

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

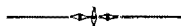
---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

Professor Dill is the historian telling us of the ordinary life of the Empire during a certain period. Professor Bigg's task is a much more difficult one—to estimate the Church's difficulties in the midst of the Empire, and to try to account for her successes and her failures. Both books deserve and will repay study, and our appreciation of the second, and of its usefulness to us, will be immensely increased if we approach it in the light of the knowledge which we have gained from the first. The information we shall gain from the study of these books combined will not be merely interesting, it should be most helpful at the present time. We notice, and we deplore, not merely the existence, but the growth (possibly rather the recrudescence) of what are termed mediæval tendencies in the Church at the present time. The best way to combat such of these tendencies as are wholly foreign to the spirit of Christianity is to make clear their real origin. We must be able to show whence they came, and how they first entered the Church. That entrance was far earlier than is generally supposed. We accuse men of going back to the errors of the eleventh or the sixteenth century. But the phenomena of these centuries arose from causes which were active eight or nine hundred years earlier. A careful study of Dr. Bigg's lectures and of Professor Dill's history will make this abundantly clear.

W. EDWARD CHADWICK.



## THE SPIRITUAL AND THE SOCIAL WORK OF THE CLERGY.

I NEED not stop to inquire at the outset what the precise distinction between spiritual work and social work may be, for we all have a pretty clear idea in our own minds as to the kinds of efforts denoted by these two titles, and, further, the distinction will become clear enough for the purposes of discussion as this paper proceeds. I propose, rather, to seek at once the principles underlying these efforts, and then to consider them in relation to the ideal of the clerical life.

And in seeking the principles we turn instinctively to the example of Christ, Who knew what was in man, Who knew, too, the mind of God, Whose principles and practice are, therefore, a safer guide than either our preconceived ideas or even our daily practice, which is too often (I speak from my own experience) the resultant of the outside forces which bear upon us rather than the mature expression of well-thought-out ideas.

We turn, then, to the example of Christ.

We all must have noticed, perhaps with a sense of surprise, how much time and labour He bestowed upon ministering to the bodily and temporal needs of men—healing their sick, satisfying their hunger, comforting the bereaved, raising their dead—and this, often enough, without enforcing the moral of His acts, and without, apparently, making any immediate attempt to gain spiritual results from secular efforts. The conclusion seems to be that He revealed that the will of God includes the perfecting of man's temporal powers and mortal capacities, and that He regarded the bodies and minds of men, their daily needs, hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows—in short, all that goes to make up common life—as having a share in His work of establishing the kingdom of God, and as worthy of the attention and labours of the Incarnate Son of God; and that He regarded this work as worthy of performance for its own sake, without immediate reference to its bearing upon the winning of their souls for God.

If this view of one part—an important, indeed an essential part—of our Saviour's work is correct, it follows that we must regard all that goes to make up the fulness of human life as being sacred, and as claiming our pastoral efforts.

But we cannot take one side of our Lord's life and ignore the rest. While, I think, we must conclude that He regarded the whole of human life, even in its least obviously spiritual relations and aspects, as worthy of His beneficent attention, we must also recognise that His motive for doing so was that He regarded men as the children of the Heavenly Father. His kindness was His revelation of the Father's all-embracing love; and, though He often left men to inquire for themselves into the significance of His doings, yet, when He could, and when they gave Him the opportunity, He led them on to faith and service.

And so we are reminded that as time went on He came to vary His methods. Not, I think, that He had tried an experiment, and, being dissatisfied with the result, turned to other experiments; but, rather, that after He had completed the broad outlines of one aspect of the revelation which He came to give, He passed naturally to the fuller revelation which still remained in store; and also that the earlier method, characterized chiefly by works of power and mercy, had prepared the way for the later methods of spiritual teaching followed by the uncompromising appeal for faith and sacrifice. In short, the revelation of the Fatherhood of God, with all that it implies from the Divine side, was complemented by the revelation of His own Sonship and of the sonship of humanity, with all that is implied herein.

