

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

ABOUT EQUALITY

The Christian Mission Magazine, September 1875

Surely no one who was not bereft of reason, for the time being, at any rate, could advocate the reduction of every member of society to some level of equality in outward circumstances. Certainly, such theories have been brought forth, but we can hardly help connecting them in thought with the influence of the wine-cup, so utterly absurd does the idea appear to be. To make and to preserve perfect equality in men's outward circumstances, there would evidently have to be at once an enormous inequality in their power, for only absolute force could the men of property be induced continually to share it with their poorer neighbors, and the ignorant to keep up to the level of even moderate education, in order to understand the uses of such property. Indeed, we can scarcely conceive of the possibility of producing anything like outward equality amongst a number of people, without making and keeping them all prisoners.

But there are certain respects in which men almost universally lay claim to equality. That there should be equality before the law, and that there should be some approach, at any rate, to equality in opportunity to rise to the highest dignities, society appears to be pretty generally agreed. We wish these principles could be more perfectly acted upon. We should like to see the real authors of crime made to suffer with its agents, and great and small criminals dealt with on a similar system. We should like the path of the diligent poor upwards made more easy. But while rejoicing in every forward step of society in these directions, we cannot but feel that these matters can never be fully adjusted on earth, and we rejoice to know that there is a Judge and King enthroned on high, who is reigning and judging aright. It will be one of our greatest surprises in the world to come, we fancy, to find how wonderfully equal have been the various lots of men here below, fairly computed and understood; and, at any rate, all unjust inequality here will be put right in the world to come. It seems therefore a comparatively useless task to deal with the claims made for

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

equality in various respects, and we prefer to look at the grander and most important respects wherein equality already exists.

I.—IN GUILT,

alas! there is a sad equality amongst men everywhere. Not that all have done an equal amount of sin, but that all are sold under its power, and are condemned equally on account thereof.

If we look at a gang of convicts working together in some great prison, we may be perfectly conscious that their crimes have differed widely in number and character, and the duration and severity of their punishment may also vary; but two things are perfectly clear. They have all been convicted of some crime, and they are all under condemnation.

And as we look at mankind bending under pain and sorrows everywhere, heart-oppressed, and afflicted in more ways than any one mind could ever comprehend, we see written, in terrible letters of blood, the awful truth that, all have sinned, and that all are already suffering the penalty of sin under the Almighty hand. It is only a further proof of this fact, that men's reason is so universally diseased as to produce continual denials of their sinfulness, and even of the authority of God over them. Alas! alas! to how terrible a depth of wretched equality has Satan reduced us all! But, thank God!

II.—IN MERCY

there is equality as well. Not but that the differences in the number and extent of our transgressions must necessarily seem at any rate to require a greater exercise of the Divine love in pardoning some than others; but there is enough mercy to meet every sinner's case with equal completeness.

Listening one day, at an open-air service, to the singing of that precious hymn—

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee—
O Lamb of God! I come,



50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

and looking around the great crowd, in which persons of all sorts and conditions of life were mingled, we thought what a glorious basis of equality the hymn expressed. If the crowd had marched off to the railway station, they would have found a great many distinctions made there in the length of journey and comfort of traveling which the money just then in each of their purses could have procured; but turning from their sins, and coming to Jesus, each one might have obtained a free and immediate entrance into His kingdom, and a start, on perfectly equal terms, for the Canaan above. Oh, what a boundless fountain of universal happiness the mercy of God in Christ Jesus is! Through this, and this only, can men everywhere be united in an equality of peace and contentment for ever!

Let us beware that, as administrators of God's mercy, we treat men as equals. Without receiving His pardon, all alike must perish. Therefore, all should be warned with equal faithfulness and persistency. Through mercy all may be made children of our God, and therefore all should be sought with equal zeal and love. Oh, let us guard against a feeling of hopelessness with regard to any! Let us guard against any rising pride or weakness that would make us turn away from the most wretched sinner to seek more hopeful cases! God ever save us as a Mission, from turning from the poor masses of the East End, whose terrible need called forth the efforts in which the whole work originated! Better, a thousand times, err on the side of partiality to those who have the least light and opportunity, than on the side of those who may be more easily led to Christ, if in seeking these latter we lose any portion of the mercifulness of Him who is "no respecter of persons."

III.—IN THE SALVATION OF GOD THERE IS GLORIOUS EQUALITY.

Jesus came to save His people from their sins, so that not one of them, whatever his sins may be, need be burdened or enchained thereby any longer. It is not that this man, who breathed before his conversion a heavenly air, and was surrounded with every advantage, may be raised to a high state of grace and great moral excellence, while that man, who was converted while on a Sabbath-breaking excursion, and who was surrounded at the time, as he had been from his childhood, with the most ungodly society, may only rise by very slow and painful degrees to a righteous life and a heavenly mind. No! The

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

Almighty Savior is able to save them both "to the uttermost," and that with equal readiness.

