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Man's Responsibility

Earl Clement Davis

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Lewons I. Subject: Maria Response hility. Erifture: Jub 251-27 Gal 61-10. Sext. Gal, 65 For each man shall have his own burden." Such a bald and affarently cold = blooched statement of a fact of life which wast everyone is fainfully aware of from his own experience, seems all wort unnecessary, and at first thought seems rother inconsistants as a teaching of a gosfel in which one of the chriest statements in love unto me all ye that labor and are heavy ladered and I will give you sert." How many Times in the course of the year we become discouraged, tiech and meany

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self what his Holy derifting shall be. on other words instead of having some one she till you what Revelation is and in what book it is to be formed you have to find out for your self. This is just the sume as surging each won must have his our bucken's In the an illustration of the distinction between the old and new in question of word conduct. Again the old soys that rules of conclust for every were are very explicitly taich set forth in the Rible. The only thing necessary is to follow that, the the other hand wooden thright soop. Just as there are sectaring

famages of Scriftime which every one accepts or infiled because they infire every one. so there are certain great frincifler which quick ou concluct, because every me con see that they are by the very notions of things right, Everyone an see that the ten commanchments are fincifles which unt be observed in every commity. but when it comes to decide the quarties of right and using in the three and and one little details that woke of the firthere of claig life. there is vo fixed low or wo five scale or stouch by which we can

make an absolute decision. For they neighbor on the self is a very heartiful and for reaching fin: cifle, but how een oue kom just what is for the best intents of his weighter. Do unto other on ye wool that they should do with you," is a comparatively fan reaching answer in question of kuchet. but how are your going to do unter other or you would that they should der unter yrr, when your der with home what you would with to have them do unter you. See other words woden thight sop you are endwed with a refairly

of chorsing between right and unong but it must rest with your our reff to decide you the farhinda action in a curate rase. in other worke work, in the word wold as well or in the finder world, woclew thought sorp the usprinibility sette with the inclis nichol um, Each um unt bear his own bucker?" I me it is that Chaming stord for the Diquity of Human notice and Ewerson for the Disine ver of Human notice, but to accept there lefty standards of the nature of humanity, cames with it the

abligation to accept the conserfending responsibilities, there consigneding responsi lititets recluced to liment town are stoled in these worch Each. wer must was his our bruchen." e .

The meaning of this is quite enident; The spirit of God speaks to us, seach one of us directly, and not though and arbitrary mechnicol system. Sorbtlen god did speak to won though The forger of the Bitle, but that is wat the only machine of Revelation from God to won. Every book, every sentime That has been the wears of uflifting a human sine, that is a revelotion of Gol. any thought i ichal that frames itself in our und, and imfels us to voble underet, that is the spirit of good revening streef to we. Beyond de doot the spirit of god we reverled to a worderfor

degree in the life of Jerry, but it does not follow that in him we have the only revelation of the word and spiritor clerks of bod. Every was who box lind a life of live and devotion to what is night has been a revealer of the word and spiriture furforer of god. Seyrel durbt the church ha been a great word and spiritve face in the worlds histing, but it does not follow that the church is the only institution of word and spinter france. det me illustole. We see about me every woment of our life evidences

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18 ver larger hold to a conception of our relationship with good which will fermit us to look to some agency outside our our ferren as a mechium through which we are informed of gode nice, and his word furface. The conception of a system by which the chity of discensing girli low can be fort upon the should of sime extense agency, such or the Bible, the church, or chirt is vor burgen terothe. but you and I are bringht into chilet uni unicotion with goal's spirit, and each one must bear is our buden in this world fevere, and accept.

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21 ically out of fort to face the stown and winch of the great ocean beyond the harber, It is such a ficture that gives un enverge, and tol recolls un to the duty of life, and responds to what is climine in us. Discourged and meany with the meight of on cargo do me tun for inspiration to him who, mithert aim a huden floots listenly over the sea glife, or do me turn to one when we Nor is also camping a heavy huchen and is doing day by day the things that such a bruchen demarch. It is the sympthy of like locked vench That help, not that we exfect to

26 to cost our kuchen sofur him who is already budened, but side by side with him to toil and later. hverning that we are doring an fart in the works work. but to cost the bruchen soft another, but to know that Every were most cary his own bruchen" is The great truth the quat confort of worden thought. But we must remember that the electrice wachines in order to do als work, in order to transform the energy of the universe into the form which will serve for wohing and light beb glow with light, must some into commicotion with that all

23 fervasine energy. In our liver, too, if we are to use the mentol former which are given un, and woke volvolle for wonkind the hormledge that we have we must be fordi spirit have con: tool of our lives, giving of all anceit and vaingling, and service selfithren we unt becaue the mechine though which gach spirit very bring wirchen and light, and have note the world. The chitres, which are an chitres, the orton work which is one work, the serfusibility which is one responsibility are too us, vot a buden which we mall cost ofm the shoulder of averthin. but the buden which with a frame

24 and a consciourven that we are working to getter with god, we shall camp as frentfully avelos unenly on becomen the diquity of one who is the spiritual son and co-worker of the sufirite from of the univere. hat the safely woored, sugoden ship but the hearily ladened neucle on the no of light is the time and deep aspir: ation of our sove to be. for me how that it is vot a handship, but a frinkege for each one to feel that in doing the wold'e work, God's work, Each won unit bean his our buden."