What follows from these thoughts is obvious enough. Put as briefly as possible it comes to this—that while all that is human is, *ipso facto*, sacred before God, and while no effort that tends to the culture (on its human side) of what is human is to be despised as being merely secular, yet no such effort is in itself satisfactory and final, but all must be completed by being subordinated to the more perfect effort to consecrate humanity (thus developed) to the Divine service in the faith which is perfected in sacrifice; and this because we have the whole revelation given by Christ to guide us in our work, and not only its earlier part.

With the theory I hope we shall all agree. It is when we come to apply the theory to daily practice that the difficulties begin. Is a clergyman justified in becoming the treasurer of a trade union? Is he justified in spending five nights a week at a working men's club, where such religious results as can be tabulated in statistics are infinitesimal? Is he justified in giving time to service on a committee of the Charity Organization Society? Is an incumbent justified in requiring his assistant clergy to get up the winter programme of concerts? By what authority do we spend our strength on bazaars? on coal clubs? on provident societies? on managing Church schools? on managing Council schools?

The list grows indefinitely under one's eyes, and every instance requires separate treatment. Is there any intelligible and consistent test by which we can judge each case as it arises?

Perhaps we shall see our way to answering that question by putting another. In all our scattered efforts what is the precise result that we desire to secure as the outcome of our labours? When we have answered this in one or two particular instances, and have compared the answers with our ideal of the function of the clergyman in society and in the Christian society, we shall begin to see our way, and we shall see what we are to work for as the final solution of our problem.

Let us consider quite briefly a couple of instances out of our random list. Take the case of the provident club—the really provident club to which nothing is contributed by way of charity except, perhaps, voluntary labour and office work. Is this in any way a worthy object of the expenditure of our time and energy?

If you agree with Mr. Charles Booth that organized district visiting tends almost inevitably to develop as an essential corollary either visiting for the purpose of giving, or else visiting for the purpose of collecting; and if you further agree that these alternatives represent alternative influences upon

the moral character of the visited, which influences are respectively pernicious and edifying; then, in those parishes in which you cannot go outside the ranks of the clergy to find satisfactory scrutineers of accounts, or even satisfactory treasurers and managers of funds, there is something to be said in favour of the view that the provident club may be a proper department of clerical effort. It becomes so, not in view of any competition with the Post Office, not merely in view of teaching people to provide for rainy days or for Bank Holidays, but in respect of its intimate connection with moral character. Perhaps the heaviest and most irrefutable charge brought against the clergy as a class is that, with the best intentions in the world, they are apostles of the gospel of Cadge. The provident club may afford an answer—or a remedy.

Take another case, the working men's or working boys' club. Nothing has brought more disappointment in its train. It was to have been the feeder of the Church; it was to have turned out hopeful communicants and a devout congregation; it was to have been the usher of the millennium. These hopes withered long ago, and there is a tendency to regard the Church club, if it is to be Church in anything but name, as useful only for the purpose of edifying the already faithful. It is widely felt that the club must be fenced by tests against the irreligious. It is no longer a missionary effort.

I venture to suggest that this despondency is due to a complete misapprehension of the teachings of experience as to the true nature of clubs. As missionary organizations they have, on the whole, probably failed. But as schools of character they are, in my experience, unique.

Thus we come to the principle which we have been seeking. I do not lay any particular stress for their own sakes upon the two instances which I have almost casually selected. They have served their purpose in bringing us to the desired point, and we may dismiss them. They have brought us to this—that much that is apparently secular may in reality be spiritual, because it is a lever to lift character. That is the test which I should apply to all our work. This thing or that, this guild, that concert, this bazaar, that service in G flat minor, this confraternity, that day-school—do these things, when dragged to the light and seen through and through in principle and detail, do they or do they not tend to the promotion of righteousness?

