

The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

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Personal Responsibility. Some admirer of the "Jove-like Daniel" is said to have once asked, "Mr. Webster, what was the greatest thought that ever entered your mind?" Daniel Webster reflected intently for a moment and then responded solemnly, "The thought of my personal accountability to God."

The impress made upon man by the parable of the Talents is indicated by the popular meaning assigned to the word "talents" in ordinary usage. The parable has given to our language one of the most common words in it; whenever the terms "talents" and "talented" are used, unwitting testimony is borne to the force of this parable, one of the most instructive contained in the Gospels.

It should be considered in connection with that of the Pounds, both treating of this great matter of personal responsibility; there are points of agreement and points of difference between them.

The primary idea is that of stewardship; in both cases the goods are not the property of those in possession; they constitute a trust devolved for a season, for the discharge of which there shall be a reckoning

whether soon or late. More than this, both the trust and the trustees in each instance belong to the truster; complete ownership, the completest conceivable, is indicated: "called unto him his own servants and delivered unto them his goods." The servant belonged unto his master and his time was not his own, the property committed to him belonged likewise to the same master. The lesson here is evident; he who reads the parable aright must feel deeply impressed with this great thought of his personal accountability to God for the right use of his time, his gifts and his means.

Wide Discretion.

The wide latitude allowed is striking. In each instance the owner goes away into a "far country" evidently for a long absence. There is not a hint of instructions, or even of suggestions; there is not the slightest indication of anything like espionage. Every trustee is left absolutely to his own discretion to do whatsoever he chooses with the money entrusted to him. Diligent use is evidently expected, but the ways and means are left entirely to the wisdom and the

its details. Even at a glance it can scarcely escape us that this historical method of conceiving the Lord's Supper approves itself in manifold ways by the light it throws on the problems which have perplexed men in their efforts to understand the Supper. Three of the services it thus renders are worthy of special mention. It throws a bright illumination upon our Lord's words of institution, and makes all the dark places in them light. It offers a ready explanation of the corruptions which have crept into the idea and practice of the Supper in the course of Christian history: as the memory of a sacrificial system died out in the course of generations of men born Christian, the significance of a sacrificial feast was lost and the attempts that were made to find some other meaning for phrases growing out of it necessarily have led to error. And it supplies an adequate interpretation of the Supper itself as it is commended to us by the Apostolic writers, and gives it its due place in the body of Christian institutions. A simple historical suggestion which performs such services to thought thereby powerfully commends itself as fundamental to a right conception of the institution.

THE LAW OF LOVE AND LOVE AS LAW.

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"Thou shalt love." This is the language of law. It lays a command on us. It is not something we may, or may not do, with impunity. It is something we must do. It differs from the most of the commands of the Decalogue, in that it enjoins a positive duty, whereas they merely prohibit sins. But it is no less imperative. It can no more be waived aside without bringing the soul into collision with the inflexible authority of God.

This command goes deeper than conduct; it lays a requisition on the heart. "Thou shalt love." It lays claim to the affections, Does any one object that the heart is not under the control of the will, and that it may, therefore, be impossible to render obedience to this command? The command admits of no excuse. Like all divine law, it rests on absolute, unchanging obligation. It simply claims what is due. The debt is on us regardless of our ability, or inability to pay it. If love be wanting, we cannot force it, and yet

we must love, or suffer the penalty of disobedience to divine law.

Not only is this command of the nature of law, but it is inclusive of all law. It sums up the whole obedience which we owe to God, and all the duties which we owe to our fellow-man. It is not coordinate with the commands of the Decalogue, but is comprehensive of all those commands. It sweeps a wider field than that. In its two-fold direction toward God and man, it embraces in its strenuous, uncompromising demand all the law and the prophets. When we have loved to the full extent enjoined, we have discharged to the full limit in every direction our whole duty. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." One can acquit himself of all other obligations, but the duty of love remaineth. "The debt of love is immortal." In the very act of discharging this debt, he frees himself from all others. The apostle restricts his arguments to the duties we owe to man, but the same argument is equally valid as respects our duty to God.

As love is comprehensive of all duties, it is for this reason inclusive of all virtues. There can be no virtue apart from love, nor can there be wanting any virtue when love is present. Angelic gifts of speech, prophetic gifts of knowledge, miraculous gifts of faith cannot enable one to put forth virtuous activities in the absence of love. The giving of all the goods to the poor, and the yielding of the body to be burned have but the semblance of benevolence and devotion unless the motive be love. It is the Midas touch which transmutes all metals into gold, turns all deeds into virtues. Lacking this one thing, the rich young ruler lacked all things. In form he had kept all the commandments from his youth up, but in reality had fulfilled no obligation of the law.

