

Brothers Of The King

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“The will of God the Father is to do service to them that need service. This was the great lesson of His life and teaching. All His life with them, He had taught it; but now, on the eve of His departure, He taught it again.”

The Law of the Kingdom

MANY a kingdom has this world seen, and many a one, too, that has sought universal empire, from the days of Babel, to our own. But none has there been in design so vast, in spirit, so unique, in purpose so all-embracing, yet in outward form so far unperceived, as the kingdom set up by the God of heaven, which “shall not be left to other people,” but “shall stand forever.”

Before a little despot of the Roman rule, there stood the King. Alone, despised, accused! “Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee, unto me: what has Thou done?” frowned the procurator of Judea, who thought he held in his hands this Life. Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world.” “Art Thou a king then?” cried Pilate. Jesus said “I am.”

But not to Pilate, nor yet to the proud heads of His “own nation,” did He, or could He, reveal the character of that kingdom of His, which is not of this world. That was reserved for a little band of fishermen, and publicans, and other humble ones, who had been drawn by His magnetic soul of truth. (John 18: 35-37.)

The night before, in an upper chamber of a proud house in Jerusalem, He had revealed anew to His chosen - disciples and apostles the nature, the law, and the future glory of His kingdom. All that the prophets had -told, all that the longing heart of mankind has conceived and hoped since the flaming sword of cherubim shut the gates of Eden, all was comprised and, promised in those words of comfort: “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” John 14:1-3.

But not yet the glory! Preparation must: be made for it. For that glory is the outward expression of the character of the King; and, first, before the, glory, must come into the soul of every one of the citizens of that kingdom the motive, the power, the character, of Him who makes the glory.

He had long held out to them the precious gift of brotherhood, the comradeship of equal fellowship with one another and with Himself. He had said to them at one time, “One is your Master, even Christ; and all you are brethren.” Matthew 23:8. And at another time He put Himself among them in the words, as He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples: “Behold My mother and, My brethren I” Matthew 12:49. And so He referred to them when, after His resurrection He bade Mary carry word thereof to His disciples: “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.” John 20:17.

But to be a brother of the King is to be of the character of the King. “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me,” and, “I do always those things that please Him,” He said of Himself. And of them He said, “Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which - is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.” Matthew 12:50. The will of God the Father is to do service to them that need service. This was the great lesson of His life and teaching.

All His life with them, He had taught it; but now, on the eve of, His departure, He taught it again. As ever through His life, He taught it first in deed, then in word. When the disciples had all come into the upper chamber, and had sat down before the feast, they suddenly found that there was no servant present to perform the usual service and ceremony of washing their feet. They looked at one another askance, these twelve men who, on the road from Galilee, had spent much of their time disputing which of them was greatest, which most deserved honor and promotion. If any one of them now should stoop to wash another’s feet, would he not thereby disclaim honor and preferment? Would he not submit himself to be the least of them all? “I will not,” said every one of them to himself. And so they sat, brooding.

Oh yes, they had heard, each one of them, the lesson Jesus had taught them, in the way: “Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all.” Mark 10:43, 44. But it is one thing to hear, and another, thing to perform. James and John, and Thomas, and Judas, were not the last Christians to balk at the personal application of, things they preached.

Then Jesus, laying aside His garment, and girding Himself with a towel, took a basin of water, and “began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.” John 13:5. That broke one heart? Yes, eleven hearts. And it hardened one. Peter laid his life at his Master’s feet then. With him went ten of his fellow disciples, glorified servants now, all of them. But Judas-Judas went out; and it was night. It was night to the traitor, an eternal night. He could not measure up to the character of the kingdom; he could not be a servant; he could not love another more than himself. He went out.

And when the room was cleansed from his presence, Jesus put into words the law upon which He had acted, the law which was to be, as it had always been the law of, His kingdom, old, yet ever new. “A new commandment I give unto you,” He said “That

you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another.” John 18: 84, 85.

Now when we would determine who are the disciples of Christ how do we go about it? Why, we are prone to set some certain one before our mental gaze and proceed to ask questions about him such as these: “Does this man believe as we do? Is he straight upon doctrine? Does he understand the prophecies? Is he acquainted with the sanctuary question? Is he a health reformer? Does he pay tithe?” If so, “Well, we will admit him to the circle of the disciples; he belongs to the remnant church; he is one of God’s peculiar people.”

But not so does the Lord Jesus determine discipleship, nor ask men to determine it. He says, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another.” Ah, this is the touchstone of sincerity and of loyalty: love. A man may know his Bible from cover to cover, he may be, able to dispute in theological circles, he may be able to preach wonderful sermons, he may give alms; but unless he has love toward his fellow disciples and toward all men, he is no disciple of Jesus.

In saying this, I am not minimizing the importance of true Christian doctrine. It is essential that we know all truth, that we inform ourselves on everything the Bible teaches, and take our stand with, the law of God. For doctrine is the framework of religion, and without it there can be no church. But doctrine is not the life; doctrine is only the skeleton, the flesh, the form. Through that form of the church, through its arteries and veins, into all its tissues, there must flow the love which is the life of God. “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.” 1 Corinthians 13:1, ARV.

Love is the law of the kingdom, the password, the vivifying power. Without love no one may enter the kingdom of God, nor stay there, nor live. With love the disciple is proved, and with it he lives in the presence of his Lord. “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another.

The King’s Own

“We cannot improve any faulty character by finding fault with it, but we can improve it by giving loving service. We can never criticize anyone into heaven, but we can love one into heaven.”

DO not know that any of you have the difficulty which I have, and which I have noticed in many others. But for myself and these others, I find it is often very difficult to get along with certain of my brethren and sisters, members of the church of Christ, because they have traits of character that displease me. One of them, perhaps, is very enthusiastic, and I think he is extremely unwise in his enthusiasms., Another is too slow in thought and. action to please my fancy. Still another is too much filled with business affairs, and in my opinion is lacking in spirituality. Now to me the temptation often comes to criticize such and such a one because of these things that seem to me defects. If they were all just like me (with, of course, a few small corrections), we should without doubt have a very perfect church. If they would just straighten up and be decent and proper and good, why, we should have no trouble at all in the church; but so long as they go on in the way they do, I cannot see how anybody can love them or respect them or be. proud of them or, count them as Christians. I am sorely tempted to dis-fellowship them, in. my thought, and to turn my back upon them.

Now I say, you may not have any such difficulty, but it is very evident that the twelve apostles did, and that Jesus had to meet that difficulty in them and to teach them how to get rid of it. It was for this very purpose that He put forth the law of the kingdom.” A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” He gave that law to them; He gives it also to us.

This is no common love that Jesus required of them, and requires of us. A very weak and very common love is sufficient for some acquaintances. We say of a certain man, “Why, he is such a noble character you can’t help admiring him. I love that man.” Or you say of a certain woman, “Oh, she is such a lovable character. Every one who knows her I think she is so wonderful. I can’t help loving her.” Oh yes, that is very easy. But the love of Jesus goes further than that. His is a love that conquers unlovely things. Take those twelve apostles, for example. They, were, men of greatly varying characters. They are as diverse, I suppose, as any twelve men, you could get together.

There was John, for instance, and James his brother, men so hot-tempered and passionate that Jesus called them Boanerges, the sons of thunder, They were ardent in their friendships, but swift and vindictive in their hates. One time they proposed to call down fire, from heaven upon a village of Samaritans because its people would not take them in for a nights lodging. And Jesus rebuked them. They had other faults too; they were proud, autocratic, self-serving. Yet, Jesus, though He had to discipline them, kept close to them by His love. And through that love they came finally to a transformation of character which made them men of a truly different stamp, so different that whenever we think of John, for instance, it is not as a-proud, fiery character, but as a gentle, reflective and loyal, though still ardent, man, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

There was Peter, headlong, impulsive, eager, and ready to act before he had time to reflect. Jesus had often to rebuke him sometimes to take swift action to remedy the trouble Peter brought upon them All. But never did He give Peter up. He bore with him, correcting him, praising him, checking him, urging him on, as need might be. And in the great crisis of his life He saved Peter. When that erratic follower, fearing for his life, had denied with cursing and swearing that he even knew his Master, Jesus turned and looked upon Peter. Was it a look of scorn for one so weak, so recreant, so base? No. If it had been, there would have been another suicide that night. Peter would have joined Judas. But the look that Jesus bent upon His erring disciple was a look of pitying love. That love pierced to Peter’s heart, it changed his nature, it drew him back to God. He went out and wept, bitterly repenting. Satan had desired him, that he might sift him as wheat; but Jesus prayed for him, He loved him, and He saved him.

