are the conditions upon which God sanctifies his truly justified child?

ANSWER:

There are two steps to the cleansing fountain, only two. 1. The presentation of the faculties of our entire being, both body and Spirit, to God, to be made completely holy. These faculties have to be made alive from the dead before they can be presented; hence this act of consecration cannot be made till after we are regenerated. It has to be made in righteousness, it can not therefore be made by any human being, who is not fully and freely justified. (See ^{<R18>}Romans 6:13, 19, and ^{<R17>}Romans 12:1, 2.) This offering thus made involves the ceding our whole being to the use of God forever; hence it never needs to be repeated, unless our covenant is violated.

2. Our whole being having now been placed in the hands of Christ to be made holy, the act of faith which receives him as our complete sanctifier, and the heart trust in his cleansing blood to make us pure within, is both reasonable and scriptural. (See ^{<M12>}Matthew 1:21; ^{<R19>}1 Corinthians 1:30; ^{<R125>}Hebrews 7:25, 13:12, 13; 1. ^{<R102>}John 1:7; ^{<S123>}1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24; ^{<R176>}John 17:6-23; ^{<A105>}Acts 1:5, 8, 15:8, 9, 26:16-18)

Question 10: When penitents are at the altar seeking pardon and believers are seeking to be sanctified wholly, what measures do you suggest as the best to secure to them the object for which they are seeking?

ANSWER:

Whatever measures will lead them most directly and thoroughly to meet God's conditions.

As a rule I would invite all spiritual people to locate themselves contiguous to the seekers, for a season of persistent prayer, that the direct and powerful aid of the Holy Spirit might be given to each seeker, that to them sin might be made to appear exceeding sinful, and that each might be made to see clearly what God now required of him and be led now to surrender to the mandates of the Holy Spirit. I would have no formal speeches made to God, or man, but the heart cry of both saint and sinner

for the help needed just now. These heart prayers could be mixed with verses of song, bearing on the present needs of those we are there to help. All who are interested should heartily join in this season of prayer and not be looking around or talking. At its close sing appropriate verses, while, if need be, dear souls who are thus led may have a few minutes to make suggestions to individual seekers as they have felt impelled by the Holy Spirit. When a certain degree of enlightenment has been reached with a yielding attitude, on the part of the seekers, let all become silent and the leader have the undivided attention of those present, while he concentrates the thought of all at the altar on God's conditions, which now have to be complied with.

If sinners are there as penitents, compel them to see that God is right and they are wrong, and that their heart rebellion must die, or they must die. Hence, submission to God, absolute and unconditional, must be reached here and now.

If seekers of holiness are there, show them that Christ alone can sanctify them, and that nothing can be done while they retain the case in whole, or part, in their own hands. That he now waits to receive the case with all its difficulties, and now demands the utter and unconditional transfer of their whole being, to be his property through and through, forever and ever! To obtain the required action involving complete submission on the part of rebels, and this act of complete consecration on the part of believers; now sing a verse involving entire abandonment to the will of God, and require that each soul who does here and now put his case thus forever in the hands of Christ to trust him for pardon or holiness, sign the covenant with God, by raising both hands while you sing. Now, having completely yielded to God to trust Jesus Christ as their present, all-sufficient, almighty Savior, if anything is still wanting, in any of them, it will be in order to tell them to "pray through." In either case it is disastrous to lead a soul to fancy it is justified or sanctified, when the work has not really been wrought. A sinner left unpardoned, unregenerated and without adoption, is still a child of the devil and the heir of perdition, though he may be a professor, an elder in the church, or a minister in the pulpit. A Christian who has simply been blessed, or restored from heart backsliding, with the carnal nature still within him, is a deceived man, if in this state he professes to be wholly sanctified. The knowledge of either pardon or

completed holiness cannot be had, till the Holy Spirit's witness is superadded to the work wrought. We can safely and scripturally believe the work is wrought, for God's truth is the base of our faith, for both justification and sanctification; and have thus to believe through his promises, in order to be saved. It is objected that we can know we are saved, because we know we have met the divine conditions. We answer we cannot know we have met those conditions, without the Spirit's witness. We may believe we have repented, when we have not; and that we are saved when we are not; but when the Holy Spirit witnesses we know both the one and the other. We may believe we are wholly consecrated, when we are not, and that we are wholly sanctified when we are not; God only can know, but when the right time comes, he sends the Holy Spirit to make us know. Those without that witness must shiver in the judgment day! This witness is always given to each soul, both as to the new birth and entire sanctification, but not always in the same way, nor with equal clearness.

