

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/robbadshaw>

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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

found that in this Parliamentary paper every incumbent who was not actually living in the glebe-house, or who, from unavoidable circumstances, could not reside within the immediate limits of the parish, was returned as non-resident. Consequently the real facts were most seriously misrepresented, for by far the larger proportion of the clergy reported to be non-resident were living adjacent to their parishes, and actively serving their cures, though from the reasons given they were unable to reside upon the spot. The editor of the "Official Year-Book," by communication with the Diocesan Registrars, has corrected these statements, and the facts as they are now given may be relied upon.

From the corrections supplied by this table,¹ it is satisfactory to observe how comparatively few of the parochial clergy are now non-resident, in the sense of being personally unable to discharge the responsibilities of their cures, and that thus a reproach resting on the Church in former days, is now very generally removed.

A further opportunity will be afforded for dwelling upon other branches of Church work not yet touched upon. Enough, however, has been said to show that the Church of England is ~udeavouring devoutly, and prayerfully, to apply herself to the great responsibility of guiding the future destiny, and welfare of the English people under the light, and influence of the Gospel of Christ. There is naturally much to wish for, and still many defects to correct, but there are yet evident witnesses of the presence and favour of God working mightily through our Church, manifesting itself in a deepened sense of the solemnity of our trust, a more earnest devotion to work, a stronger faith, and courage in facing great difficulties threatening to impede our way, in a broader charity towards all who are striving, though by different means, to accomplish the highest ends, and in a fuller and clearer comprehension of wise, and practical methods for adapting the ministry of the Church to the peculiar wants of this generation.



ART. II.—SYMPATHY AS A QUALIFICATION IN WORK FOR CHRIST.²

IT is well for any man required to work, that he should realize his situation—stand and survey the field of his operations, know the resources on which he may draw, and understand

¹ "Official Year Book," 1884, p. 563.

² This paper with a few verbal alterations is the Charge delivered in St. Saviour's, Southwark, at the visitation of the clergy and churchwardens on the 15th of May, 1884.

the purposes for which his work ought to be done. And the Christian man needs specially to be wise and thoughtful. He is dealing with immortal souls, living amongst very precious opportunities, standing in prominent position while a great conflict is going on between truth and error, the Church and the world, Christ and the enemy of mankind. So he is bound to consider whether anything is to be found in himself to disqualify him for his work, to range against him any whom he ought to attract and influence for good, or to withhold from him the presence and the blessing of God, without which no real good can come. And the subject of human sympathy, Christian sympathy as a factor in Christian work, deserves attention, and the discussion of it may be helpful in this day of controversy and conflict amongst Christian men.

It may be stated thus: To feel "*as a man*," is but part of that "*simplicity and godly sincerity*" which make a man natural, and secure for him at the hands of other men the ready acknowledgment that he is a true man, honestly expressing what he knows and feels to be true. There is a great charm in this transparency of Christian character. Men soon see the inner coruscations and flashings of the light divine, which mark the real gems formed in the laboratory of grace, made to adorn the Redeemer's crown. The man who only echoes the opinions and experiences of other men, cannot have the force and the fervour which belong to the originating mind. It is the experiencing heart which indicates the man who is an original in character and history, by reason of the mighty working of God's grace upon his own soul. And the world is keenly conscious of want of reality in any man who recommends what he has never tasted, and who pleads with others before he has become persuaded himself.

So also to "*feel for a man*" is an essential element in that outgoing unselfishness which characterizes the mission both of Christ and Christlike men. The primary idea of Christian work is that a man saved by grace has a world of happy enjoyment within, and a world of happy labour outside himself. It carries the notion of a brother pleading with sinners about God, and pleading with God about sinners; and men soon see the glow of a genuine love, heart-work yearning in pity, brimming full of zeal, forgetting self in thought about God and good.

But "*to feel with a man*," taking a seat on his own level, looking with him from his own point of view, talking, feeling, acting as a brother who tries to understand before he undertakes to advise or help—this is what I mean by sympathy, this is what men may try to learn about, so that in their work they may be seen to be not servile, not severe, not selfish, but

men of a generous spirit, and of an honest endeavour to do their duty in the sight of God and men. It is on this point that I ask to be permitted to offer a thought or two for mutual edification.