So it was with all the disciples. Despite their defects and faults and their unlovely traits of character, Jesus loved them with a love unfaltering, unfailing, never-ending. "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end." That is the love which Christ asks you and me to have for our fellow disciples. We are not to expect perfection in the beginning in every one of our brethren. They, as we ourselves, are faulty; that is why they, and we, need Christ. But if Christ receives them, acknowledges them as His own, bears with them, loves them, so also it is His commandment that we receive and love them.

The church of Christ is the Israel of God. Citizenship in the kingdom of God is determined, not by genealogy, but by character. "If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed." Galatians 3:29. "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly." Romans 2:28,29.

Israel was divided into twelve tribes tribal division will continue in the redeemed state, the kingdom of glory. (Revelation 7:2-4.) It may well be thought, then, that in the register of heaven the church of Christ has, even now in this kingdom of grace, the twelve fold division of the tribes of Israel. We would naturally suppose admission to those tribes to be upon the same basis as admission to the church, or nation, of Israel; namely, the basis of individual character.

Now it is an interesting fact that the characters of the twelve tribes are outlined in the Bible in two Places. The first of these is in Genesis 49, where Jacob, under the influence of the Spirit of God, told his sons their characters; the second is in Deuteronomy 38, where Moses, under the, same Inspiration, portrayed the characters of the tribes.

The study of these tribal characteristics gives us an insight into the characters, not only of those ancient members of the kingdom, but of the present members of the church, our friends and ourselves. We shall find that they are not altogether good. Good traits are mentioned, but evil traits are also named. There were always found, and there always will be to the end of time, good and bad in the church of Christ. To begin with, no one is wholly bad nor wholly good. It is the work of the church and of every member of the church to help every other member to increase in goodness and to decrease in badness. The only way in which that can be done is by following the "new commandment" that Jesus gave. "That you love one another; as I have loved you."

We cannot improve any faulty character by finding fault with it, but we can improve it by giving loving service. We can never criticize anyone into heaven, but we can love one into heaven. It is by love, and not by faultfinding, that Jesus wins. The same means must be used by His disciples to win and up build others. In this we may be greatly aided by the analysis of character and the application of the prime law of love in the studies that follow.

The Sons of Reformation

"Let God take us, and put us into a situation where the trials are more terrible than we think we can bear; Let His fires of affliction grow hotter and hotter; and if by His grace we will stand to it, long after we think we shall die in it-then the change of character will be made."

THE days of the patriarch Israel were drawing to a close. The eyes that had scanned with keenness, the Promised Land now were dim; the arm that had drawn the bow against the Amorite lay lax. But still his mind was clear, and on this day of the Final Blessing it was inspired by the Spirit of God.

Jacob called before him his twelve sons, men grown, every one of them fathers and some of them grandfathers. They had passed the days of their youth, wild and stormy for most of them, and they had come out into a haven of peace. Yet the thoughts and the deeds of their lives were written in their characters, and would be transmitted to their posterity. Good and evil were commingled. The good might be confirmed, the evil might be conquered; that was the task of ages to come, a fight to be fought by every individual member of every tribe. And that the issues might be of record, the sons of Israel were to be told by the Spirit of God, speaking through their father Jacob.

REUBEN

The words of Jacob to his oldest son: "Reuben, thou art my first born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power." Genesis 49:8. What a eulogy is this! Wouldn't you like to have that said about you? "the beginning of my strength," "the excellency of dignity," "the excellency of power." That is the character which, of right, was Reuben's, with which, indeed, he was endowed. But it was spoiled by a fatal defect. What was that? We read it in the next words: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

You know how unstable water is. Have you ever tried to build anything upon water? Suppose you put down some water as the foundation of a house, does it stand up sturdily and firmly? No. What does it do? Why, it runs away, downhill, curling around every little molehill in its way, always seeking the easiest course, and always going downhill.

That is like Reuben. He had good qualities. He: was amiable, kind-hearted, ready to relieve distress; but he had no backbone, no grit and determination to go through hard things. He always sought the easiest way. It was so in his personal life: he was not master of his passions, he could not say No to his appetites; and because of that, he was led into terrible and vile sin. That defect nurtured in his private life showed also in his public acts. He could not be decisive, he could not stand against the opposition of his fellows.

You remember the time when, his, brother Joseph was sold as a slave. Those nine cruel men, urged by Simeon, seized the frightened, lad and were about to kill him but Reuben could not bear that. He wished to deliver Joseph; but how did he go about it? He was the oldest of the brethren; his was the right of leadership. He might have struck his fist into his hand, and said to those men: "No; you shall not hurt one hair of my brother's head. I will send him home safe to his father."

But, no, Reuben could not do that. Unstable as water, he could not lead; he must seek an easier way. So, like water curling around its molehills, he skirted the difficulty, and made, as he thought, a better, an indirect plan. "Let us not kill him outright U urged; 'here is a dry pit; let us put him in there and leave him. He will perish,' but his blood will not be on our hands." But he intended, when his brothers had gone to come and pull Joseph out and send him home.

So they listened to him, and thrust Joseph into the pit. Reuben went away to hide his feelings. While he was gone, his brothers, at Judah's suggestion, sold the boy to a passing caravan of Ishmaelites; and, Reuben, upon his return, was smitten with the fact that his timorous effort at rescue had failed. His easy way had made a harder situation.

Yet again he sought to avoid straight consequences. He might now have gone to his father and made a clean breast, of the matter; but that was too difficult a role for Reuben. His brothers succeeded in drawing him into their scheme of deceiving their father as to the death of Joseph; and twenty-two years of sorrow were to pass before the evil was cured.

I have no doubt that Reuben carried influence, had weight, sometimes. That is the nature of water. Put it under certain conditions, and it can turn mill wheels and set great machinery to work. But it always does it going down. And that is the nature of the Reubenite. "Rail fellow well met," he is often the, evil genius of the gang, the one whose proposal of a drink, whose graceful flourish of a cigarette, whose invitation to a den of vice, carries his companions with him. But he cannot find a way to carry people with him upward; he is too watery, too wishy-washy. He may get into a passion, like a flood of water, and sweep things away in his rage; that is a characteristic of weak people. But his passion is damaging, not constructive.

"Well," you ask, "are people like that going into the kingdom?" We have a good many of them in the church, a whole tribe; but something is going to happen to, them before they get into the sinless kingdom of glory. I don't know, my friends, that any of you belong to the tribe of Reuben. But if in your own soul you know that you do, if you feel your weakness in dealing with your appetites, your passions, your difficulties; if you sorrowfully acknowledge yourself a Reubenite-take heart! God will make you over.

Listen! There is something else about water. Weak, unstable, downward-tending as it is, it can be wondrously transformed. Shut water up in a boiler; put fire under it, make it hot, and hotter, and hotter, and HOTTER, and what happens? Why, that water turns to steam. And has steam power! None greater. It has a thousand times the power of water, and it exercises it going up.

And, that is just what will happen to the Reubenites who are-to go into the kingdom. Let God take us, and put us into a situation where the trials are more, terrible than we think we can bear. Let His fires of affliction grow hotter and hotter; and if by His grace we will stand to it, long after we think we shall die in it then the change of character will be made. Our weak points will become our strong points, our downward tendencies will become upward tendencies, our force will be exerted for God rather than for the flesh. We shall be changed from weak, watery Reubenites into forceful, steam like Reubenites, in whom the good qualities of kindness and helpfulness will show forth in perfect ministry to others.

The Reubenite may not be myself. I may be strong, upright and inclined to be stern (strict, of course, I call it) with those who show weakness of character. And I observe that Reubenite, dodging of the issues in public life, and falling down before the temptations of his appetite or his passion in private life. Maybe he has a weakness for drink, or tobacco, or drugs, and sometime, in an hour of temptation, down he goes. Or maybe, suddenly and to my horror, I hear that he has been caught in sensuality; his weak will and conscience, overcome by his passions, have let him down into, social vice. And I crease my lips into a firm, straight line of virtue and I lift my hands in horror, and I shake my, head, and I say, "He has gone to the devil!"