It is not always given in the moment when the work is done, as God may see it best that we stand by faith, without it for a time; but it is always given (~~8184~~ Romans 8:14-17; ~~8186~~ 1 Corinthians 2:6-12; ~~8188~~ Hebrews 10:14, 15).

Question 11: What should be the most important point to be considered, in the conduct of an altar service?

ANSWER:

Thoroughness!

CHAPTER 7

BY

REV. D. F. BROOKS

As a rule I believe in a radical method of making the call. The candidates should be warned not to slip into the third or fourth pew from the altar itself, and thus prevent the complete submission of the will, and attempt to conceal one's identity with the object in view.

An intelligent lady in service at a certain place knelt in the third pew from the altar, and I said to her, "What are you seeking here?"

She replied, "I desire to be sanctified wholly."

"Then why did you not come to the altar as requested?"

She replied, "I have no objection to going there."

"Then," I said, "if you have none, let me see you go."

There was a moment of hesitation, and then she arose and went, looked up in prayer and the blessing came, and then she said, "I was just a little tempted not to go for fear what some might say."

The influence on others when they observe a hitherto good woman going to the altar has been the means of producing conviction.

At another place one lady said, "I do not see why Sister D. needs to go to the altar, for she is one of the best and most faithful women in the church." But the dear woman, like many others, had been troubled with that internal, occasional uprising of sin in the heart that she had so successfully concealed for years, and which had now been described, and the complete remedy presented, and the honest and good woman was too good and honest to remain away from the altar any longer.

The act put this other lady under conviction, and she, too, sought and found the blessed fullness, and went on her way rejoicing.

Yes, let there be a coming out, a coming way out too! A half way compliance with the divine condition will secure no results to the subject, for that is a positive act of disobedience, and you do not get the goods because the price has not been paid.

As a rule it should secure a positive division. I mean call for a decision on the line of the two states of grace, something like this.

“How many of you loyal children of God desire to obtain the entire sanctification of your soul, stand up, or come to the altar.” It has been my observation that anything short of this really secures no pronounced nor satisfactory experience.

The Word does not say, come partly out from among them, but does imply a complete separation when it says, “Touch no unclean,” and the act of the will is indexed by the act of the person, whether they come part way to the altar or way out and kneel at the altar itself.

And then again the coming should be repeated by the same seeker until they positively get the positive witness to the work of grace in the heart.

How many have failed here, by being tempted of the devil not to repeat the act, and thus turn away from the battle on the eve of victory?

A lady not six hours ago from the time at which I am writing, asked me that very question, “Mr. Brooks, shall I come to the altar again?” I made reply as on many previous occasions, “Certainly, keep coming until you positively know you have the experience.”

This lady received it that evening.

I rarely ever give much instruction until the seeker has prayed earnestly for the grace desired, and on many occasions have I seen the face lighten, and the cheek glow, and then suddenly arising the voluntary speech of victory would quickly follow.

Three points I usually make on the exercise of faith before the witness comes, usually quoting, “What things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” The verb “receive” is past tense,

and not future. Hence we must read as follows, and so instruct. “Believe that ye have received, and ye shall have.”

We are then to say what this passage really means. No one can say they have the experience until they know they have it. All instruction to the contrary is spurious and misleading and has wrought mischief.

