

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

were written this phrase meant the Lord's supper (probably in connection with the Agapae). The observance at Troas (Acts xx. 7), and the references in Corinthians show that the Supper was introduced among the Gentiles also, with the first preaching of the gospel. That such a rite should have sprung up so soon and have become so generally an essential of Christian worship, without the appointment of the Master and even contrary to his intention is incredible. The inevitable remembrance of that evening meal on the part of the early disciples, which Dr. McGiffert suggests, is utterly inadequate to account for it, if indeed, on his theory of the original meal, such reverent recollection would not preclude such perversion of it. To suppose an unrecorded command after his resurrection, as Dr. Briggs does, is sheer gratuity. The simple and natural explanation of that early practice is that Jesus instituted the memorial just as Corinthians records.

Back of this question regarding the Lord's Supper lies the far larger and more vital discussion concerning the person of Christ himself. Was Jesus the Son of God? If so, how far did he exercise on earth the attributes and authority of deity? Into this I shall not enter further than to say that it is in its relation to this larger question that the discussion regarding the Supper has, if not its motive, certainly its greatest interest and importance.

While from a historic standpoint the newer views regarding the origin of the Supper seem unwarranted; the presentation of them helps us to perceive that no single view of the purpose of that sacrament is adequate. Like the Master whom it commemorates,—like the great sacrifice which it symbolises,—the Lord's Supper is many sided, has manifold relations, and can be properly apprehended and appreciated only through a recognition of this fact.

THE FUNDAMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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The most salient fact connected with the institution of the Lord's Supper is, of course, that this took place at, or, to be more specific, in the midst of, the Passover Meal. It was "while they were eating" the passover meal, that Jesus, having taken up a loaf

and blessed it, broke it and gave it to His disciples (Mat. xxvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22). This was, assuredly, no accident. As the time of His offering up drew near, the indications thicken of the most extreme care on the part of our Lord in the ordering of every event: and these indications are least of all lacking with respect to this passover (Mat. xxvi. 2; Luke xxii. 8; Mark xiv. 13 *sq.*; Luke xxii. *sq.*), which He himself tells us He had earnestly desired to eat with His disciples before He suffered (Luke xxii. 15). We must certainly presume that all that our Lord did at this meal was in execution of a thoroughly detailed plan of action, formed in the clear light of the whole future (Luke xxii. 16, 18, 30; John xiii. 1, 3, 11, 18, 19, 21, 27; Mt. xxvi. 31; Luke xxii. 31, 37, etc.). Nothing can be more certain than that He deliberately chose the Passover Meal for the institution of the sacrament of His body and blood.

The appropriateness of this selection becomes apparent the moment we consider the similarities between the two ordinances. These lie in part upon the surface. Both, for example, are feasts, religious feasts, religious feasts in which the devotional life of Jews and Christians respectively to a large extent centre. They penetrate, however, also in part very much below the surface. The central feature of both, for example, is eating a symbol of Jesus Christ Himself. The typical character of the Paschal lamb certainly cannot be doubted by any reader of the New Testament (Jno. i. 29, 36; I Cor. v. 7; I P. i. 19; Rev. v. 6, 12; vii. 14; xii. 11; xiii. 8 *et passim*): the lamb that was slain and lay on the table at this feast was just the typical representative of the Lamb that had been slain from the foundation of the world and in whose hands is the Book of Life. The bread and wine of which we partake at the Lord's table are in like manner, according to our Lord's precise declaration, the representations of His body and blood—His body given, His blood poured out for us. What is done in the two feasts is therefore precisely the same thing: Jesus Christ is symbolically fed upon in both. This close similarity between the two feasts again certainly cannot be looked upon as accidental. We must assuredly judge that our Lord, in instituting the Supper, meant to make it to the full extent to which these similarities point, a replica of the passover. In this sense at least the Lord's Supper is the Christian Passover Meal. It

takes, and was intended to take, in the Christian Church, the place which the Passover occupied in the Jewish Church. It is the Christian substitute for the Passover.