But what, is the, law of the kingdom? "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you love one another." Has Jesus given him up? Did Jesus cast the first stone at the woman taken in adultery? Did He thrust the recreant Peter down to despair? No; no I He, the pure, the true, was the first to hold out His hand. "I condemn thee not," He said. And even as He loved them, the erring, so He loves the 'weak and fallen, today. And so He asks you and me to love them, and help them to stand by them. And by that love we shall rescue and save them, and, bring them up to the place where they stand,' in the transforming power of Christ, strong where once, they were weak.

SIMEON AND LEVI

"Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations." Genesis 49:5. The particular, crime that called forth this denunciation was the treacherous slaying, by these two brothers, of the men of Shechem; but their conduct at other times was in keeping with this description. The two brethren were not wholly alike. We may discern in Simeon a zeal which was, debased, by a passionate nature, into wrath and treachery; in Levi, we may see a stern sense of right, which, under evil influences, led him less to, the checking of his own wrongdoing than to cruel and savage punishment of other offenders. Zeal and loyalty, when infused with love, are among the most valuable traits in the Christian character, and God makes use of them. But without that prime principle of love, whereby, Jesus said, "shall all men know that you are My, disciples," they have the terrible results that cause the Spirit to cry "O my Soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou, united."

There are bloody pages of church history ascribable to the Simeonites and Levites of Christ's body, who, with sincere zeal, but without the knowledge which can come only through love, smote infidel and heretic, with terrific destruction. They thought they were doing God service; but the sentence of the Spirit, is, "Cursed, be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel."

Today in the church of Christ there are potential inquisitors whose spirit, unless conquered by the love of God will lead them into the condemnation of Simeon and Levi.

Levi, however, underwent a great change. Like John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, who, from being a “son of thunder,” came to be the apostle of love, Levi was so transformed that his impregnable loyalty made the bulwark rather than the danger of Israel. In the apostasy at Sinai, when Israel went into the worship of the Egyptian bull god, Serapis, the tribe of Levi, with few exceptions stood loyal to Jehovah, and it was rewarded with the trust of the perpetual tuition of Israel. “They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments, and Israel Thy law.” Deuteronomy 33:10. The roll of Levi’s great ones is second only to that of Judah. What heroic memories in the wars of God are recalled as we name Jochebed, Mows, Aaron,

Samuel, Abiathar, Jehoiada, Jeremiah, the Maccabees, John the Baptist! Love added to loyalty softens the sternness of an adamant nature into the sweetness and the firmness of the teacher.

If then, we find in our midst to-day-as we shall-those who have a zeal not balanced by knowledge, or a forbidding sternness that would call down fire from heaven upon the erring and the froward, let us not forget that still they may be members of God’s Israel, and that He is concerned to convert and employ them. How often we are called to grieve over the intemperate words or ill advised acts of some member of our church who has thus brought discredit upon the cause of God! But let us leave the condemnation of Simeon to God, while, with the love wherewith Christ has loved us, we pray for him, and seek to help him, by word and example, into a zeal that is according to knowledge. Again, with what a shock we sometimes run full tilt into a Covenanter breed of church father, whose rigid code and contemptuous hatred of the lightness of youth seem certain to drive the younger or the less solid members of the church to despair and rebellion! But let us not forget that God can change Levi, and that His instrument of love may be exercised for that purpose through us, if we remember our Savior’s commandment, “That you love one another; as I have loved you.”

Let Simeon and Levi also consider their course; for only by the entrance of the loving Christ, who will drive out their passion and their cruelty, can they ever become full members in the church God knows as His own.

The Sons of Strength

“We are too prone to seize upon some trait obnoxious to us, and often because it runs counter to our own crossed vision and uneven step, measure the man by that. We know our brother as the tide knows the earth, by the rocks that obstruct our way.”

IT IS not always that we recognize the good qualities in our fellow men, the qualities that perhaps dominate their lives and determine their value to the world. We are too prone to seize upon some trait obnoxious to us, and, often because it runs counter to our own crossed vision and uneven step, measure the man by that, the squint of his eye or the length of his stride. We never put our finger upon his pulse, we never follow, his woodland path we never catch the song that the rhythm of his life pours forth. We know our brother as the tide knows the earth, by the rocks that obstruct our way.

But it is not so that the church of Jesus Christ know one another. “By this,” said the Master, “Shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another;” if you love one another; as I have loved you.” Viewed through the virtues of the indwelling Christ, the characters of our fellow disciples present a different aspect. They may have faults, spots where the perfection of Christ has not yet been permitted to work; but we do not dwell upon these. Our minds and our speech are directed rather to the value of service which their positive, virtues afford; and by this, attitude, we are enabled ourselves to be of more service to them in getting rid of their faults. Often we shall find that those whose defects magnified themselves to us in our faultfinding state loom highest in virtue and power when we see them through Christ. In this spirit let us look at some further divisions of the Israel of God.

JUDAH

“Judah,” said the inspired patriarch, “thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of your enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee.... The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Genesis 49:8-10.

Judah came to be the leader in Israel after the failure of his older brothers. To the line of Judah came the kingship and the lineage of Christ. In the roll call of Judah are such glorious names as Caleb, Ruth, David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, Zerubbabel, and Mary the mother of our Lord. Broad-visioned, noble-minded, courageous, resourceful, Judah indeed, in his own life, and in the lives of his descendants, natural and spiritual, has been “he whom his brethren shall, praise.

Yet Judah was not without fault. We turn to his history to discover it, and read in the thirty eighth chapter of Genesis-the account of his secession from his brethren. It was after the experience of selling Joseph for a slave; and Judah was doubtless dissatisfied with his own experience, was moody, and restless. When he looked at his brothers, he found ample cause for criticism.

“These the people of God!” he brooded; “quarrelsome, vengeful, greedy, vain! Here is Reuben, supposed to be the leader; weak, vacillating, sensuous, afraid of his shadow. Simeon cannot take his place; he is too hot-headed and lacking in judgment. And Levi- I wouldn’t trust my life in his hands overnight; rigid as a rock, cruel-eyed, intolerant. As for these younger brothers, that lad Joseph was right about them: they are vile scum of the earth.

“Shall I waste my like among this crowd, who claim to hold the oracles of God, but who do the work of the devil? The world is more upright than this degenerate church. My influence will be greater if I leave them and go by myself. Separated from the evil reputation of these brethren, I will stand alone for right and God.”

So Judah went off by himself, away from the church, into the world. There is no record that he received from his brethren moral support, or asked it. He worked all alone there among the heathen, found there his friends, married there his wife. I have no doubt that Judah tried to hold a high standard and to uplift his neighbors; but he was disappointed. He found that evil is not, in the church alone, but also in the world, and that while the grace of Christ is working to overcome it in the church, the diabolism of Satan is working to, increase it in the world. The state of the church may sometimes be low, as it was in Judah’s day; but whenever it is, the world is so much the lower. Judah found himself separated from the freest channels of grace, he felt the pressure of evil about him, he saw his children go down into iniquity and death, he found his own feet slipping.

Then Judah prayed. We see it indicated in the plea of Deuteronomy 33:7: ‘Wear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people.’ This is a prayer for the brethren of Judah to pray when they see him slipping away, disgruntled, suspicious, independent. They are not then, to push him on, to pull apart from him as he is separating from them, to criticize him, to sigh, “Oh, my poor, lost brother, I” It is for them to pray: “Teach me, Lord, how to draw near to Judah, how to shape my own life to win him, to show him the value of union and fellowship and mutual helpfulness. Incline his heart to return. Hear, Lord; the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people.”

God heard Judah, and brought, him back to his people. He came chastened and humble, generous to others’ needs and others’ faults, helpful, ministrative. To Reuben he supplied strength, to Simeon patience, to Levi gentleness, to his younger brothers purity and love. And when they all came to the great crisis of their lives, their nation, and their church, Judah offered the supreme sacrifice. Before the governor of Egypt, who accused Benjamin of a crime from which he could purchase his life only with slavery, Judah offered himself to take the lad’s place: “Now therefore, I pray thee, let Thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.” Genesis 44: 33,34.

And so, humbled to service, Judah became chief, according to the law of the Master: “Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister, and whosoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:43-45.

Zebulun and Issachar were brethren, and, of them together Moses said, “They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.” Deuteronomy 33:19.

This language indicates the common sum and material ability of these two tribes; but they differ in the direction of their activities. Zebulun is, the alert man of affairs, dwelling at the great junctions of trade, and gathering in the abundance that flows through the arteries of commerce. “Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships.” Genesis 49:18. Wealth is his, both because he has from God the “power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18), and because he is willing to exert himself and to deny himself for the attainment of his purpose. The need of the church for such characters, with such ability, is, very evident; and they have an honored place among the tribes of Israel.