What is that we “have received?” We have received all states of grace by the gracious provisions of the “Atonement,” hence as it relates to personal sanctification, we have received that in the will of God, for “This is the will of God, your sanctification.” Then it is the will of God. What is the will of God? My personal sanctification, for it reads, “Your sanctification.” Then I have received it in the provisions of the Atonement. (~~415~~ Ephesians 5:25-6.) “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it that he might sanctify it.” Here is a statement of the feature of the Atonement for the sanctification of the believers, as well as the feature of the Atonement for the sinner at ~~416~~ John 3:16. The seeker then should be instructed to believe that it is received, or must be accepted on that ground. God has provided for it in the death of his Son. The command is therefore absolute, because the provision is adequate, and as a motive to great earnestness in seeking the experience is not optional but a necessity, and the plan of God in the provided provision must not and cannot be slighted without danger of losing one’s soul.

We have received it in the promises of God; this also the seeker must believe and the fact must be emphasized that God has not demanded any more than he has promised.

This interpretation of that much misunderstood passage and much abused one, too, by the talkers at the altar, is best rendered in the manner I have indicated, do not believe you have it and you have it, but believe it has been received in the tense of the verb, “Have received,” as a past promise and provision, and will of God.

This is the receptive attitude that all seekers must assume, and this attitude is a proper receptive state to receive the positive witness that the work is done, and known beyond any doubt that the experience is a reality, and then the positive testimony will follow, that will bear on its face the evidence of a wonderful reality.

CHAPTER 8

BY

REV. ISAIAH REID

The word “altar” we use in an accommodated sense. We carry up into it most of its meaning from the Old Testament, though we spiritualize its material service. Many of the objections to our altar service arise from an utter misunderstanding of the important meaning and place occupied by the altar in the old-time worship. Many of the abuses and misuses of the altar service are from the same lack of carrying into our ordinary work the important cluster of considerations wrapped up in the material service of the old dispensation. Note:

- a.** The original altar was a place of sacrifice.
- b.** It was a holy place.
- c.** Approach to it was a religious act.
- d.** The idea of death was always connected with it.
- e.** Fire always burned on it.
- f.** It was a place of human acceptance or rejection of God.
- g.** It was the central point in all Old Testament service.

Our accommodated use of the word, when properly considered, carries up out of the Old Testament, most of these ideas. Though these were material, they help us understand that which is hard to be understood by the way of mere word and thought. As in the olden time that was the place of offering, so now, this is our place of presenting in a public way “our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.” In the old, an animal was offered. In the new, we offer ourselves. In the old, was a human priest. In the new, Jesus is our High Priest. The altar to us, as it was then, is the declaring place and act of the

soul. There we are separated from the world, as was the lamb separated from the common herd in the field. In the old, the fire on the altar consumed the sacrifice, that is the fire representing the Divine presence, took hold on, and appropriated, used, took to itself, and changed into other form and use the parts of the animal offered, so we are accepted by the Lord, and the virtue in the Divine nature, as the fire on the altar, takes hold on us. "The altar sanctifies the gift." The soul has actually met God. Up to this time it had believed on him. It had intellectually indorsed truth and had given adherence to the truth, but truth had never been realized in experience. The Old Testament worshipper believed in the altar before he came. The proof of this was his bringing of the lamb. But it required not only a lamb on the altar, but the additional fire which consumed it was that which rendered the service complete. He had "decision day" when he went out to get a lamb from his flock. But that was not enough. It was a good act, but it was a long way from there before he came to the altar. The Old Testament worshipper had his "inquiry room" investigation when he went out to select his lamb. He did not go to the altar with any question in his mind. All doubts were settled before that. He went there as the culmination and completion of the whole thing. So our modern altar service means much more than an "inquiry room," or a "decision day," or even a "penitent form," or "mourners bench," though it may answer for these in the wider meaning of the word and in common acceptance. But it goes further than all these. The whole of the old symbolic service was of no special avail until the sacrifice met fire on the altar and was consumed. So in our service the essential thing, and that for which all necessary preparation is made, is the meeting of the soul with God. If this is not secured the soul goes away from the service uncertain and unsatisfied. Going to the altar as a mourner is not thought sufficient, though it is right to go there to mourn, and good to go there to mourn. Going there to get rid of or solve doubts is not motive sufficient. Doubt will hinder the soul from meeting God. The "inquiry room" precedes the offering of the sacrifice. Going there as an experiment to see what God will do, implies such a measure of doubt as will defeat the going. Going there for any other purpose than to meet God in final settlement will not meet the need of the hour. The altar is the place of the soul's last extremity. All question as to willingness on the seeker's part, or all question about the willingness on God's part are previously settled. The issue is now final. The soul must

