

John—the Apostolic Divine

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John, the Son of a Fisherman. There were four persons in the family of John, whose names are known to us; himself, his brother James, his father Zebedee, and his mother, Salome. This family was in partnership with the family of Peter and Andrew, and plied their trade as fishermen on Lake Galilee. Fishing was probably very lucrative at that time. Among the apostles there were at least four who were in the business. John's family seems to have enjoyed a certain competency, inasmuch as Zebedee was able to employ three laborers, and Salome is ranked among the women who accompanied Jesus in His journeys, and ministered to Him and to the twelve of their substance, while John is said to have had a house of his own into which he received the Mother of our Lord.

John, the Beloved Disciple. John was in all probability the youngest disciple of John the Baptist who, with Andrew, began to follow Jesus in Bethany beyond the Jordan. Hence these two became the first disciples of our Lord.

John is referred to several times as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He was one of seven who witnessed the second miraculous draught of fishes after the resurrection of our Lord. He was one of the four who witnessed the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, and the first miraculous draught of fishes. He belonged to the inner circle of those who were admitted to scenes in the life of our Lord of which they alone were witnesses, as the raising of Jairus' daughter, the transfiguration of our Lord, and the agonizing prayer in the garden. He was one of the two who were charged with the secret mission of preparing the last Passover. He was the privileged one who was permitted while at supper to recline on the Master's bosom. He alone was apprised by Jesus of the traitor's identity. He was the chosen one to whom our Lord entrusted the care of His mother at His death. It is very clear that he is rightly referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

The love which the Master had for him John reciprocated. He alone stood by Jesus through the dark and dangerous hours of his trial and death. (Compare Matt. 24: 66; John 13: 15; 19: 25.) He, too, was the first of the disciples to reach the sepulchre after the announcement of the resurrection was made by Mary of Magdala; though Peter, coming after, with characteristic boldness, was the first to enter the empty tomb.

What was it in John that made him the favorite with the Lord? It was not because he was one of the two who were the first to become His disciples, nor because he may have been the youngest of the twelve, nor because of the amiability and gentleness of his nature. Artists have pictured him as a gentle spirit, almost to the point of effeminacy. But this is hardly consistent with his character as a Son of Thunder. Jesus' love for John was due not so much to any sweetness of temperament as to quickness and depth of insight which enabled him to understand the Master better than his companions. The evidence of this is found in his writings. To his spiritual insight into his Master's teaching must be added his native modesty. He is not a talker like Peter; only three short sayings are attributed to him in his Gospel. He is the first disciple to reach the empty tomb, but his modesty and reverence prevent him from being the first to enter it. He is the first of the fishing crew to recognize the Master as He stands upon the shore, but his modesty and good judgment prevent him

from jumping into the water to meet Him.

Jesus knew what He was in man, and it is because of what He saw in John that He made him His favorite disciple.

John, the Son of Thunder. John and his brother James were surnamed by our Lord, Boanerges, i.e., Sons of Thunder. This title suggests a vehemence of spirit, an intensity of nature, and a commanding zeal for the Master. They joined with their mother in asking for the highest place in the kingdom of their Lord; they declared that they were willing to drink of the cup that He drank, and to be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with; they rebuked one who cast out demons in their Lord's name because he did not belong to their company; and they sought, Elijah-like, to call down fire from heaven upon a Samaritan village which had rejected their Lord. There are also certain traditions regarding John's later life, which reveal him in like character. On one occasion, it is said, that upon entering an oriental bathhouse, he found himself under the same roof as Cerinthus, an arch-heretic; and fearing lest in the vengeance of God, the roof should fall upon them, he suddenly rushed out of the building. Again, it is said that having inquired of a certain bishop concerning a young convert whom he had entrusted to his care, and having learned that he had fallen away from the Church and had become the leader of a band of robbers, he censured the bishop for the neglect of his charge and ran off in spite of his age, into the mountains, in search of this bandit who succeeded in reclaiming him for Christ.