It is not always easy for a person of business ability, and especially one whose success has come largely through his own self-restraint and energy, to have patience with less successful and less disciplined souls. It is a fault not infrequently adhering to the men of Zebulun, to condemn the unfortunate and the poor, to point to their obvious deficiencies, and declare that with equal care and self-denial, they might have equal success. It is a great temptation to many to regard their wealth, not as given by God, but as gained by, their own self-constituted powers, and in its distribution to be either selfishly luxurious, or, quite oppositely, penurious. So prone are men to measure all values by money, that usually those who have great store of, money do not consider that others who have wealth of learning, or of strength, or of love, are, in giving others the benefit of their service, bestowing what has cost them more and is of more value than the money, the rich might give. This is false reckoning. It is not the right of the poor to claim the wealth of the rich, any more than it is the right of the ignorant to claim the knowledge and power of the learned. But it is the duty and the privilege of the wealthy and the wise to give all that they have to feed the poor. And if the rich and the poor were in this true relation, many, of our social ills would disappear.

ISSACHAR

“Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: and he . . . bowed his shoulder, to bear, and became a servant.” Genesis 49: 14, 15.

Of Issachar are the burden bearers. We all know, by reputation at least, that little beast of burden, the ass, by which Issachar is represented. Down in our Southern mountains, we have many of them, “jacks” and “jnnies” and oftentimes you will see a diminutive jinhy plodding along under a sack of corn or meal weighting her down on either side, or carrying a man whose long legs must be held up high lest they touch the ground and she slide from under him. Whose burdens does the ass bear-her own? No; it is always the burdens of another. She has little of the grace, not much of the strength, none of the swiftness, of the horse. and other elegant creatures, but she is sure footed and willing.

There are Issachars in the church, and we may thank God there are. They do not make a great splurge in public; they cannot preach eloquent sermons and capture the, plaudits of the multitude; they may not seem to have any great gift of teaching they do not

shine in society. But when it comes to unostentatious burden bearing, the Issacharites are right under the load. They are they who find, the weary mother and the burdened neighbor, and go in to help with the housework and the nursing, and the wheat harvesting, and the wood chopping. Or they quietly get under the mortgage, or see that the little Jimmies and Susies of the poor family have new mittens and shoes, in winter. They are the ones who volunteer to do the janitor work of the church, or to take that class of bad boys, or to fit the little shroud that sorrowing in mother fingers could not touch.

We may not notice them very much m-the days when their hands make the way smooth; but when they are gone they move away, or they die then we feel the loss, and we mourn for Issachar. We miss, too, the solidity of their judgment; for, swarm as we may about the brilliant light of an eloquent oracle, we instinctively turn, matters of grave moment, to the counsel of those who have shown the solid, perhaps the stolid, qualities that fit for burden bearing. Of Issachar this is true'; for it is written, "The children of Issachar . . . were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." 1 Chronicles 12:32.

True, Issachar has his faults. He is often slow, not of movement alone, but of wit. And his slowness is not only an annoyance to others; it is frequently injurious to the cause of God. It is no credit to be slow and clumsy, to take longer to do a thing than would be required if the fingers and the brain had been disciplined and trained to the task. And while the patience of the swift is to bear with the clumsiness of the slow, it is the duty of the slow to use all diligence in improving their powers of dispatch. So will the grace of Issachar be increased.

These are the sons of strength, upon whom as upon a great rock of defense, the church gathers for conflict. Not greater than any other, not sufficient in themselves, but strong, and true when they give themselves to service, and through the grace of Christ cast off the evil that they inherited. Learning the lesson of Judah, they will humble themselves, and offer their lives for others, thereby gaining the vision and the power of leadership. Learning the lesson of Zebulun and Issachar, they will minister of their substance and give of their strength and wisdom to the necessities of their fellows, and so call the people to the mountain of God's own glory with the sacrifices of peace.

"The sane man finds work a joy and a blessing. The mechanism of his body and of his mind requires exercise; and normal life is made up of well-apportioned work. If, however, the purpose of this work be selfish, it be to gain for ones self rather than to give to others, it becomes abnormal; for giving is the law of life."

The Sons of Trial

THE hardest lesson for men to learn is that of a willing service. Under compulsion, most men work the compulsion of hunger, of pride, of fear; but for the most part, they seek to barter their labor for the utmost of money, of privilege, of pleasure. It is the world's way, and it always will be. The Christian's way is a reversal of all this-a reversal not of process, but of motive. Upon the Christian, as upon every man, rests still the law of survival given at the, fall: "In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread." It makes all the difference, however, what one's attitude is toward this law. Regarded as a curse, evaded, resisted, it comes down upon the offender with all the weight of eternal truth, and makes him a drudge, a parasite, or an outlaw-a, slave in any case.

But the sane man finds work a joy and a blessing. The mechanism of his body and of his mind requires exercise; and normal life is made up of well-apportioned work. If, however, the purpose of this work be selfish, if it be to gain for one's self rather than to give to others, it becomes abnormal; for giving is the law of life, cooperation is, the breath of society. It is a lesson that love teaches, in marriage, in parenthood, in social relations, that only he who, gives his all can receive fullness of life.

Of all men to the present time, no others have had so great opportunity to learn this lesson as had the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. They were His constant companions in the days of ministry, when there went out from Him virtue and power to heal the sick of, body, mind, and soul. In great degree, they learned the lesson, though slow and halting in their progress. From self-seeking politicians, they became unselfish servants to their fellow men's necessities. Three years and a half they walked with the Master Teacher; and thereafter, for their longer or shorter lives, they were the ministers of grace, willing to give and giving of the life that in abundance flowed to them and through them.

THE HEADS OF THE TRIBES

The greatest teachers are the most perfect, servants. And, to these fellow servants of Him who "came not to be ministered, unto, but to minister," it was given to become the great leaders and teachers of eternity. "In the regeneration," said Jesus to them, "when the Son of man shall sit in the, throne of, His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matthew 19:28. Not as judges between right and, wrong, for in the kingdom of glory, there will be no evil. But as the early judges of Israel were the leaders and teachers of their people, so the twelve apostles will sit as the heads of the twelve great divisions of the new earth's inhabitants.

We are not told to which tribe any one of them will be assigned; yet as character no doubt determines their assignment, and as we know more or less of their characters, we may hazard a guess as to their places. Thomas, perhaps, the hesitating and doubtful, may head the tribe of Reubon, Simon, Zelotes, who came from that Jewish party, the Zealots, who by passionate word and deed demanded what they claimed as rights - Simon may judge Simeon. And who but John, first a "son of thunder," who would call fire from heaven to avenge an insult, but who became transformed into the great teacher of the church-who but John may typify the

transformation of Levi? James his brother seems to have many of the qualities of Judah, and there we may place him. Zebulun should have a business man at its head, and him we see in Matthew the publican. And to Issachar, we may assign that slow but faithful brother of our Lord" called James the Less, who through the days of schooling is hidden away under the burdens of service, but who in the later, days becomes one of the "pillars of the church."

Now we come to the sons of trial, from whom we may learn lessons of greatest value in our Christian warfare. One we shall follow as he goes down, down, down, finally to perdition; with the other, we shall go forward through trials and defeats, with faith and courage unflinching, to final success and glory.

DAN

In the roll call of the tribes which we find in Revelation 7, that last muster of the army of God on earth, are named all the tribes of Israel but one. Reuben is there, having conquered his weakness. Simeon and Levi are transformed; Judah is reconciled to his brethren; Issachar and Zebulun are in their places. Gad, Asher, Naphtali respond, with Manasseh and little Benjamin. We may miss the name of Ephraim, and some, following this suggestion, would have it that Ephraim, because of persistent apostasy, is dropped from the roster. And they refer to Hosea 4:17, which reads, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." But it takes only slight knowledge of the times of Hosea to know that "Ephraim" here refers not to the single tribe, but to the kingdom of Israel, the "ten tribes," of which Ephraim was the leader. Just as "Judah" stood for the other division of Israel, which included two tribes and the greater part of one or two others. In the roll call of Revelation 7, Ephraim is present under the name of Joseph, his father; because Ephraim, having received the birthright, was the titular head of the house, and the names are interchangeable. Not Ephraim alone, but the whole house of Israel, was joined to idols," yet God rescued His people.