meet God for a settlement. The altar is the appointed place to do it. The altar call is the set time for it. The sacrifice and the fire must meet or there is nothing effected in the service. The fire represents the Divine presence. The sacrifice represents the soul.

Stopping short of this, is the bane of the altar work. Such teaching, and such leading of the seeker which proposes to satisfy him short of this is to land him in darkness of spirit and uncertainty, and send him out into the world with no conscious salvation, an empty professor having the form but in reality denying the power thereof.

“Taking the word for it,” is well enough as a means, but will never answer for the end. Faith that the word is true does not satisfy, only God satisfies. The end and object of truth is not faith, but truth making one true. The end of the promise is not the raising of a blissful expectation of meeting God in the sweet by and by, it is in meeting and having him now.

For these special reasons, and for this special end, is the altar. Unless this is secured the whole of typical altar service was a failure. I say these things because many go to the altar and get nothing; because many invite to the altar and have little or no such meaning in their invitation or in their instructions at the altar; because the popular estimation or idea of the altar is so nearly out of mind that in an ordinary congregation many who go on invitation to pray at the altar never dream, even that it is a place to pray and pray till God answers by fire — by his presence — and are therefore ready to jump up and run the first time any one says “Amen.”

When I went forward for the first time for pardon I had no idea of making any experiment. I was before a believer, or I never would have gone. I did not go there to inquire, I had been in that business in the services for several days. I felt in the depths of my being that it was a final and sacred step which if I took I must forever be the Lord's. It was the declaring act of my soul. It was the declaring place of my soul. Seventeen years later when I went as a child of God for the sanctification of my nature the issue was to have God do for me that which he alone could do. I did not even go there to consecrate. I had done this before I went. I did not go there to inquire, my mind was fully and wholly made up and mentally I was satisfied. My heart wanted God in sanctifying power. I had very little need of talk from men. I needed more to hear from God. All men said to me

was of little use. I went there to meet God, forever settle the whole business, and come away with the blessing. I needed the altar as the last resort. It furnished time and place for the final transaction. I needed just the final commitment it required. I needed the pressure of time and place it afforded. I was not disappointed, either.

CHAPTER 9

BY

REV. WILL H. HUFF

When Paul said, “Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry,” he said something that is well worth our careful consideration and earnest prayer. There are factors, both human and divine, that enter into this genuine revival work that we can all study and profit withal.

In this work of the Lord there is the preacher. A man “called of God as was Aaron;” a good man; a man full of the Holy Ghost; a man with the weight and worth of immortal souls on his heart. God has sent him to be a laborer in this white harvest field.

There is the preaching of this God-sent man. He is sent not to lecture, not to entertain, not to tell death-bed scenes, not to carry a stock of anecdotes to make the people laugh, but to preach the Word. Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.” Paul said, in his letter to the Romans, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation.” In his letter to the Corinthians, he said, “My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration and power of the Spirit.” In his letter to the Thessalonians he said, “Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes.” Peter spoke about those who preached the “gospel unto us with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” In apostolic times they went everywhere preaching the word.

God uses the preaching of Bible truth to convict, convince, awaken, and reprove those who hear. The Spirit always honors the truth and makes men feel their need of God and salvation. Under the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, the people were pricked in their hearts and cried out, “What shall we do?”

After the preaching comes the altar call. This is an important juncture in the meeting. Here the preacher strives not so much for a logical climax as for cyclonic exhortation which moves people to God. Or, sometimes, the Spirit moves the speaker not as the mighty whirlwind, but as a warm gulf stream which melts and draws people to the place of prayer.

