

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

ABOUT FRATERNITY

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In nothing does the utter departure of mankind from the will of God appear more glaringly than in the want of brotherly love between man and man. We see the human race, which was intended to be a family under one father, torn into nations, tribes, and communities, feeling almost as completely severed from one another, as though they were different beings altogether. Until the ever-growing and spreading light of God's Word chased away the delusion, we actually saw one set of men, all over the world, treating whole races as mere brute beasts, to live, labor, and die for their superiors.

And within every nation the same state of feeling produces classes, parties, and leagues, which regard one another with an enmity sometimes rising to the fullest hatred. It has been well said that the history of a nation is the history of its wars; and it is equally true that the history of society is made up of the contentions of different sets of men. Yet even these parties are only handed together to a very slight extent. Easily broken up, and only associated for certain purposes, each individual attends for the most part to his own interests, regardless of those of others. "Every man for himself," is everywhere the motto acted upon. Even amongst Christians it is only very partially and by slow degrees that anything like real brotherhood seems to be brought about. Even in the sanctuary, as a rule, distinctions of caste are as marked as anywhere else; and the occupier of one seat knows no more of the fellow-hearer by his side, than of his next-door neighbor. In short, the whole constitution of society, and the relation of every man to every other, tell us plainly enough that our Father's will has been universally trampled under foot, and that all we "like sheep have gone astray." But, thank God, our great Elder Brother has come down to put matters right, and we, at any rate, who love Him ought to learn to have true fraternity with all men.

WE HAVE BROTHERS GONE BEFORE.



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The gap which death so often makes in a family circle only ensures more than ever the portion of him who dies in the hearts of those who still live. And with proper feeling of our relationship to God and His people, even ages ought not to prevent our hearty good fellowship with those members of the heavenly family who have long since ascended to their Father and ours.

Jesus Christ came specially to abolish in His own body the partition between Jew and Gentile, and yet (marvelous masterpiece of the devil!) this very Messiah and His work have been represented as forming a great gap between us and the men of the "old dispensation," and Christians usually talk as though Abraham, David, and Jeremiah could have no more sympathy with us, or we with them, than the savages of some outlandish region. This state of thought and feeling necessarily separates us almost as much from the Apostles and their flocks, for these evidently drew very largely for encouragement upon the experience of the holy men of old. Paul, when he had no man to stand by him of all his living associates, felt himself surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who had passed away; and was cheered on by their brave looks, and gladdened by the sympathy he enjoyed with their loving hearts. We have need of these great big brethren of ours, or God would not have taken so much trouble to preserve for us a perfect record of their lives and feelings. How much of spiritual development and practical advancement has been lost through the separation of heart which the devil has wrought between us and our brethren round the throne, God only knows! Let us no longer treat the Old Testament as of inferior value to the New, or read it with the calumnious assumption filling our minds, that the holy men it describes knew nothing of spiritual religion; but let us pray God to destroy the horrid veil that is so generally on the hearts of Christians in the reading of the larger part of His book, and to enable us, through the Psalms and Prophets especially, to take sweet counsel together with these our elder brethren—gone before.

WE HAVE BROTHERS IN THE FIELD.

Thank God for each and all of them! To these, at any rate, the duties of brotherhood should surely be well performed. "Union is strength," and especially in the gigantic and overwhelming task of saving souls; we cannot afford to give up any of the free we can derive from another's help.



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WE OUGHT TO COMMUNE WITH ONE ANOTHER.

Many a battle has been lost through some want of understanding between different portions of the forces engaged, the results of which it has been impossible to remedy, until too late to prevent a great disaster. Oh! to how dreadful an extent has the work of God been hindered for want of more brotherly intercourse between the soldiers of the Lord! Distance, coldness, offense, disregard, aversion, separation, mark the conduct of the professed servants of Christ towards one another continually; and meanwhile, the work of God devolves upon a few, whose efforts are ever and anon hindered and spoiled by the misconduct and neglect of the rest. What encouragement, what enjoyment, what love one to another should we realize, if we were only to treat our brethren in Christ with brotherly confidence. Souls once linked together in fraternal fellowship convey to each other in every word, deed, and look, sympathy and actual help, such as no outside influence can interfere with, and to which no other assistance can compare. The love of such souls for one another cannot fail to be observed by everyone around, and must in itself form one of the most heavenly sights on earth. And it is precisely this spectacle of Divine affection, high and profound as God's own nature, that Jesus requires us to present to the world, that they may know that we are His disciples. And the want of this love between fellow-soldiers, especially when caused, as is so often the case, by some mean, worldly consideration of different "position in society" or "circumstances," is a trace of the devil wherever it appears. Let us "love as brethren."