It is another whose presence we wholly miss, and that is Dan. In the Old Testament, the last of the prophets who calls the roll of the tribes, Ezekiel includes Dan (Ezekiel 48:1). But between his time and that of John, something had happened which made Dan transcend in wickedness his weak and sinful fellows, to the point where he was cast out from among his brethren. He became the one irretrievably lost tribe of Israel." Let us see what his sin was.

Jacob said, "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel." Genesis 49:16. Strong commendation this is, the statement of a great endowment. To be a judge takes no small ability. It requires keen insight into human nature, a true perception of right and wrong, sound judgment, decisive character. No Reuben is here, no passionate Simeon, no slow-witted Issachar. Dan stands forth, keen, virile, alert, judicious. Such was the endowment, such the opportunity, of Dan. He might have become the helper of his brethren, a mighty force for good in Israel.

But what was the trouble? Oh, we have it in the words that follow: "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward." Verse 17.

The, figure is that of a rider on horseback, coining along the grass-bordered path; and there, hiding is a snake. He waits until the horse is just past, then he slips out and nips the horse's heels, making him rear up and throw his rider over, backward, injuring him, perhaps killing him.

Did you ever hear of a backbiter? What is a backbiter? He is one who goes behind your back, telling evil about you. He is the talebearer, the scandalmonger, the faultfinder, the criticizer. You know; he stops a friend on the corner, and speaks on this wise: "Have you heard what Deacon Brown has done? I thought that man was a pillar of the church. He has held enough offices to make any man a saint, I should say. But last month so I'm told, he - And his boys, they - And his wife says Of course, it's a great scandal to the church, and we've got to have a meeting and clear it up, and clear him out." That's Brother Dan! Brother Dan, the backbiter!

Or perhaps it's Mrs. Dan: "I've just run over for a minute, Sister Snoop. No; I haven't time to stay for dinner; I left my preserves stewing on the stove. But I just felt I had to tell somebody. You know Sister Black, what a good woman we all thought she was Sabbath school teacher, head of the Dorcas Society, and all that. Why, you'd never think that woman could do an evil thing. But do you know what I heard this morning? I never would have believed it possible. Now if I tell you, I don't want you to tell anybody else. It's terrible and it's awful, it's disgraceful; but you must not lay it up against her."

And Sister, Snoop doesn't lay it up. She carries it right, on to the next neighbor before she has done her breakfast dishes. And so the evil thing - and it may have been an evil thing-grows, and it expands, and it flourishes in the backbiting winds of the Danites, until it disrupts, the church, and throws out of the, Christian race, the way of salvation, this one and that one and the, other, the poor, weak, struggling, sheep who need a shepherd and not a snake.

Do you know that this temptation to criticize and find fault comes most strongly to the keen visioned and high-purposed men and women of the church? It is not the dolt, the sleepy-headed swallower of sermons, that feels it, most; it is the alert, highly sensitized disciple who wants progress, to whom with peculiar force comes the temptation to criticize. We all have the tendency and the temptation. In this, as in other faults and qualities, all the tribes share. But the distinguishing characteristic of each tribe is that trait which in it predominates. And in Dan, the trait is judgment debased to criticism.

Now there is a constructive criticism which builds up instead of tearing down. This is what Dan was meant to show. As we are instructed in Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1, the faults of our brethren are to be taken to them directly, with the love and the humility that the Spirit of Christ gives us; and in wise personal labor, we are to help them over their trouble. In this work, Dan might have excelled. But he chose rather to find fault, to backbite.

And he has that airy, insouciant way of doing it that says, more strongly than words: "You poor fool, what can you be thinking of, to measure your wit with mine? Take care of your steps, or you'll get in even worse than you are now." Those Danites

who robbed Micah the Ephraimite of his images and enticed his priest away, leaned on their arms as Micah and his fellow to men came hotfoot in purity and innocently inquired, "What ails thee, that, thou comes with such a company?" And the Injured man cried, "You have taken away my gods which I made, and the Priests and you are gone away: and what have I more? And what is this that you say unto me, What ails thee?" "Oh, don't be so loud" say the Danites. "Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household." And they stalk serenely on their way. (Judges 18:28-26.) The Danite is perfectly conscious of his own probity and uprightness, no matter though he has robbed his neighbor of his very religion. He has the satisfaction of out talking, out arguing, outwitting the weaker, the more defenseless; and he strides on his victorious way, well pleased with himself.

Upon the heels of this came idolatry. Those images and teraphim, that stolen priest with his ephod, marked an epoch in the disruption of Israel. In far Laish, which those Danites conquered and renamed "Dan," they set up their molten and graven images, and invited the neighboring tribes to worship with them. Dan became notorious in Israel as an idolatrous tribe. (Amos 8:14.)

And what is idolatry? It is the worship of human qualities. Not the image, but what the image stands for, in license and in indulgence, draws the idolater. He is worshiping his own human qualities, worshiping himself. Love of self is idolatry, and love of self is the spring of criticism. Whenever we criticize one another, we do so, often unconsciously, for the sake of elevating ourselves in the estimation of our public. If by our criticism we can prove another worthless, we thereby imply greater worth in ourselves. This is the very opposite of the prime law of the kingdom. "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you."

God bore with Dan, as He bore with all the other tribes, seeking ever to win him away from his evil to his true mission in Israel, until the time came when the supreme test was given to all the tribes, in the persons of their future heads, the twelve apostles.

And there was the head of the tribe of Dan, keen, alert better educated than the most of his fellow disciples. He could easily see the faults of his brethren, and he did. Peter was too impetuous. John was first too passionate, and then too meek; Thomas was too moody; Matthew was too close, James too dull, Philip too impractical. Not one but had awful faults, except himself, Judas Iscariot. His qualities lifted him above the common herd; he was worthy to be first in the kingdom. If only his policies were followed, the kingdom would be won much the sooner. And so convinced did he become of his own worth, so, worshipful of money, place, and, power, that he schemed, against the Lord Jesus Himself. He formed a plot to betray his Lord, reasoning that when brought into a tight place Jesus would never, allow Himself to be taken, but would show His divine power, and proclaim Himself king. Then, with the revelation of Judas' part in bringing about that crisis, the reward would follow.

You know what came of it. The traitor saw his Lord go to death; he saw his fellow disciples, bewildered, dispersed, despairing; he saw his own schemes fall to dust and ashes. Then he went and hanged himself.

Was not he true head of the tribe of Dan? With him perished the last hope of the salvation of Dan. Not that those who may have been physically of Dan could not be saved, but in the resurrection they will belong to another tribe; for Dan, unlike the rest, was conquered instead of conquering, and forever Dan will be blotted out.

And now, my friends, I, do not know that any of you are in the tribe of Dan. You must tell that for yourselves. But to every one of us comes the temptation to criticize, and find fault, in the home, in the neighborhood, in the church. Let us remember, when that temptation comes, that it is an invitation to enter the tribe of Dan and the tribe of Dan never goes into the kingdom.

It is the most terrible fault that affects the church, this habit of criticizing and backbiting. It is the most terrible because it is the most subtle of all temptations, and it has the worst results. It, is spiritual cannibalism, this devouring of the characters of men. And the degraded condition of the cannibal follows upon its practice. It is the one sin that shuts out a whole division of Israel.

This is the one fault that deserves the sternest measures for suppression. When Dan comes to you with scandal' or faultfinding concerning another, say: "Now. Brother Dan, I don't know anything about this; but God instructs us to take a man's faults directly to him, and in the spirit of meekness recover him from those faults. So now let us go to this faulty brother, and you tell him what you are telling me." Then take Dan by the arm and go! That will cure Brother Dan. He will either get out of his tribe or get out of the camp, at least out of your tent.

But first we must make sure that we ourselves are cured of the fault. It must have no dwelling place with us. It cannot be conquered. by destructive methods; it is itself destructive. We cannot resolve, "I will not criticize," and succeed. We must have a positive program against it, a process of in filling, that it may be crowded out. The secret of success lies in, the in flowing of love, through a study and reception of the character of Christ. If we live with Him, through, daily study Of His word, through daily speaking with Him in prayer, through daily ministry to others such as He inspires, then criticism and hatred and. envy will be crowded out of our lives. They can be crowded out in no other way.

This is the way to get out of the tribe of Dan. And we must get out; for Dan has no place in Israel.

GAD

If there is any tribe, to which I should prefer to be transferred from the tribe of Dan, I think it is the tribe of Gad. For Gad, tried and tested, succeeds instead of failing. Of Gad are the persevering ones. "Gad," said the patriarch, "a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last!" Genesis 49:19.