Then comes the altar service, with all classes and conditions of men, seeking, if haply they may find God. Some for pardon, some for reclamation, some for sanctification. Here is the use and importance of the altar.

First — It is the method God has always smiled upon; the rank and file of the people who testify of the grace of God were blessed and saved and sanctified at the altar of prayer.

Second — The altar separates men from their boon companions. Most people hide in the crowd; linger for somebody else; see what the other man is going to do.

Third — The altar puts a man in the attitude of an intentional seeker. Carnality loves to hide itself in the plural pronoun; it says, “We all need to be better,” “We all need to get nearer and nearer,” “We all need blessing,” but when a man comes out under an altar call, he comes single-handed.

Fourth — The altar breaks down barriers, burns bridges, puts men without the gate — they feel something must be done and they must have heart-relief.

Fifth — The altar is a place of humiliation, it spoils carnal importance, pride and dignity, limbers up, takes the starch out and makes the seekers feel they must find God like the rest of the folks.

Sixth — The altar is a convenient place for the good people to gather around and by their prayers, their faith, their love, help the poor struggler who is “coming through.” It is a convenient place to instruct seekers, a glorious place to be converted, and a blessed place to be sanctified.

This is the time real altar work begins, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we must get people through to God. Now is the time for real earnest, honest prayer that takes hold of God; that opens the skies; that brings the power of God down on the penitent seekers. This is not the time to look

around, nor visit, nor talk, nor instruct, but this is the time for prayer. Here are seekers facing eternal destinies; if they fail at the altar they may be lost forever. A great deal of talk and instruction are not needed but what instruction is necessary should be given earnestly, lovingly and thoroughly. The seekers should be brought face to face with God and held at the point of entire abandonment of their will and all that stands in the way of their getting victory. It is a good thing for the leader to insist that the seekers stir themselves up to take hold on God; insist that they kneel on both knees, hands down from their faces, handkerchiefs out of their mouths, their eyes toward heaven and their hands raised in the attitude of surrender.

The yielding souls can be helped here by the singing of the good old altar hymns, such as,

*“I surrender all,
“I surrender all,
All to Thee my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.”*

Or,

*“Here I give my all to Thee,
Friends and time and earthly store,
Soul and body Thine to be,
Wholly Thine forever more.”*

We have seen hundreds brought through in scenes like this.

Of course every altar worker knows that the sinner seeking pardon must give up his sins and trust God to save him; the backslider must confess his backslidings and trust God to restore him; the believer must consecrate to God and trust God to sanctify him; but while there are certain definite steps the seekers must take in order to get victory, yet there can be no set rule by which every altar service must be conducted.

The successful altar worker must have the Holy Spirit, knowledge of the Bible, heavenly wisdom, real tact, and plenty of stick-to-it-iveness. In altar work we learn a good bit about human nature and a great deal more about carnal nature, and are soon convinced that the “old man” needs heroic and radical treatment.

No altar work is easy. It is real labor. Those who are willing to wait, pray, sing, exhort, and be patient will be used by God to the helping of souls.

I am sure God wants all his preachers, evangelists, and workers to be holy in heart, mighty in prayer, strong in faith, unctuous in preaching, fiery in exhortation, wise in their dealing with penitents, and useful in all the work of God.

“For they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”

CHAPTER 10

BY

REV. JOSEPH H. SMITH

Hugh Price Hughes when once asked before the New York Preachers' Meeting for some advice concerning the "After Meeting," said (1) "Take good care of the before meeting." And this is wisdom. The service from beginning to end should be a unit. Not necessarily a unit as to themes, nor as to methods; but surely a unit as to object. Nothing must conflict, but everything contribute to this object. The altar service should not represent so much an addition but a culmination.