God has recorded for us the lives of many of His saved ones in times past. He has shown us how they were delivered by His power from darkness and sin, from fear and unbelief, from pride and weakness, from deceivers and enemies, from dangers, poverty, trial, and care, and delivered so gloriously that, without thought, we should scarcely notice in the reading how much of all this salvation might have been missed had these, our elders, neglected to avail themselves of all the love God bore them. Why are any of us not equally strong, not equally rescued from all evil, and not equally pleasing in our Father's sight? Certainly not because He has been to any extent partial to men of other times, but only because of His children a joint heirship with Christ in all He can give. What more could He do to show His willingness to save each of us with equal perfectness both here and hereafter?

Oh, for an equality of faith in God's salvation with the grand men who have climbed the skies! Oh, for a determination to receive from the Lord as much as He has ever bestowed upon anyone yet! It is ours, and we must be short-sighted indeed if we spend time, and worry ourselves in grumbling at our inequality with Mr. Somebody in some little earthly details, while we have not availed ourselves of the glorious privilege of being as much saved and blessed as were Paul, and Peter, and John, and James, and Stephen. God help us to open our eyes to our magnificent opportunities and to enter into them at once!

IV.—IN OBLIGATION

there must, then, be equality, no matter whether we avail ourselves of all our property or not. At the first there might have been in the matter of pardon some difference in the extent of our indebtedness to our Savior. Those who have had much forgiven should love much.

But if all are alike played within arm's length of "all things," then all are equally under obligation to the bounty of Him who offers all to all, no matter whether of that great store they take much or little. And yet we actually hear professing Christians talk about what could and could not be "expected of them," as



50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

though God really had only given them so much, and had only a limited claim upon them!

Such thoughts cannot but remind us of a certain battery of artillery which was once found retreating from the front in a great battle. Upon being asked why they were not keeping their position, the men replied that they could not get ammunition; but not only were they unable to show that they had applied to any one for a fresh supply, but upon examining their wagons it was found that they had not even fired off the rounds they had! And probably those men were not great cowards after all. Had a competent officer been with them they would have stood anywhere and fired as long as they could; but amidst confusion and uncertainty they became despondent and gave way, just as the vast majority of the Lord's people continually do. With grace in their hearts, and all heaven at their beck and call, they doubt, and tremble, and yield to a lying, bullying enemy, whom they might drive in terror before them if they would only use the resources at their command.

Every one of us is as much under obligation to God as Paul was. We have just as much Divine wealth as command, and it is all non-sense therefore to suppose that God does not expect us to exercise as great faith as to be equally self-sacrificing and heroic in our devotion to Himself. Assuredly God will require of us an account, not merely of what we have received, but of what we might have received—and nothing short of a complete living, incessant sacrifice of all we have and are will be a suitable return for what God has conferred upon us.

V.—IN SERVICE

there ought then, to be equality. Not that all can be at work in precisely the same way, nor that all are able to do an equal amount or quality of work. But all are equally bound to serve, and all ought to serve, with equal readiness, regularity, and self-denial.

The coolness with which multitudes of the Lord's "servants" take their ease and enjoy themselves, leaving a comparatively small number to wait upon them and all the world besides, would really be intensely amusing were it not for the terrible consequences of this general apathy.

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

Imagine, if you can, such a scene as this in some large bakehouse. Half a dozen bakers are hard at work in various way. Forty or fifty more stand or sit by watching them, and making remarks fro time to time. Of these, one or two occasionally carry burdens to or from the workers. The rest content themselves at most with giving them food from time to time, with kind words of encouragement occasionally. "I like that brother," says one, as a poor toiler draws a large batch of bread from the oven. "Yes," says another, "so do I, but I think he is rather forward—I prefer the brother behind him, myself."

"Oh," says a third, "they are all very dear, good men; but a deal too noisy," "Well," says a fourth, "they certainly work hard, but I fear they are raising the dough too quickly. I like solid work, I do." "I am getting tired," says another, "of this bread; there is too much sameness about it. I must have better food, I think I shall step over to Mr. So-and-so's next Sunday." The remainder smile approval, and in some cases cry "Bravo," but the idea that they too are bakers, and ought to bake, seems never to enter into their minds! *What would the master say?*

Oh, that an equality of service may be brought about at any rate in our Mission! Oh, that all may open their eyes to the urgent need of the dying millions around us, and may awake to the great weight of sin that must rest upon the idle! Service and reward are linked together. Alas! there will be widely different rewards: for there are widely different degrees of faithfulness. Oh, let us not be amongst the laggards, creeping into heaven almost unnoticed, unwelcomed, and unregretted! Let us be amongst the giants, dreaded by the devil, hated by the world, criticized by "the church," but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin and Satan!

VI. BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

there will be perfect equality, and everyone will be impartially treated, according to the deeds done in the body. Let us live and labor in full view of the great white throne!