No, better illustration of Gad's perseverance is to be found than in the twelfth chapter of 1 Chronicles, verses 8 to 15. It was in the time of David, when he was hiding from, Saul. Many there were in Israel who sympathized with David; but so great were the restrictions, so real the dangers of allying themselves with him, that they were few who took the risk.

On the other side of the Jordan, however, there were men of Gad who determined that come, what would, they would join the man whom God had anointed to, be king of Israel. They looked to, a future success that involved the reform and the glory of Israel; and they desired to be a part of the movement.

So these men of Gad set out to go to David. But Saul had his watchers who quickly resorted the movement, and there sprang up in the, path of the Gadites armed hosts to oppose their way. Nothing daunted the men of Gad gave battle. I do not know whether they had cheeks, defeats. I suspect they had—"Gad, a troop shall overcome him," but there is only put in one short clause their success: "They put to flight all them" of the cast valley.

Next they came to the Jordan River, which ordinarily could be forded at various places. But now they found it in, flood; and when Jordan is in flood, it is no small obstacle. Wide through the valley spread the waters, swift raced the stream; but to the dauntless men of Gad it was only another, obstacle to be overcome. How they went across we are not told; the fords were buried, the boats doubtless swept away. They may have swum the river, in any case, it is said that they went over Jordan when it had over flown all his banks."

Not yet, however, we're they, free. Upon the western side, the full weight of Saul's forces could be brought to bear. Again they faced enemies determined to overcome and force them back. But the men of Gad could not be denied. Through whatever battles, ambushes marches, ruses, they went, their determined way, and "put to, flight all them" of the west valley, and so they came to David. No wonder it is said of them that their "faces were like the faces of lions;" that one of the least was fit to be over a hundred, and the greatest over a thousand.

How vital to the success of the church are the men of Gad! When the dark days come, when opponents stand in the way of God's work, when men's hearts are fainting for fear, then those indomitable Gadites come forward to save the day. Elijah the Tishbite came from the mountains of Gad in a day when Baal seemed almost to have triumphed over Jehovah, and single-handed with his God overthrew the power of superstition and tyranny, and reestablished faith in the hearts of Israel. When the civil and religious liberties of Europe, were threatened with extinction, there arose in, the Lowlands that prince of Gadites, William the Silent, who, though defeated and thwarted in his plans again and again, nevertheless persevered until he overthrew the power of Spain and made little Holland mighty in liberty. And so we might, in many ages and many causes find these unbreakable souls who have served God and their fellow men by their great quality of indomitable courage.

The fault of Gad was intolerance. It is the tendency of an uncompromising nature to look with little compassion upon the failures and weaknesses of other men. The stem strife which Gad carries on, his own rigid adherence to his faith and his ideals and his promises, tend to make incomprehensible and abhorrent to him the softer moods and policies of men differently situated or constructed. Tolerance, sympathy, compassion, it was hard for Elijah to feel and show; yet in the end, through the discouragement of his flight and through the vision of God's greatness in the "still small voice," Elijah learned it. And his last days on earth were mellow with the love of a father. It is for all Gadites to learn the same lesson today. The most of our squabbles come became our spirit, are not anointed, lubricated with the oil of peace. The roughhewn timbers of our spiritual home need the smoothing and the rubbing and the polishing that alone bring the refinement of the true Christian."

The Sons of Genius

WHAT a wonderful body is the church of Christ, how many-sided, how complete! We come upon it on one side, and it seems to us a company devoted to trial and suffering. We touch it in another part, and we marvel at the lion like power of its attack upon evil, Again, we behold its members bearing with patience and meekness the commonplace, heavy burdens of the world. And yet anon we are brought to admire the fortitude with which they overthrow the obstacles that beset their path and forge straight on to their goal.

It is not all a fighting force, nor yet a servants' household; it is not all the swift zealot, nor yet the slow, plodding burden bearer, this church of Christ. If we have beheld in it the tender-hearted, the zealous, the loyal, the broad-minded, the thrifty, the helpful, the persevering; if we have seen there the statesman, the warrior, the manager, the teacher, the minister, yet we have not finished the roll call. There are other members, other qualities, other characters, which help to make us the great composite commonwealth of Israel. And so we to turn to-

ASHER

Jacob begins the blessing of Asher, Moses concludes it with making him a blessing. "Out of Asher," says Jacob (Genesis 49:20), "his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties;" Moses concludes, "Let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil." Deuteronomy 83:24.

Asher is refined, and he is diplomatic. Let no one scorn these qualities in the church of Christ, regarding them as too slight and too finical for Christian service; for while it is not to, be denied that they may be carried too far, and refinement becomes fastidiousness, and diplomacy craftiness, and while it is not to be denied that the Asherite has these temptations and may sometimes need to be rescued from them, yet in themselves these qualities are true Christian graces, and are in the catalogue connected with sturdy powers. "Thy shoes," says Moses to Asher, "shall be iron and brass; and as thy clays, so shall thy strength be." He is not a weakling, a dilettante, this member of the church of Christ; he is strong and enduring.

It is not a mark of strength to be rough; coarse, boorish. Too many there are of Christians whose training has been all of the roughhewn variety, with little of the smoothing and polishing that make for beauty, while not diminishing strength. And I am persuaded that it is for this purpose that God has placed Asher in our midst, that his influence might smooth and brighten and make gracious the lives of his brethren, Oh, there is great need of a refining influence, of the gentle manliness of Christ among His followers! Its need is manifest in the home in the relations of parents and children and of brothers and sisters to one another. It is a need observable in neighborhood and church society and in business. Wherever the Christian goes, whatever relations he holds, through whatever experiences he passes, he needs to take with him the gracious, considerate, courteous bearing of his Master.

But how far from it the most of us come! In the home, how many are the unkind, cutting words that are spoken, how frequent the brusqueness of manner and of tone, how common the disorder and inattention to the proper care of person and surroundings! Simeon flings his clothes and his words in disgraceful heaps, Gad cleaves with his broadsword a way for his person and his beliefs, Zebulun cuffs a broad path for his, policies, and Ephraim shrills denunciations of another's selfishness.

Well is it, then., that we have Asher. "Let him be, acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil." Listen to him, brethren! The agreeableness of his person, the quietness of his tongue, will help to still the tumult and soothe the ruffled minds. It is not so difficult to come into agreement, to be able to cooperate, when the oil of grace with which Asher has been anointed is brought into the affair. The most of our squabbles come because our spirits are not anointed, lubricated, with the oil of peace. The roughhewn timbers of our spiritual house need the smoothing and the rubbing and the polishing that alone bring the refinement of the true Christian. Oh, there is work enough for Asher to do!

It is not without significance that Asher, the diplomat, is represented as living in the midst of plenty. It is our common observation that those who come up by great striving, through hardship and privation, are not by nature diplomatic. They are used to breaking bones, not to mending them. Though there are exceptions, it is more often the man who has at least sufficient to lift him above want, who exhibits the suave and conciliatory temper. And we are not to condemn him for the conditions out of which. "his bread shall be fat." It is no crime, and it is no disgrace, for men to have wealth, if they use it aright for God and their, fellow men. God can and will use them in their peculiar field if they yield themselves to Him. It is "the love of money," not the money, that God condemns. As Robert E. Speer has said "We cannot serve God and mammon; but we can serve God with mammon."

It is, of, course, more usual for men raised in the midst of plenty to become selfish and oppressive toward their less fortunate fellow men. But the grace of God makes exception in the cases of those who dedicate themselves to Him. And, whether inherited or acquired, such is the state of Asher which helps to give him the refinement and the grace to, be "acceptable to his brethren."

NAPHTALI

Naphtali is a hind let loose: he gives, goodly words." Genesis 49:21.

Of Naphtali are the eloquent. Most naturally we look for him among the preachers, the evangelists, the orators of the pulpit; though not all preachers are eloquent, and not all the eloquent are preachers. It is a great gift, this of eloquence. It does not consist merely of a readiness of speech; that may be simply chatter, and more than one man who thinks himself eloquent in the things of God has merely a barber shop garrulity. Yet a ready command of language is a part of the gift; and he who has it has an endowment from God which he should cultivate and improve. But eloquence involves a grasp of more essential things, a vision of a wide field, a power of analysis, a fervor of spirit, an intense faith in the cause. Of these, with declamation, is compounded eloquence. And great is its power in the church of Christ.