Man's Responsibility

E. C. Davis

November 27, 1904

Pittsfield, MA*

Scripture: Job 28:1-27; Galatians 6: 1-10

Text: Galatians 5:5, "For every man shall bear his own burden"

Such a bold and apparently cold-blooded statement of a fact of life which most everyone is painfully aware of from his own experience. Seems almost unnecessary, and at first thought seems rather inconsistent as a teaching of a gospel in which one of the choicest statements is, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy ladened and I will give you rest." How many times in the course of the year we become discouraged, tired and weary and long for one moment of relaxation, one moment in which to throw aside the responsibility, and feel the relief which might come to us in knowing that there is nothing at that moment that we must do. We stand at the dock watching the unloading of a big ocean steamship, and we wonder how that great ship must feel, if she has power of feeling, to find herself safely in dock, protected from the winds and storms, and free from the burdens of freight which she has been carrying. I fancy we would say that she must have a feeling of satisfaction and joy to know that she is free from responsibility and care, and safe from all dangers. What a delight, too, it would be for her to slip out of the harbor, and free from all burden, to dance merrily over the surface of the water unrestrained by the cases of a cargo.

Such a picture is alluring and attractive, and it may seem that it is just the kind of a picture that a gospel of peace and joy might bring. We call our gospel of the liberal religion a gospel of peace and joy, and we may think that it paints for us a picture such as I have

^{*} According to the notes on this text, this sermon was also given in Canton, MA (December 4, 1904), Billerica, MA (no date given) and Sterling, MA (January 22, 1905).

described, carefree and irresponsible. But far from being true is that idea. However much we may feel that a gospel of peace and joy cannot bring with it this message, "Each man shall bear his own burden," it will appear upon second thought that the fundamental message of liberal religion is just this, that "Each man shall bear his own burden" when the distinctions between the old conceptions of religion and the modern conceptions of religion have been stripped of all the attendant paraphernalia, and we lay open to our view the very essence of the distinction we shall find that this thought which Paul has so clearly put into these words, "Each man shall bear his own burden" is the foundation stone upon which liberal religion is constructed. It is because we believe that it is true that each man must bear his own burden, that we feel that the gospel of liberal religion has much more of real manliness and womanliness, and therefore much more of satisfaction and force than the old message where [the] cardinal principle seemed to have been to cast your burden upon someone else.

Now let us see how it will work out if we compare one or two of the old ideas with the corresponding modern ones for the purpose of discovering whether or not it is true that liberal religion in each case will say that "each man must bear his own burden" while the old thought will say, "Shift the burden to some other shoulders."

For example take the question of Revelation. The old point of view says, "Oh, you need not disturb yourself about Revelation. God has provided for all that in advance. The Bible is a complete and perfect revelation of God's will, accurate, and infallible in every detail. The only thing that you have to do is to have faith, and then you will believe it all, the impossible as well as the possible. That blind belief in Revelation is the basis of your religious life."

Now I am not resurrecting these bygone ideas on the assumption that any man of sense today believes in them, although I have heard these very ideas preached from a pulpit in Massachusetts within a month. I simply speak of them to show the changed point of view. Modern religion would say on this point of Revelation something like this,

"Yes, God has spoken in the Bible, at least in some parts of it. He has also spoken elsewhere. In the sacred books of all religions we may find passages where the Divine spirit is evident. God has also revealed his truth in other ways than by the printed book. 'That which inspires me is inspired' was the way Coleridge determined what was Holy writing. It does not make any difference where we find scripture, in the Bible or not. If it is true, and has the power of arousing the noblest aspiration in a human soul, it is Revelation from God." Now here it is evident that each man must determine very largely for himself what his Holy Scripture shall be. In other words, instead of having someone else tell you what Revelation is and in what book it is to be found, you have to find out for yourself. This is just the same as saying "Each man shall bear his own burden."

Or take an illustration of the distinction between the old and new in questions of moral conduct. Again the old says that rules of conduct for every man are very explicitly set forth in the Bible. The only thing necessary is to follow that. On the other hand, modern thought says, "Just as there are certain passages of scripture which everyone accepts as inspired because they inspire everyone, so there are certain great principles which guide our conduct because everyone can see that they are by the very nature of things right. Everyone can see that the ten commandments are principles which must be observed in every community. But when it comes to decide the question of right and wrong in the thousand and one little details that make up the problems of daily life there is no fixed law or no fine scale or standard by which we can make an absolute decision. 'Love thy neighbor as thyself' is a very beautiful and far-reaching principle, but how can one know just what is for the best interests of his neighbor? 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you' is a comparatively far-reaching answer in question of conduct, but how are you going to do unto others as you would that they should do unto you when you do not know what you would will to them to do unto you? In other words, modern thought says, 'You are endowed with a capacity of choosing between right and wrong, but it must rest with your own self to decide upon the particular action in a concrete case.'"