Even this, however, does not do full justice to the relation between the two. If in the light of the broad facts suggested rather than recited in what has been said, we seek to go back in imagination to that upper chamber, and to realize exactly what Jesus did when He took the bread and wine and gave them to His disciples to eat and drink in remembrance of Him, we shall not fail to perceive that it is almost as inadequate to say merely that the Lord's Supper was instituted as the substitute for the Passover as to say merely that it was instituted at the Passover. It is not something entirely different from the Passover,—or even wholly separate from it,—now put into its place, to be celebrated by Christians instead of it. It is much rather only a new form given to the Passover, for the continuance of its essential substance through all time. Precisely what our Lord appears to have done was so to change the symbols which represented His sacrificed Person in the feast, as to adapt it to the new conditions of the Kingdom as now introduced by Him, and thus to perpetuate it throughout the new dispensation. The lamb had hitherto been the symbol of the great coming Sacrifice; but as they sat about the table and ate, Jesus solemnly took up a loaf and breaking it gave it to His disciples and said: "Take, eat: *this* is my body that is given for you." Many thoughts, many feelings may have crowded in on His disciples' minds as He spoke. There was much they may not have understood; much which, half understanding, they may have half revolted from. But there was one thing that, however dimly, they can scarcely have failed to catch a glimmering of: their Master was identifying Himself with the Paschal Lamb, and He was appointing to them a new symbol in its stead. For was not that lamb what had been given for them, the symbol and seal of their redemption? And was He not speaking of Himself as given for them, and appointing the bread and wine as the symbols of Himself? We may be sure there were searchings of heart that night as to what these things might mean: gropings no doubt in the darkness: but not gropings altogether without a clue or in a darkness unilluminated by a single beam.

The reason why Christ made a change in the symbols represen-

tative of His sacrificed self is obvious enough. He to whom all the Paschal lambs from the beginning had been pointing, was about to be offered up. The old things were passing away: behold, all things were to become new. As He was in no doubt as to His approaching death—or rather as He was in the act of preparing for the death He was Himself to accomplish for sinners: so He was in no doubt as to the approaching dissolution of the Jewish state, and the cessation of the ritual law, and with it of the sacrifices which that law prescribed. But not only was it appropriate that the new epoch in the Kingdom of God that was about to dawn should be marked by a change in ritual; it was necessary that the change introduced should follow on some such lines as those our Lord was actually giving it. The Temple sacrifices were to cease; there were to be no longer sacrificed lambs available for the Passover festival. There is accordingly no lamb in the Jewish Passover to-day while yet there remains the symbol of the Lamb in the Christian Passover: they have no altar, but we have an altar of which they have no right to eat. The new dispensation was to be universal: it was needful that its central act of worship should not imply a central place of worship and be bound to it: the day has come when neither in Jerusalem nor in any other special place should men worship God, but everywhere in spirit and in truth. Above all, the true Lamb to which all the Paschal lambs had pointed was at length to be offered up; fulfilled in the antitype it would be indecorous to offer up longer the types. Thus the change that was made in the chosen symbols of the great sacrifice needed to have regard at once to the closing of the old dispensation of typical sacrifices, to the opening of the new dispensation of universal spiritual worship, and to the passing away of the type in the antitype. All this was beautifully provided for when Jesus, even as they ate the last Paschal lamb, took the bread and wine that lay before Him, and, with the unmistakable emphasis of contrast, said "*This* is my body given for you;" "*This* is my blood of the covenant poured out for you." Whatever His disciples missed in their wonder at the new things that were so mysteriously and so rapidly crowding upon them, we may be sure they did not miss this: that in some way the Master was transforming the Passover for them and giving them not indeed a new symbolism for it but new symbols in it.

