

EDITORIAL

"On these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets." The two commandments referred to are, of course, about the love we must have for God and for neighbor. But the dependence on these two commandments is not just for our eternal happiness; it also extends to our temporal happiness.

International disputes and crises evidence a lack of love, at least between governments. Psychiatrists' offices are filled with people who don't know how to love their neighbor, their God, or themselves. As for God, we know it is impossible to love Him sufficiently but we must love Him with all our strength. Some love themselves too much, others love themselves insufficiently. The explanation of these failures at love is that these individuals do not know either God or themselves. If they did, they could regulate their own loves and attain a balance and integration in their desires and activity.

As we love ourselves, we are commanded to love our neighbor who may be either friendly or inimical to us. If he is hostile, we must answer the query of Christ: "If you salute your brethren only, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do that?" Although loving enemies is difficult, we know we must do it, and the very difficulty evokes a greater effort. But when our neighbor is a friend, we find the command somewhat easier of fulfillment.

God has given us sufficient laws to direct our loves, and sufficient helps to regulate them. He gave us the prophets and judges in the Old Testament; He gave us His own Son in the New. He commanded, enticed, pleaded, and cajoled us through their mouths. His only Son, Christ, epigrammed the whole divine message in His two commandments of love.

Truly, there doesn't seem to be any lack of awareness among us about the fact or contents of Christ's great commandments. But there does appear a certain indifference, a semi-acceptance, a mere speculative assent to the command that they be lived. Everyone will admit to knowing this law of love, and almost everyone will profess adherence to it. But for too many, this admission and profession only means covering over their vices with a false self-complacency and smugness. This satisfaction and self-centric love impede the expression of true self-love, and true love of God and neighbor.

The love of neighbor which is commanded is not just a wish for his

advancement and well-being. It must be a sincere willing, praying, sacrificing, working. We have no difficulty or hesitation about acquiring all kinds of "useful" goods and taking care of ourselves. We must also be prompt to secure the necessities of spiritual advancement and bodily life for our neighbor. We must persevere in this love and effort in good times as well as bad. It's not just an occasional Sunday morning thought that is in question; rather this is what the gospel of Christ means. We can equate the word "Christ" with the word "love." St. John connects the two implicitly when he says: "God is love."

The God-Man, Jesus Christ, assumed our flesh to redeem us who were the children of wrath. He did this for one reason—love. Can we appreciate this adequately? If we responded with all our potential for love, our fervor would enflame the world. The heat of our love would radiate and warm all those around us.

St. Paul tells the Romans that "love is the fulfillment of the law." St. John writes: "By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." In his old age, John reduced his whole teaching to a simple line: "Little children, love one another."

This is a rather simple but at the same time, a tremendous teaching. We must advert to it, and more, we must live it. To fail in this is to deny Christ, and to increase interpersonal and international strife. The stark alternative is very well put by W. H. Auden: "We must love one another, or die."