While the law of love is one law, it points to two objects, God and man. It, therefore, includes two claims. As God is infinitely superior to man, his claim is primary and supreme. "The first and greatest commandment is thou shalt love the Lord thy God." This is the door of entrance into the sphere of obedience, and

hence into the sphere of divine favour. We never obey God till we love Him. We are never the objects of His favour till we obey Him. A man may have an amiable character, and a high sense of honor. His kindly disposition may prompt him to deeds of generosity. His strict principles of integrity may secure a faithful discharge of his social and civic duties. In such a case he is entitled to our esteem and admiration. But if he loves not God he has not yet fulfilled the one requirement which makes it possible for him to impart the quality of virtue to any deed. "When the Saviour looked upon him He loved him," but He shut the door of the kingdom in his face. He esteemed the pure morality which is current coin among men, but He could allow no place in the Kingdom to one who loved not God. "If any man," no matter how amiable and upright, "love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, Maranatha," let him be an accursed thing. Our Lord cometh.

Under the law of love, our obligation to God is not only primary, it is absolute. "Thou shalt love Him with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength." Thou shalt love Him with all the powers of thy being to the fullest measure of their capacity. The law of no despotism was ever more exacting, and this for the reason that our obligation is only limited by our ability. However great this may become in the case of any glorified saint in the onward sweep of ages, it must still be taxed to the utmost to meet its obligation. Forever and forever he must love God with the fullest intensity of all his expanding powers.

"The second is like it, thou shalt love thy neighbor." It is the same in kind, only different in measure. When God is the object, the only limit of our love is the limit of our powers. When man is the object, the limit is the measure of permissible self-love. Just what this is may not be precisely determined, but always self must be subordinated to God.

Such in brief is the law of love. It is the law of our being, impulsive and regulative, at once the motive power and guide of life. He, in whose heart love is wanting, is a lawless being, as much so as an animal that is destitute of the instincts that properly belong to its nature. He works out his own ruin, and by his influence spreads moral desolation around him.

Turning now to the other phase of the subject, love as law, the

inquiry is pertinent, what does this law demand? The obvious answer is that it demands, as the aim and end of all our activities, the highest good of those who are the objects of love. This is ever the urgent, imperative behest of love. To this end it lays under tribute the whole nature, the thought of the intellect, the volitions of the will, and the strength of the body.

First, self is an object of love. The law of love demands that we seek our own highest good. Its requirement extends to every part of our complex nature, physical, intellectual and spiritual. It is every man's duty to himself to preserve his health of body, and promote the full and symmetrical development of its power. It is further his duty to cultivate his mind, and expand to their utmost its varied gifts. Still further, duty to himself demands that he shall seek purity of spiritual life and the highest possible attainments in virtue. In a word, love as law enjoins on every one to make the most of himself, for time and eternity. Of course, this necessitates that every lower interest shall be subordinated to the higher, the interests of the body to those of the soul, and the interests of time to those of eternity.

Second, our neighbor is an object of love. As love to self is the measure of love to our neighbor, the duty we owe to self is the standard of duty to our neighbor. Love as law demands, therefore, that we shall seek for our fellow-men the highest good of which they are capable, along the same lines of physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being.

Third, God is the object of supreme love. Hence this love lays upon us the duty of making God the final end of all our activities. "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Life is to find its unity in drawing its motives from the love of God, and in directing its energies to the glorifying of God. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This unifies life's interests as well as its motives and energies. In seeking this highest end we best promote all other ends.

It only remains to be said that love as law makes duty the twin sister of delight, and in pointing us to our supreme obligation, points us to our supreme happiness. This law can never cross the will, nor produce friction in the sensibilities of the soul. It makes the will a cheerful servant, and brings into sweet and perpetual

harmony all the passions, sentiments and aspirations of the inner life. "Thou shalt love." Do this, and God will acquit thee, and exalt thee to be a partaker of His own joy.

ANDREW, SIMON PETER'S BROTHER—A CHARACTER STUDY.

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"Are you related to Professor G—?" asked one man of another in my hearing recently, naming a well known teacher. "Yes", came the quick reply, "I am his brother and for that reason I am supposed to have lost my identity."

To be known as some one else's brother seems to imply that a man is a nobody himself, or at least that his chief claim upon our attention is his relation to that other. Is this the case with the subject of this study? The study may help us to decide.

The sources for the study of Andrew's character are the notices in the Synoptists, the scenes of the Fourth Gospel in which he is a prominent actor, and the list of apostles in the first chapter of the Acts.

Mark gives an account of Andrew's call in the early ministry of Jesus in Galilee, incidentally speaks of Andrew's house in Capernaum, includes Andrew's name in the list of the twelve apostles in his account of their appointment, and mentions Andrew as one of the four disciples with Jesus on the Mount of Olives three days before His death (i. 16-18, 29, iii. 18, xiii. 3).

Matthew gives an account of the call, and includes Andrew's name in the list of the twelve apostles in his account of their mission (iv. 18-20, x. 2).

Luke includes his name in the list of the apostles in his account of their appointment (vi. 14).

From these seven passages which, if we omit repetitions, mention Andrew on five occasions only, and which are meagre enough in their details, we glean these facts.

Andrew was a Galilean, a brother of Simon Peter, who lived with him in Capernaum in a house that they jointly owned, and was also engaged with him in the fishing business, in which they