Unfortunately many services — particularly in what are called the regular means of grace — are without any object. Unless it be simply that of finishing a duty, performing a service or a perfunction. It very often happens that the preliminary part of the service — notably the professional music — is conducted rather for the worship of man than of God, and these singers draw sharp distinction between their anthems and gospel songs. So that it not infrequently occurs that to get the people at all into the neighborhood of his proposed sermon, the preacher is sensible of a mighty effort to recall them from what has gone before. Or he must ignore it entirely. Then, too, there is much danger that the sermon itself become an end, and not simply a means to an end. This makes a second break in the continuity of the service, and the meeting must be closed up with a third piece to the mosaic or medley. The unity of the Spirit in a divine service comprises this twofold object — the glory of Christ in the salvation of men. Worship and work are wedded. But not only are many held without any object, but some indeed have other secondary and even some questionable ends as their object. As of old, the Lord's house is made a place of merchandise instead of a place of prayer. Ways and means are allowed to defeat worship and evangelism.

Immediate results during the preaching is an ideal condition, which not even our devotion to the altar service should be allowed to preclude. That sermon is not finished which has failed to grapple with the wills of men. "While Jesus spake many believed on him." An urgent faith on the part of the preacher, and a unit of faith on the part of Christians present will often precipitate salvation during the sermon, during the singing, during the praying. When once it is understood that we are met for business, everybody will be made to converge to the business in hand. And when we ourselves are expecting that this business may be accomplished not in connection only with some one part of the service but with any and all parts of it, then our zeal will not be showing a feverish unrest to get to the altar service as though nothing could be done without it, or before it. Inskip would sometimes reverse the whole order of things in a service, saying he was not going to let the devil find out what he was going to do next, and have people prepare themselves against it. It seems to have been right in the midst of Peter's sermon that the household of Cornelius received the gift of the Holy Ghost. But we think the secret of this was in the number and nature of their "before meetings."

Yet there are New Testament precedents for "after meetings" in which the work begun in the preceding is completed and the results gathered on the spot. When Paul had preached and indoctrinated those disciples at Ephesus, he afterward laid his hands upon them and then they received the gift of the Holy Ghost. After Peter preached that great sermon on the Day of Pentecost, there followed a meeting of inquiry and exhortation and instruction and prayer which led up to the consummation of 3,000 conversions. And there is no doubt that procrastination or neglect of these after exercises would have resulted in the loss of much of the good effects of the preaching as it did when Felix, though trembling under the great apostle's reasoning on righteousness, temperance and judgment, dismissed the matter for a more convenient season. An after service is therefore both philosophical and scriptural. It is necessary because

- (1) of the frequent absence of the previous conditions to insure the best end of preaching in coetaneous results;

(2) because of the fact that certain persons or states of mind require added instruction and exhortation and supplication to get them clear through.

The altar service (or “mourner’s bench”) still proves to be our most efficient (though not the only) means for conducting this after work. When properly conducted it is most interesting and impressive to the audience. It involves an openness of avowal and seeking which at once burns many bridges behind the seeker and tends greatly to intensify his earnestness. Its very form and nature emphasize prayer above mere instruction or inquiry. It also presents and presses the prospect of an immediate settlement of the question. Besides this it furnishes employment for the gifts of many besides those of the preacher, in invitation, exhortation, instruction, supplication, etc. And one ideal to be ever aimed at in public service is the spiritual and evangelistic employment of all members of the body.

Lastly a word about conducting the altar service. Till the preacher or leader of the meeting surrenders it by appointment of another it should remain in his hands. Nor should this surrender be made without good and justifiable reasons. While in the very nature of the case the fullest possible liberty should be accorded the individual workers in their methods of persuasion, instruction, etc., yet they in turn should respect the generalship of the leader and concede and contribute in every possible way to insure the success of the work as a whole. The leader must also have in mind and hand the congregation at large to prevent dissolution, distraction and undue detention. Experience proves that the most is done and the results are most quickly attained by having the seekers pray for themselves. For whether it be for justification or for sanctification they seek, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The altar service now lacks five years of being in use for a century.* Nothing yet has been devised that can successfully or sufficiently substitute it. Yet there are many things which may supplement it to good profit.

* Note: This book was published in 1904. According to Smith’s statement then, the use of an Altar Service began five years short of 100 years earlier, or about 1809.