WE OUGHT TO BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.

It is very easy to pray for our "dear brethren in the vineyard," and prayer must not for a moment be undervalued; but we must not expect the Lord to bestow blessings if we show no sign of our determination to secure them. How can people expect the Lord to "help the preacher," who will not help him themselves? We have even found a company of people, who had themselves been doing nothing to increase the congregation, praising God for their health and strength, and praying for the salvation of souls! Surely it would be more likely that the souls should be saved if these brethren would help to gather them in. How dreadfully common it is for work to be left to those who are willing to do it!

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Surely our brotherhood demands that we should rather struggle to relieve one another to the largest extent in our power.

“Oh, but,” says some one, “I cannot preach—I cannot speak—I cannot pray aloud—I cannot leave my business during the week—I cannot give much—I cannot come to the services, because I should have so little time at home.” Why not say, I will not? And so those who are willing must do your part as well as their own!

“Oh, but others are so much better qualified than I am.” Very true, perhaps; and so they are always likely to be if you never give yourself to the work they do, and accustom yourself to the performance of it. But are the best qualified people to be worn out while you stand by idle? Come, is it that you are so jealous of the opinion your brethren may form of you, that you will rather neglect the work than subject yourself to their criticism, which you naturally judge to be as unloving as your own?

There are, alas! so many who cannot open their lips in public in the cause of Christ, and yet these very people may perchance be seen in a shop, or on the pavement, amidst a listening crowd, disputing some price affecting their own pocket. Now if they were addressing the whole company, instead of one man in it, and were in the very same voice pleading for the interests of the kingdom God, they would be doing just what they say they cannot do! This selfish and foolish bashfulness must be given up, and everyone must bear his and her proper share of the great work we have to do.

WE SHOULD DEFEND ONE ANOTHER.

Offenses must needs come, but woe to him by whom the offense cometh; and alas! how often it is by a brother in the faith that this woe is deserved! It is natural enough for the world to attack us, and natural enough to defend a brother against unbelievers; but when brother complains of brother, it becomes difficult to avoid condemnation of one or the other, and too often, “for peace's sake,” an evil report is received, and by-and-by repeated rather than offend the reporter. But how often such evils might be nipped in the bud, if each one felt that his brother's honor and credit could not be injured without harm to himself!



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We must defend one another against ourselves. The world goes upon the principle of trusting nobody. Christ commits Himself to nobody, but trusts and believes in all who trust and believe in Him. We ought to do likewise, and never to be willing to believe harm of a brother without overwhelming evidence. If each one of us were guarded by all the rest, how secure we should all be against ill-fame or damage!

WE HAVE BROTHERS "BY THE STUFF."

The grand superiority of David's religion to that of most Christians appears conspicuously in his treatment of those who tarried by the stuff, and whom he caused to share in the spoils taken from the enemy equally with the actual victors. Amongst these tarriers by the stuff are found not merely some who cannot take part in the labor and glory of the front ranks because they have duties not less important, though not so attractive, to perform in the background, but some who stay behind only because they have grown weary and faint, which generally means faint-hearted.

With regard to these last we would have expected a hardy warrior to lose all patience; but no!—"We cannot afford to lose 'soldiers,'" says David. These men, upbraided and despised, as they deserve to be, will slink away, and, perhaps, not merely leave the ranks for ever, but go over to the foe. We must treat them with a great-hearted, brotherly kindness, which will not merely do more to shame them than any amount of scolding, but will bind them to us, and encourage them back to the front. Oh! what a pity that any other sort of treatment is ever shown to those who halt by the way! How often is the feeble knee pointed at with a shake of the head, and even pushed aside by those who should confirm it! Let us rather encourage the disheartened; bear their share of the fight without grumbling, and with a loving pity cheer them up.

But there are wives, servants, and other, who cannot come out so much as they would, and who can only come out at all, in many cases, by the kind consideration of husbands, brothers, and sisters. *We want more of baby-carrying religion*, for though husbands be ever so devout, and spend their strength and time ever so earnestly in the service of others, they cannot be excused for neglecting "their own," and would be filled with anguish if some poor, home-bound one were to charge upon them the loss of heaven, by-and-by, through



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the omission of care to enable her to attend the means of grace. It is a melancholy sight to see a man so fond of the fireside that he cannot be got out to the battle; but it is not less sad to see a man so fond of the battle as to forget the fireside and the patient, weary watchers there. It is bitter to see a man or a woman too inconsiderate or not bold enough to bear some portion of the general public ministry; but it is not less bitter to see one too thoughtless or not brave enough to bear some earthly burden, that another may be set free, for heavenly enjoyment. Let us think of one another, and strive to lighten every burden, and make every burden-bearer as happy as we are ourselves.