There is a great contrast of figures between Issachar, and Naphtali. The one is the ass, slow, plodding, haltered, burden-bearing; the other is the bind, a deer let loose upon the hills, light, fleet footed, free as the air. And it is not hard to imagine-indeed, it is not hard to remember that Issachar and Naphtali, whenever they fail to keep the love of Christ in their hearts, fall out with each other because of their very opposite traits.

"Look at him!" cries Issachar, "that Naphtali! Oh yes, I know how he gathers all praise to himself! Eloquent? Sure! He can spout words like a fountain." When he lets himself loose and goes skipping over the hills or soaring up into the Clouds, he makes you all think he is the most wonderful man in the world. And then the people who are taken in by him come up and pump his hand and tell him how wonderful they think he is, and he swells up bigger and bigger with importance. But you just try to tie him down to responsibilities, to hitch him to the plow of service, and you'll find he's not there. He just hasn't the weight. He gets all out of patience, and kicks over the traces, and smashes things up in general. He's a good speaker, and that's all you can say. He gets all of the public's eye, and leaves the public's foot to plod."

And Naphtali rolls a condescending eye down upon Brother Issachar. "Oh! Issachar?" he says, in that exasperatingly superior tone. "Why, yes, I think Issachar is a good man, Not very much sense, but he means all right. He's stupid, you know, and slow-witted. Very provoking in Sabbath school class or under a sermon: can I get an idea through his head. My, when I'm preaching my most eloquent sermon, and the people are stirred to the depths of their souls, I look down there and I see Issachar just sitting with a wooden face, not comprehending or appreciating a bit of it. And he hasn't any too- much reverence for the gospel ministry: never comes up and shakes hands, or congratulates you, or anything. Of course, he has a soul to save; and I try to help him in my sermons sometimes. But when he gets the mulish streak on, I just leave him alone to sulk it out. Only thing you can do, you know."

Oh, what a state of affairs there is in the church when brethren of differing capabilities lose sight of Christ and gaze in critical disfavor upon one another! Thus it was often with the apostles who followed Jesus. And as with them, so now, it would not take long in such a state to wreck completely the fellowship and the service of the members.

But when the grace of Christ is flowing into the heart when His directions are remembered and observed, "that you love one another. As I have loved you," A what a change comes! Then, as they look at one another, the members of Christ's body, though they may discern defects have their minds fastened rather upon the perfections of their Master, and through Him they see the good that He has placed in every fellow member. Then Naphtali, beholding Issachar, says:

"I want to tell you, Brother Issachar is an invaluable man in the church. We couldn't get along without him. Why, when you see things moving along vigorously and smoothly, and no one in sight, you just want to get down and look underneath, and there you'll discover Brother Issachar. Quiet, unostentatious, he puts his back under every burden, and his shoulder to every wheel. He treats the sick, he feeds the poor, he gives a home to the orphan, he searches out the downcast and the discouraged, and puts them on their feet. And when I start a tent meeting, to give a series of gospel lectures, why, there's always Issachar right on hand to drive the stakes and make the benches and arrange affairs with the business men of the town. Always helping.

"Oh, of course he isn't everything! We have many other members who can do various things he can't do. He's sometimes a little slow and deliberate, and it may be hard for him sometimes to get the full meaning of a sermon. But even then he's a great help to me. For when I'm preaching and I look down there and see Issachar sitting with a dumfounded look on his face, I say to myself: 'Now look here, Naphtali, you aren't making that thing plain enough. And so I start over again, making it more simple, using an illustration, turning the idea over and over. And pretty soon I see Issachar's face all light up! And I know he's got it! And I know if he's got it, everybody else has got it. Oh, Issachar is a wonderful help to me!"

And Brother Issachar says: "Thank God for Brother Naphtali! You know, we poor people work along, some of us, ministering to the people, treating the sick, doing little friendly, neighborly acts, giving out literature. But, really, we can't do much to give the truth to the people. After a while some of them do get an interest, and they come to us and say, 'We'd like to know something about your religion, and why you think and live as you do. There must be something in it. Can't you get one of your preachers to come down here and give us some studies on the Bible and about how you get your beliefs from it?"

"And right then and there we send for Brother Naphtali. And you know, Brother Naphtali comes down and he starts in to give the people such wonderful lessons from the Bible that they all flock out to hear him, and they say, 'Well, that's certainly the truth. We never heard the Bible so clearly and beautifully taught as your man Naphtali teaches it.' And of course we are all praying with him that they shall get their minds on the truth instead of on the speaker, and that many of them shall be converted and saved. And they are. And pretty soon a lot of them join the church. And under God we have Brother Naphtali to thank for that. "Oh, of course," says Issachar, "Brother Naphtali isn't a very practical man. He isn't a farmer nor a carpenter nor very good in business. But that's where we others come in. We are meant to help one another. But I tell you, now, when it comes to preaching the word and building up the church, then is when we can't get along without Brother Naphtali."

Oh, what a change comes into their lives when Brother Issachar and Brother Naphtali get hold of the love of Christ! Then they see, not the defects, but the virtues of each other.

And isn't it true, friends, that God uses a man for what he is good for? "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body." 1 Corinthians 12:17-20.

But when with due, humility we look at one another in the spirit of Christ, we find, not room for destructive criticism, but place for praise and encouragement and cooperation. How differently the failures and weak points of our fellows look when we exchange the spirit of mortal flesh for the sympathizing, long-suffering spirit of Christ! The very things that before invited our severest criticism, now challenge our magnanimity, our fair play, our broad-visioned Christianity. Where we once wished to expose, we now endeavor to shield. And this is the test of discipleship, for Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another."

"Back over the broad highway trodden by the feet of the soldiers of Christ, how wonderful is the record of faith which Israel has left, with the armies of the cross marshaled under the banners of the tribes of Israel. They are not all alike, save in the one badge of fraternal love and sacrificing service."

The Sons of Contrast

DEAR Rachel! Dark-eyed, daring, sweetly imperious beauty of the Mesopotamian plains! What splendor of young love in the meeting at the well, with the sheep and the city gossips for witness! What tragedy of un sisterly betrayal, of stint to mother love, of gasping, bitter death in sight of Bethlehem! Rachel! Of all the Bible women, from wayward Eve to the magnificent group about the Man of Galilee, thy figure charms me most save it be that of Mary of Nazareth; and she was not so humanlike as thou. What fault was in thy proud life, that God should scourge thee so with thorns? Still, when thy soul cried out in agony, He gave thee sons, sons whose deeds have rung throughout the ages, and will yet to eternity; sons, like thyself, compounded of fire and ice, of daring and compassion, of pride and abnegation, -the Sons of Contrast.

JOSEPH

He walked a narrow path those seventeen years that were first in his life, this petted favorite of his old father, cherishing his dead mother's memory, austere following the grave counsels of his world-weary she, and keeping an eagle eye upon the misdeeds and the rank speech of those sons of weak eyed and the maids -a young god in rectitude, and a fool to his sear eyed brother's.

What torture he is to the sophisticated, this Joseph, scornful of muddy speech but half understood, and commanding, in his ignorant innocence, the beasts of lust to be gone! What! (cry his brothers) half of life, as all of reality, is bid to him. Yet he would assume to be a censor of life. Oh, he were well fit to hang tip-headed about the knees of his mother or of old Deborah! But they are gone. And he must needs come puling about with hairy men, and rebuke them for men's laughter and men's blows. And to show off his striped coat I And for all he shows a stripling's muscle and a willing heart, and will not let a lamb be missing for an hour, would he were gone! Shall men who smote a whole city and dared the countryside to block them in their march, fall before this big eyed, moon-faced codling? His dreams indeed! His bowing sheaves! His sun and moon and twelve stars! It is a cause for ribald laughter.

But Joseph went through the furnace. And when the blast of hate struck him, it seared off the tassels of his pride. And hard labor shriveled the days of dreaming. Then lust flamed out and would have swallowed him; but the pure soul that formed in the fields of Canaan was proved gold in the house, of, Potiphar, Last, wearisome, hopeless days in the, dungeon; but the will to service could not be quenched. And lo, there was a man!

What could Reuben say to his purity? Why could Simeon answer in the face of his patience? What did Dan and Zebulun, Gad and Asher, know more of life than he. Who of them could have stood the fire of his trial? "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." Genesis 49:28-26.