CHAPTER 11

BY

REV. G. A. MCLAUGHLIN

The altar service is a modern institution. Like many other modern usages, it is not authorized directly by scripture. Nor, on the other hand, is it contrary to scripture.

In the early days of Methodism such mighty conviction attended the preaching of the Word that men often fell like dead men during the delivery of the sermon, or were seized with such distress of soul that the preacher would frequently be compelled to desist from preaching to pray for and instruct conscience-smitten souls. Hence the whole assembly frequently became a great altar service. The after service was as much expected and looked for as the sermon itself.

As the Methodists began to succeed, they began to organize. From their simple services in barns and schoolhouses, they went into their newly-built chapels and churches. Following the example of the Church of England, from which they originated, they built the communion rail, with its step for kneeling, just before the pulpit, and called the intervening space the altar. In times of revival this was a most convenient rallying place to invite the penitent and to gather around and pray for him. The altar also took the name of “the mourner’s bench,” because in more primitive times a bench was set out for those who sincerely mourned over their sins and desired to “flee from the wrath to come.” There has always been more or less objection to the altar. But the objection is usually by those who do not want to thoroughly repent of their sins and hence are unwilling to humble themselves. When we consider the fact that more souls in modern days have been saved at the altar than by any other method we believe in it with our whole heart, and shall use this method on every fitting opportunity, until we can find some other method by which more souls can be led into the light. The mourner’s bench is the Galilean Carpenter’s

bench, where he has done some of his best work. We shall say to those who criticize this method, what J. S. Inskip said to those who said, “We do not believe in your methods of doing it.” He replied, “I do not like your methods of not doing it.”

But it is not our purpose to argue this point, but we desire to address those who believe in these methods.

1. The altar is the place for prayer. The seeker separates himself from everything and comes out from among his associates to find God. In some quarters there seems to be a great need of emphasizing this fact. We have seen some altar services which were simply discussions and social conversations — the seekers on one side and the “workers” on the other, carrying on familiar talks across the bench, without a word of prayer. The usual altar service has too much talk and too little prayer. We wish we could ring this statement in the ears of all the people all over the land. If we could not get space for but one sentence in advice to workers, we would say this, Have as little talk as possible with seekers at the altar. Many times have we seen earnest seekers confused, bewildered and almost stunned by the talk and religious twaddle of people who were no nearer salvation than the seeker himself. Such “workers” seem to us like the unclean birds which Abraham tried to keep off his sacrifice. People have said to us, “I will not go to the altar again. As soon as I try to seek God, so many people begin to talk to me that I get confused.” We have seen an earnest seeker many times with one or two parties at each ear and all talking at once. On any other subject it would be ludicrous in the extreme. When we see much talk with a seeker we know usually that seeker will not get anything. Some years ago we remember, at a camp meeting, a sister who was seeking the blessing of a pure heart. We wanted her and the other seekers to pray through and especially requested that there be no conversation. We made our request very emphatic. But her father, an aged man, pressed his way to her side and in spite of our request began to pour a torrent of words into her ears. Before that time she seemed on the point of yielding entirely and claiming the victory. She became bewildered and wavered and drew back. Today, after all these years, she is a chronic seeker, seemingly not a step beyond where she was years ago. It is of little use to have an appointed leader of an altar service, if everybody is to rush

in pell-mell and conduct one of his own. The altar is the place to meet God and not man; to pray to him and not to listen to human voices.


But, it will be asked, are we not to instruct seekers? Yes, somewhat. It is only necessary to instruct them to give up, trust God and pray through and get them at it. And the worker who can not do this in a few words, but has to give an address, has missed his calling and had better do something else. If he is full of talk he had better go into the congregation and talk to the unsaved. Sometimes people who want to do something and have not the grace and nerve to go out into the congregation, will go to the altar to confuse some struggling soul, with their empty, often misleading talk.