WE HAVE BROTHERS STILL IN SIN,

No worse than we have been ourselves; no better than many who are damned—led captive by the devil at his will, though entitled to the same liberty we enjoy. Defiled and cursed with sin in every way, these poor victims are still our brethren, and have a claim upon us, which we ought every moment to be conscious of. This is the case with every sinner, no matter how low he may have sunk, and how degraded he may be in every way. It is this principle which makes respect of persons impossible, which is so conspicuous in all the dealings of God with mankind, and especially in the life of Jesus Christ.

The contemptible folly of attempting to make or keep up social distinctions and “positions in society” along with work for God was exhibited and condemned more fiercely than anything else by Him who came to seek and save the lost. None has ever held so lofty, so secure, so unchangeable a position in society as the Son of the living God, who descended step by step from the highest to the lowest circles, never losing the respect of the humble and meek, and trampling down with scorn the senseless pride of the haughty. The man who becomes really awake to the fact that *his own brethren* are perishing, will forget all the silly trifles of outer life in his earnest haste to save them. The rich officer doffs his splendid uniform as readily as the poor sailor throws off his jacket to plunge after the drowning; and the rich and poor are certain to meet together on equal terms in soul-saving work, whenever both are equally away to the realities of eternity. To give up everything for our fellow-men, to be brothers to them all, that is how to save them, and to gain, even amongst them—in the long run—the highest possible position.

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This hell-born idea of “position in society”—with all the customs and arrangements which come from it—which has separated between man and man; which has perhaps more than any other outward arrangement kept souls from Christ, and kept Christ’s servants from their work; which has defiled the sanctuary, and made the Word of God of no effect amongst the lower classes; which has made men, in their short-lived dignities, ridiculous in the eyes of angels, and left the worse victims of sin to perish unloved and unsympathized with—we must trample out in the name of Jesus, and act as if we really believed that God is the Father of all, and that all were really brothers born alike.

WE MUST THEN LABOR FOR SINNERS AS BRETHERN.

Oh, how coldly it is possible to talk about sinners! How calmly and systematically it is possible to work for their salvation until one realize that they are brethren!

It is a common thing for preachers to draw amongst their pictures of the judgment day largely upon the awful parting scenes which must then take place between loving circles of earthly relatives which must break up for ever. But query—Will not the stupendous light of the judgment day utterly dissipate the horrible pall of separation which sin has wrought between man and man? And shall we not all see in every sinner who goes groaning and blighted away from the great white throne a *brother!* When it comes to eternity, will not our eternal relationship to God exercise far more influence on our minds and hearts than the special relationship of family here?

One thing is certain, Jesus knows no distinction in His labor for us. He has toiled for each of us as though we were His own and His only brother; and He will expect us to labor for others as brethren. Well may a man exclaim, “Would that I were accursed for the sake of *my brethren.*” Once this great truth is received, men will find little difficulty in obeying to the last the glorious order to lay down our lives “for the brethren,” in the widest sense of laboring to the death to save our dying brethren in sin.

THE BROTHERHOOD MUST BE FELT.

Ah! this is nothing more nor less than the charity, without which all else is useless. God was in the flesh in order to be visibly, as well as eternally, a brother to us all,



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that He might save us. Until we have got this gloriously divine feeling of tender, brotherly interest in every child of man, we can be but sorry workers for men's salvation.

If the fatherhood of God be a reality, then every precious blessing we receive from Him we should be eager to share with all the family. If it be really our elder brother, of our flesh and of our bone, who died for us, and rose again, and who pleads for us and all the rest today, surely our hearts should bleed and sigh for the perishing.

Thank God there are hearts that feel, there are eyes that are opened, there are ears that hear in every sinner's voice the cry of a brother for help; and while the plague is abroad, and the family passes one by one away, there are zealous, daring steps about the camp day and night, bearing brotherly aid and desperate devotion far and wide. But, oh, alas! how few!

Oh, God! wilt Thou not rouse our slumbering senses, and open our drowsy eyes to see that it is our brother who is in need, and that we must have compassion upon him, even if it cost us our life!