He was no milksop, this Joseph who filled his young soul with manhood's virtue, and faced license at Hebron and vice in On, whose feet were bound with fetters in the dungeon, and whose finger was gemmed by a Pharaoh in the palace. When it came to vision, who so wise as he? When decisiveness was required, who so quick as he? When diligence was the need, who so untiring as he? When subtlety was in place, who so penetrating as he? Lordly indeed he was, until the land of Pharaoh cringed before him, and, shepherds of Canaan fell at his feet; but when compassion cried, then – "I am Joseph your brother. Now therefore he not grieved, nor angry with yourselves for God did send me before you."

"Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush. Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren." Genesis 45:4, 5; Deuteronomy 33:13, 16.

Because Reuben, the first-born, failed, his birthright was divided among his brethren. To Judah fell the chieftain ship; to Levi was given the priest, hood; and to Joseph the double portion. So it came about that Jacob adopted Joseph's two sons as his own, inducting them into the nation as tribes equal to the older, his own sons. To Manasseh, the elder, was given second place, and he passes always under his own name; while Ephraim, the younger, because of greater qualities in leadership, took precedence of his brother, and though usually named as himself, sometimes passes in the kingdom of Israel under the name of Joseph.

EPHRAIM

In Ephraim are manifested most fully the imperious force and spirit of his father. In the history of Israel, Ephraim-comes to the fore again and again vigorous, energetic, sometimes dictatorial, often the leader in jealous challenge of Judah's precedence, or Benjamin's, or Manasseh's. Yet Ephraim was not a mere boaster. Of him came Joshua, the single-minded, strenuous, yet self-deprecatory, who stood in the place of the mighty Moses, and in whirlwind campaigns smote Canaan into submission and marshaled Israel for Jehovah. A woman, Deborah of Ephraim, shamed a man of war into a stand for independence, and she furnished the sinews of faith and fortitude which discomfited Sisera with his iron chariots. It was a young man of Ephraim, Jeroboam, whose energy and industry brought him favorably to Solomon's notice, whom northern Israel chose, as king against Judah with its weak Rehoboam, and who with imperious haste flung the challenge of religious as well as political rivalry against Jerusalem.

No humble place did Ephraim intend to take; yet his fervor, though sufficiently selfish, was, when analyzed, more solicitous for Israel than for himself. He quarreled with Gideon and with Jephthah because he believed his presence would have made victory more complete. There is observable in Ephraim an impulsiveness, often allied with arrogance, which it is not unjust to note is first discernible in his father Joseph. Yet perhaps the mingling of the royal blood of Egypt in his veins gave him from his mother more of impatience and hasty action than was his due from Israel.

How exact is his portrait in the apostle Peter, the impulsive, hasty, imperious, and ambitious, yet withal the devoted, energetic, and loyal! Over the head of a reformed Ephraim well may preside a transformed Peter.

MANASSEH

With much of the same character as his brother, Manasseh is more sedate, retiring, and modest. Passion in him is indeed, seldom to be noted. How self-deprecating Manasseh's great Gideon, yet nevertheless how competent! But in Jephthah, the outlawed

son of Gilead, we notice a different strain. Cast out, he went for himself, yet turned again to help in Israel's need; but when Ephraim would domineer, as he had over Gideon, Jephthah struck, and his "shibboleth" has remained a mark of history.

We cannot and need not separate greatly the sons of Joseph. Though numbered double, they are one except in minor respects, the first the more impulsive and imperious, the second more sedate, dependable, and modest. And among the apostles we find, well fitting these tribes, the two brothers Andrew and Peter. Andrew, like Manasseh, the older, is retired to the background by his more aggressive brother; yet upon him again and again a greater reliance seems to have been placed by his fellow disciples and even by the Master. Let him be the head of Manasseh.

BENJAMIN

We come to the last of the tribes, little Benjamin. He is the youngest, yet, with the exception of Judah and perhaps of Levi, the most prominent among the tribes of Israel. And more delightfully romantic is his history than any other. His twofold character is well portrayed in the combined words of Jacob and Moses. Daring and defiant does Jacob see him, the wolf, swift, fierce, and predatory; mild and benevolent is he in Moses' eyes, sweetly friendly, protective: "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him." Genesis 49:27; Deuteronomy 38:12.

And such was the contradictory character of Benjamin: headstrong, fiercely and unreasoningly loyal to his word or his prejudice, undaunted by odds, contemptuous of danger, succeeding in the impossible; but to the hunted, the needy, the fearful, how careful and benign! Best represented is Benjamin by Jonathan, who one day stormed the heights of Michmash and with a single follower and but one sword put tens of thousands of aliens to flight. And who, again, went down to the hunted David in the wood of Ziph, and "strengthened his hand in God." "Swifter than eagles," "stronger than lions," "the bow of Jonathan turned not back;" yet, "My brother Jonathan: very pleasant has thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" this was, the deathless lament of David.

And what, a roll call in the pages of Israel's history is that of Benjamin! Ehud the left-handed, who smote the fat tyrant in his summer palace, coolly locked the door, and went his way to blow the trumpet in Israel and smite Moab at the fords, then the tragic Saul, who raised his people from cowering slaves to heroes that flung their enemies out, and who made the first name for Israel in the brief space of time before terrible Gilboa. Jonathan, prince unequaled in valor and self-abnegation, most beautiful type, in a dim dispensation, of the perfected man to be, the Christ. Nor does the tribe suffer in the chivalrous Abner nor the patient and true-hearted Mordecai. But Esther! Wonderful star of the Persian night! How her rare courage, her noble self-sacrifice, her keen wit, her determined will, shine out in the darkness that but for her might finally have swallowed Israel!

Fitting it is that the list should be closed with Paul, a Benjamite, and though by himself, called "the least of the apostles," yet acclaimed by the Christian world as the greatest. In him indeed the nature of Benjamin is readily to be seen. Fierce as a persecutor, and dauntless as an apostle, he was to the believers a tender shepherd. By him not only were the walls of paganism stormed, but the assemblies of the saints were taught and prepared for the great ordeals awaiting them.

He is not popularly placed among the Twelve; but he was selected by the Lord Jesus in person, and in a more marked manner than were any of the others. Who shall say that he was not meant by the Lord to take the place of that fallen disciple, Judas Iscariot? And if Paul is thus to be numbered with the twelve, we may well suppose him to be the head of that division of the church from which in the flesh he sprang and which in the spirit he most ideally represents.

So we come to the end of the tribes of Israel. The sons of Rachel, high in spirit and with grievous faults, yet stand forth in the history of the church with charm and glory. Without them, we should lack, most splendid pages of Christian history. How fascinating to trace (with fancy the Josephites and the Benjamites of all the ages) the great deeds of the fiery yet lovable heroes of this strain! Shall we see in the pure, fine Polycarp the image of Manasseh, and in Savonarola an Ephraim? Was Francis of Assisi a Joseph of his time, and Luther a Benjamin? Did not the eagle eye of Knox light with the fire of Jonathan? And did not Latimer carry his lamp and trumpet like a Gideon?

Back over the broad highway trodden by the feet of the soldiers of Christ, how wonderful is the record of faith which Israel has left, with the armies of the cross marshaled under the banners of the tribes of Israel, from masterful Judah to stumbling Reuben, from the stern Levi to the suave Asher, from sturdy Issachar to brilliant Naphtali and persevering Gad!

They are not all alike, save in the one badge of fraternal love and sacrificing service. Bound by the vow of Christ, they unite where preference would separate them, they cooperate where choice would set them in opposition, they accomplish where nature, dividing, would make them fail. For one is their Master, even Christ; and all they are brethren.

And ever in their hearts and lives, true disciples that they are, dwells that Prime law of the kingdom pronounced by their Master: "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another. As I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another."

"A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another."

A Prayer for Love

Lord, not for power I pray, in need or whim
To make men gape at splendor of my rule:
Though much is his, and much to due from him
That binds the froward, and outwits the fool.
But not for power to make supreme my way,
No, not for power to rule for Thee, I pray.

Lord, not for eloquence to charm the crowd
With sounding periods voiced, or plaudits sung,
Though blest in he that can abase the proud
And cheer the humble by his facile tongue; Yet,
Lord, for fervor of the spoken word,
For eloquence, let not my voice be beard.

Not, Lord, for Judgment do I make my prayer,
For keen and critical insight into wrong;
Though he that judges does all honor bear,
To help the feeble and to guide the strong.
Yet now I covet not the piercing sword;
Give me not judgment with my frailty, Lord.

But one full boon from Thee, O Lord, I crave:
The gift of loving not to be denied;
That though myself I can not, would not save,
I may reveal the spirit of the Crucified;
That, whether loved or hated, bound or free,
I may, by loving, make men more like You.

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