2. The altar is the place for business with God. And it is business of the most tremendous importance. If ever honest business is to be done, this is the time and place. This is the turning point, that marks the eternal destiny of deathless souls. This is no place for anything but unflinching honesty. This is no place for the application of opiates to the conscience. Flattery and even human sympathy are out of place and are even dangerous as well as wicked. We have seen the Spirit's work of conviction neutralized and destroyed by the extension of human sympathy. We have turned away sick at heart as we have heard prayers full of exaltation of the virtues of the seeker. When a soul sees the wickedness of his heart, it is wicked to tell him of his goodness. Such seekers, so dealt with by the misplaced sympathy of friends, usually get nothing. The convicted sinner is on the road to hell. There is only one chance for him, no matter how good his friends may think him to be. He must renounce his sins at any cost. He must cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, and it is no favor or kindness to him to give him human sympathy that will cause him to draw back. The surgeon that will let his sympathy paralyze his arm is not the man for the delicate operation, on which hinges life or death. The same thing may be said as regards the seeker for entire sanctification. The altar is no place for compliments, but for stern, uncompromising decision. If there were more of this kind of work done, there might not be so many converts reported, but they would be of a better quality and more lasting.

3. The singing. Because a person has a good voice they should not be asked to lead the singing in the altar service. Behind the voice should be a saved heart and good sense. Those who can not tell when to sing a hymn of

consecration and when to sing a song of faith ought not to be allowed to select the hymn. How many times we have heard hymns of faith sung before the seeking soul was ready for it. How much random, “hit or miss” singing there is in the altar service. If the leader is not fit to select his own hymns, he is not fit to lead. If he is fit to lead, he should be allowed to do so.

How many souls have been brought out of sin into salvation by appropriate song, rendered at the proper time, which enabled them to let go the last idol or give up the last sin, or nerved their weak faith to grasp some promise. Thank God for holy, well-timed song. There can not be too much of it at the right time. But bunglingly selected and executed at the wrong time it is a positive hindrance.

4. The instruction. We have already referred to this. We want to enlarge a little farther. It ought to be as brief as possible. The effort should be made to find out what the seeker needs and to have him find it out, too. He should be encouraged to state the worst of his case. Then he should be encouraged to “pray through” and get the victory. He must be encouraged to give up to God unreservedly — to turn from all his sins, if he is a sinner or to entirely consecrate if he is a seeker for holiness. If this be thoroughly done believing will usually follow spontaneously and naturally. If he be a seeker who has had little religious advantages, it may be necessary to explain the nature of appropriating faith, and to enforce upon his mind the words of Jesus, “What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive and ye shall have them” ( Mark 11:24). We append a few don’ts for altar workers:

“DON’TS” FOR ALTAR WORK

Don’t talk too much to seekers. It is possible to talk conviction all out of them. Tell them to talk to God and tell them what to ask of him. We have seen and heard discussion and argument going on over the mourners’ bench. People come to the altar to yield to God. Urge them to do it and then quit talking.

Don’t tell seekers to believe they are saved, but tell them to trust God to save them now.

Don't offer seekers human sympathy. If the Spirit has made them wretched do not tell them how nice they are or how much good they have done or how much they are capable of doing. Let them feel badly until the Spirit who gave the conviction gives them liberty. Human sympathy has spoiled much of the Spirit's work.

Don't urge seekers to "Believe, believe," until they have truly yielded to God. If they have done that their faith will not need much urging.

Don't let two persons talk to the same seeker at once. It would be ludicrous if it were on any other subject but salvation, to see two persons, one on each side, pouring a stream of talk into each ear of the seeker at the same time. No wonder people often object to going to the altar, declaring that they get confused. We wonder in some altar services that any one gets saved.

Don't be in a hurry. Because you see the way clearly; the seeker may not see it at all. Some minds act more slowly than others. We have seen many an altar service rushed through mechanically, where seekers got nothing. Give people time to break up, count the cost and forever settle this matter of eternal destiny.

Don't let the altar service become only a place of conversation. Let it be a place of mighty wrestling with God. We have seen so-called altar services with scarcely a word of prayer.

Don't sing too soon. Let the battle get fairly on before you sing songs of faith. Let prayer come first.

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