When social, secular work runs immediately into the building up of character and the purifying of conduct, then it is truly sacred work. For we aim at bringing our people to the knowledge of God, and at causing that knowledge to

show itself in consistent life and in communion with God. And nothing that does not bear upon this is really sacred, though it be done between the porch and the altar. And this because while, with our Master, we recognise that every aspect of human life is sacred, yet we must follow Him, too, in remembering that human life is one and indivisible; and that all effort must have as its final object the entire consecration of the whole man. We may be content with what is apparently secular if it is linked to the distant Divine ideal; we cannot be content with what is professedly sacred unless it has an essential bearing upon the consecration of man.

The purpose of social work is, above all things, to provide for the discipline and edification of character; apart from this it is meaningless or worse. And this position I maintain to the extent of saying that I know no schools of character open to us, in which we may apply to common life the principles of the Faith, other than those which our social, our secular work presents and develops. It is not given to the clergy to exercise a direct personal influence in the business life of the city, or to share in the intimate conversation of the factory. In the crises of life which come to our people there they must, as a rule, stand or fall without us. It is in the social work, where we meet the laity on level ground, and the most efficient man takes the lead, that there comes our opportunity and our duty to show by precept and, above all, by example what the Gospel means in practice. There, if we are strong enough and wise enough, we may discipline character.

But I would emphasize the fact, which experience and bitter disappointment emphasize every day, that apart from true religion there is, in the long run, no character to discipline.

When I see a man responding to influence and to the call for service and sacrifice, where I see the outward and visible signs of growing self-respect, there I know with increasing certainty that there is a real, though sometimes vague, knowledge of God, a real obedience to such truth as is recognised, and a well-grounded hope. But where this vital knowledge and this obedience to the heavenly vision are lacking it is only a question of time before the crash comes.

To sum up my argument. I think that the example of our Lord, the Master-worker on the souls of men, teaches us two things: First, that every side of human life makes it appeal to God our Maker, and should make its appeal to God's ministers, and that where others are not forthcoming to meet human needs it is for the clergyman to step into the breach;

second, that we may not divide human life into water-tight compartments, but, recognising the essential unity of human nature, and its utter dependence upon God, and its meaninglessness apart from God, we must keep steadily before ourselves the ideal, not only of the bringing of all human powers and capacities—bodily, mental, æsthetic, spiritual—to their highest possible development (though this has in itself the sanction of His example), but also of bringing them all finally to entire consecration.

I have dealt almost exclusively with principles, because it is principles that we need in these days of our wandering in the wilderness of details. If our principles are sound, they will necessarily express themselves in our practice.

Really our difficulties resolve themselves finally into a question of proportion. There are but twelve hours in our day, and we cannot afford to waste them in misdirected effort. We dare not give to the committee-room the time and strength which belong properly to the sanctuary, nor may we give even to the Mount of Transfiguration the time and strength which belong properly to the crowd below. Most fatal of all is it to spend the precious hours, which might have been hours of prayer and thought, in railing weakly at the distracting claims upon us, to end by rushing wildly out to do something, anything, wise or unwise, so as to pass the time in activity for its own sake and to have results to show; while conscience reproaches us for doing things which might have been right after all had they been done in the right spirit.

The difficulties resolve themselves, I say, into a question of proportion; and the proportion must vary with every worker's peculiar gifts, with the needs of each one to whom he ministers, and, above all, with the particular call of God to the individual soul.

H. G. D. LATHAM.

---

### THE OFFICE OF A PROPHET IN ISRAEL.

IN entering upon this subject it will be well to define the meaning of the word "prophet," and the sense in which the term has been used at various times. The Hebrew word which has been rendered prophet is *נביא*, and the etymology of the word has been the subject of much controversy. Kuenen, followed by Dean Stanley and many others, derives the word from *נבא*, which Gesenius renders "to bubble up," or "pour forth," whence the word came to mean, to pour