In other words, in the moral world as well as in the intellectual world, modern thought says the responsibility rests with the individual man. "Each man shall bear his own burden."

True it is that Channing stood for the dignity of Human nature and Emerson for the Divineness of Human nature. But to accept these lofty standards of the nature of humanity, carries with it the obligation to accept the corresponding responsibilities. These corresponding responsibilities reduced to lowest terms are stated in the words, "Each man shall bear his own burden."

Now the meaning of this is quite evident. The spirit of God speaks to us, to each one of us directly, and not through an arbitrary mechanical system. Doubtless God did speak to man through the pages of the Bible, but that is not the only medium of Revelation from God to man. Every book, every sentence that has been the means of uplifting a human soul, that is a revelation of God. Every thought or ideal that frames itself in our mind, and impels us to noble conduct, that is the spirit of God revealing itself to us. Beyond all doubt the spirit of God was revealed to a wonderful degree in the life of Jesus. But it does not follow that in him we have the only revelation of the moral and spiritual ideals of God. Every man who has lived a life of love and devotion to what is right, has been a revelation of the moral and spiritual purposes of God.

Beyond doubt the church has been a great moral and spiritual force in the world's history. But it does not follow that the church is the only institution of moral and spiritual power.

Let me illustrate. We see about us every moment of our life evidences of a great force in the world which we call energy. Now one of the particular ways in which this energy is manifested is in electric lighting. It is evident that at some time man devised the first electric light, and that that first electric light would have a peculiar interest for us. But it does not follow that all the electric lights we use now can receive that power necessary to make them burn only through the medium of that machine which made the first light burn. No more are we confined to receiving spiritual Revelation through one particular book.

Or it may be that some particular machine can claim to be the most powerful generator of electricity. Let it be so, and we will give it our admiration and use its power if we are so situated that we can. But again it does not follow that all electrical energy must be generated by that machine, and pour through its coils of wires. A smaller, very much less perfect [machine] will generate just as good electricity, and just as fine a quality.

All this goes to show that we can no longer hold to a conception of our relationship with God which will permit us to look to some agency outside our own person as a medium through which we are informed of God's will, and his moral purpose. The conception of a system by which the duty of discovering God's laws can be put upon the shoulder of some external agency, such as the Bible, the church, or Christ, is no longer tenable. But you and I are brought into direct communication with God's spirit, and each one must bear his own burden in this world process, and accept the responsibility which the conception of being a coworker with God places upon. As one of the direct agencies through which the spirit of God's working out a world process, each one shall bear his own burden. That is the one great message of modern thought.

As to the relation that this truth bears to our daily life, there are two ideas which are enlightening. Let us go back to the illustration with which we started, and let us assume again that we are tired and weary and discouraged, and long for a moment of relaxation. Is it true that the picture of a ship safely in dock, and entirely free from the burden of cargo, is it true that such a picture is the one that we really want? On the contrary, I think that the picture that our souls must long for is the one of a ship ladened to the very waterline, steaming energetically out of port to face the storms and winds of the great ocean beyond the harbor. It is such a picture that gives us courage, and recalls us to the duty of life, and responds to what is divine in us. Discouraged and weary with the weight of our cargo do we turn for inspiration to him who, without aim or burden floats listlessly over the sea of

life, or do we turn to one whom we know is also carrying a heavy burden and is doing day-by-day the things that such a burden demand. It is the sympathy of like burdened vessels that helps, not that we expect to cast our burden upon him who is already burdened. But side-by-side with him to task and labor knowing that we are doing our part in the world's work. Not to cast the burden upon another, but to know that "Every man shall bear his own burden" is the great truth, the great comfort of modern thought.

But we must remember that the electric machine, in order to do its work, in order to transform the energy of the universe into a form which will serve for making our light bulb glow with light, must come into communication with that all-pervasive energy. In our lives, too, if we are to use the mental powers which are given us, and make valuable for mankind the knowledge that we have, we must let God's spirit have control of our lives. Giving up all conceit and vainglory, and sordid selfishness, we must become the medium through which God's spirit may bring wisdom and light, and love into the world. The duties which are our duties, the work which is our work, the responsibility which is our responsibility are to us not a burden which we would cast upon the shoulders of another. But the burden which with a brave heart and a consciousness that we are working together with God, we shall carry as manfully and as womanly as becomes the dignity of one who is the spiritual son and co-worker of the Infinite power of the universe. Not the safely moored cargo-less ship, but the heavily ladened vessel on the sea of life is the true and deep aspiration of our own soul to be. For we know that it is not a hardship, but a privilege for each one to feel that in doing the world's work, God's work, "Each man must bear his own burden."