John, the Christian Philosopher. "Paul and John," says Findlay, "are the two master minds of the New Testament. Of all men that ever lived these two best understood Jesus Christ." John, like Peter, had a fire in his nature, but it was a fire kindled and fed by the Word, and hence less easily cooled. He did not have the same power of initiative as Peter, but he was more contemplative and more cautious. He was less a man of action and more a man of thought. The more he contemplated on the Person of His Lord, the more he loved Him, and the more he loved Him the more he contemplated. He was, without question, the best interpreter of our Lord's Person and Mission. It was eminently fitting that in the providence of God he should remain with the Church after the other apostles had been translated, so that he might teach the truths of the Person of Jesus in opposition to the false doctrines that had already sprung up in the Church.

Two opposite schools of false teachers had already risen up in John's lifetime. The first asserted that Jesus was only divine and not human, that He was a man only in appearance and not in reality. Against this teaching John asserts that the Word was made flesh in reality, that He dwelt among us, and that we have handled Him with our hands and seen Him with our eyes. (John 1: 14; 1 John 1: 1-3.) The other school denied that Jesus was divine, but asserted that He was only human. In refutation of this teaching John wrote his Gospel in order, as he says, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in His name." (John 20: 31.)

To John Jesus was the Incarnation of Life, Light and Love. These three words are fundamental in his theology.

John, a Pillar in the Church. This was Paul's estimate of him. (Gal. 2: 9.) In the earlier chapters of the Acts we

find John associated with Peter in laying the foundation of the Christian Church. What a splendid pair, so much alike and yet so different; the one supplying what the other lacked, each adding strength to the other.

In later years John fell heir to the labors of Paul in the Ephesian District. While Bishop Ephesus, he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation, which is addressed to the churches of Asia over which he held jurisdiction. John's day for leadership had come, and it was an important day. Paul had gone, Peter had gone, and all the other apostles had gone, John alone was left. The Church was passing through a crisis in her doctrinal life. Heresy was rampant. To John was committed the important task of guiding the Church safely through this crisis, a task which Peter could not have done so well. Peter, by his preaching of Jesus, laid the foundations of the Christian Church, while John, by his intuitive interpretation of Jesus and his teachings, made these foundations secure against all attack.

League Contests

This is what an experienced Leaguer has to say about *Contests*, and the way to conduct them:—

"Divide your Society into two sections, the Reds and the Blues, each side having a leader. The contest is to last say from January till May, with the understanding that the losing side will give a social to the winning side."

Six points are to be considered:—1. The regular league meeting. 2. The mid-week prayer meeting. 3. The monthly business meeting. 4. The regular monthly payment of missionary money. 5. Obtaining subscriptions for the EPWORTH ERA. 6. Gain in membership.

Rules.—1. The color having the largest number of prayer meetings and business meetings will gain a mark for each. 2. The color obtaining the most new members will receive a mark. 3. The color obtaining renewal or new subscriptions to the EPWORTH ERA will receive a mark. 4. If the number of the two colors is equal each will receive a mark. 5. To be counted as present the members must be in attendance not later than ten minutes after the time for the meeting to begin. 6. Missionary money must be paid regularly and systematically.

Make two charts to hang up on the wall of the League room, one tied with red ribbon, the other with blue. When a side gains a point make a mark on its chart with a colored pencil corresponding to the color of its side.

Those who have tried similar contests have found them to work admirably. Interest has been aroused, and prevailed until the last business meeting. The above contest may be of benefit along several lines. New members may be added to your Society. Before the contest, members who have been careless about the payment of missionary money may learn to be regular and systematic. League meetings and prayer meetings may be better attended. Few of our young people, especially the officers of our Leagues will be without their paper the EPWORTH ERA. At first some may attend for the payment of being counted, but if the meetings are carefully planned and are interesting, they will come for the help derived from the meeting. While the meetings increase in number they should also increase in quality, for there will be those attending who having kept talents buried, will begin to use them for their own good and the help of others. Try it!"

More are drowned in the wine-cup than in the sea.—German Proverb.