The really palmary fact for the understanding of the Lord's Supper thus clearly emerges. The Lord's Supper in its fundamental significance is just what the Passover Meal was: the symbols are changed, the substance remains the same. It is not necessary for our present purpose to determine the precise nature of the Passover offering—whether, for example, it was a special, or rather the culminating instance of a sin-offering, differing from other sin-offerings only in the adjunction to it of a sacrificial feast; or whether, just because of the inclusion of this feast, it was, not technically a sin-offering at all, but rather what is generally called a peace-offering. After all, the distinction is merely a matter of distribution of emphasis. Every bloody offering was piacular: and the peace-offering differed from the sin-offering only by the adjunction of an additional conception. Whether we call it a peculiar and more complete form of the sin-offering, or rather a peace-offering, therefore, the two ideas of expiation and communion are alike inexpugnably imbedded in the very substance of the passover sacrifice. The meal which succeeded the sacrifice in any case owed its significance to its relation to the sacrifice. The victim offered was the material of the meal, and the idea of expiation was therefore fundamental to it—it was a feast of death. But, on the other hand, just because it was a festive meal, it in any case also celebrated rather the effects than the fact of this death,—it was a feast of life.

Further than is obviously implied in this, it seems also unnecessary for us just now to inquire into the precise meaning of a sacrificial feast. Its general law is laid down by the Apostle Paul in the tenth chapter of First Corinthians: and despite some difficulties that hang over the exact exposition of some of his phrases, certain broad outlines are plain enough. Assuredly, for example, the sacrificial feast is not a repetition of the sacrifice; and equally certainly it is something more than a mere commemoration of the sacrifice: it is specifically a part of the sacrifice, and more particularly this part—the application of it. Every one who partook of the sacrificial feast, had “communion with the altar.” All that may be implied in this we do not stop now to discuss: this much it is allowed on all hands to imply—those who ate of the sacrificed victim became thereby participants in the benefits attained by the sacrifice. Only one or two of the household, perchance,

bore the Paschal lamb to the Temple and were engaged in its sacrificial slaying: all those who partook of the feast, however, were alike the offerers of the sacrifice and its beneficiaries. This is the fundamental law of the sacrificial feast,—perfectly understood by our Lord's first disciples, who had been bred under a sacrificial dispensation and instinctively felt its implications, but needing to be kept with some effort carefully in mind by us to whom these things are strange and without natural significance.

Precisely what our Lord did therefore, when at the last pass-over He changed the symbols by which He was represented,—He, the true Passover, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world—was to establish a perpetual sacrificial feast, under universal forms, capable of observation everywhere and at all times, and to command it to be celebrated as a proclamation of His death “till He came.” All who partake of this bread and wine, the appointed symbols of His body and blood, therefore, are symbolically partaking of the victim offered on the altar of the cross, and are by this act professing themselves offerers of the sacrifice and seeking to become beneficiaries of it. That is the fundamental significance of the Lord's Supper. Whenever the Lord's Supper is spread before us we are invited to take our place at the sacrificial feast, the substance of which is the flesh and blood of the victim which has been sacrificed once for all at Calvary; and as we eat these in their symbols, we are—certainly not repeating His sacrifice, nor yet prolonging it,—but continuing that solemn festival upon it instituted by Christ, by which we testify our “participation in the altar” and claim our part in the benefits bought by the offering immolated on it. The sacrificial feast is not the sacrifice, in the sense of the act of offering: it is, however, the sacrifice, in the sense of the thing offered, that is eaten in it: and therefore it is presuppositive of the sacrifice in the sense of the act of offering and implies that this offering has already been performed. The Lord's Supper as a sacrificial feast is accordingly not the sacrifice, that is, the act of offering up Christ's body and blood: it is, however, the sacrifice, that is the body and blood of Christ that were offered, which is eaten in it: and therefore it is presuppositive of the sacrifice as an act of offering and implies that this act has already been performed once for all.

We shall not, however, attempt to develop the conception in

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