There must be sympathy with the Master. Union with the Lord Jesus Christ, the result of Christ's grace and love towards us, is the secret of our Christianity. No man, in any saving sense, is a Christian without that. And communion with the Lord Jesus Christ; the expression and evidence of our gratitude and love towards Christ is the secret of our Christian work. No Christian man will be an efficient Christian worker without that. And that means not only the subjection of every thought to the obedience of Christ, and the consecration of every power to the service and the glory of Christ; but it means also the examination of every opportunity in the light of the mind of Christ, and from the standpoint of the purpose of Christ, and in the consciousness of the ever-present power of Christ. Faith projects a man's individuality into the presence of the Lord Jesus; and the man of God will "sit with Christ in heavenly places." It lifts the man up out of the region of the human, and sets him before the throne of the divine. The Christian refers every matter to Christ. He takes souls, questions, plans, purposes, obstacles, weaknesses, wants, weariness, and lays them before his Master. So he is in harmony with heaven, even while he is toiling, struggling, fainting, upon earth. The Saviour "went about doing good." He was "about His Father's business;" and the guiding principle of the saved sinner will be "to do good unto all men," and to "glorify God in our bodies and our spirits which are His." Christians are part of a great system, in which the Almighty is carrying out the purposes of His own will. And so long as they are in contact with, in sympathy with, the Lord Jesus Christ, they can not be slothful, need not be fearful; for to feel, and think, and walk, and work with our eye on the Master, and the Master's eye on us, is the thing which puts honour and power and pleasure into everything we do.

In like manner, for an efficient labour, *there must be sympathy with the souls of men.* Many an honest worker has failed from want of knowledge of the materials on which he has expended labour. We must study men, know them as they know themselves, see them when they put off the unrealities and externalisms which cause men to seem, but not to be, so much alike. Cases of conscience must be studied, and careful dissection of human character must come out of a trained skill. Symptoms and specifics are to be understood as part of the knowledge for a physician of soul as well as body. A diligent study of God's Word, so as to realize by its

sacred biography what the friends and enemies of God have been found to be in nature, and have been made to be under grace—this is a primary matter by which workers are educated for their labours among men. And the careful examination of our own souls, with all the evasions and concealments which may have beguiled ourselves and perplexed others, and the experience which a holy skill in dealing with different characters as the work amongst men opens out—such things need to be cultivated if we would be “wise to win souls.” The Church requires the ripened wisdom of all earnest men; and “not a novice” becomes more and more a necessary feature in all who are to be “able ministers of the New Testament.”

The subject branches out into wonderful varieties of thought and action; but each one should endeavour to enter into the interesting details. Take, for instance, the matter of sympathy with men in their doubts. It is not wise or right to class all doubters amongst disdainful opponents of Christ and His Church and Gospel. There are many honest minds in which a doubt is a torture, not a delight; and it is not enough to fulminate anathemas against such. The case is not to be met by the mere reiteration of our own beliefs. Men, when they are treated thus, feel themselves to be misunderstood and misjudged. The wise believer in Christ must conceal nothing, withdraw nothing, undervalue nothing, of that which God has taught by His Spirit and in His Word. But he must learn to sit down by the side of his perplexed brother, and try to get at the secret thing which interposes between his soul and Christ. There is a history in unbelief—sometimes in the harsher aspects of self-assertion and self-conceit—but at other times there is a touching sight of men who are drifting into the darkness out of the light, who yet are struggling to get into light out of darkness. And there is a kind of philosophy in unbelief, as when some dominant influences explain and account for the mental and moral obliquities under which men choose the evil and refuse the good. We all should seek to be well read in these records of the world of thought and conscience. For a wise word, well timed and well ordered, has often helped an anxious soul out of its difficulties. And an unskilful instructor, who shrinks from the closer contact, may miss the great opportunity out of which real victory often comes. Scepticism has gained credit for penetration, or power, or persuasiveness, because it has been ingeniously novel, or attractively daring, or loudly boastful, or persistently positive, about matters that are said to be certain, and can be shown to be fictitious and false. What the servants of Christ ought to show is, that they have considered the objections, and can hold up their heads in the presence of the most acute

opponents, because they have tried the truth and found it true—have met the difficulties and found them no hindrance to their own walk of faith. Then it will be found that, under the spell of a real sympathy, the inner humanities assert themselves; and people who looked stern, and seemed hard, and felt cold, are discovered to have more the spirit of friend than foe, more the character of an earnest thinker than of an ardent impugner of a truth, because it is too holy for a man to wish it to be true, seeing that his own life is a moral falsehood and an intellectual fraud.

In another direction the like value of Christian sympathy will be seen when men are dealing with a sinner in reference to his sin. There is a hard, rough hand which some have laid upon the ungodly, and it makes them shrink from the touch and turn round roughly in anger against the intrusion. That hand represents Law; and the soft hand represents Love. You will not force men into forgiveness. You must not represent the gospel of the grace of God as if its purpose was to crush and to condemn. The truth must be told that God hates sin, because His wisdom knows it to be injurious to man, as well as insulting to His own government, which is meant to be just and good. But God's love is to be the primary subject, love for the sinner whom He longs to welcome to the home of happiness, both as a son and as a saint. The world may cast out a reprobate; but the Church cannot. The Christian follows the wanderer, makes him the gracious offering of a present full salvation, points to the open door of hope and the broad thoroughfare of escape, and helps him to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life. A servant of God may be required to utter a sharp and severe rebuke; but he should let it be seen, by tone and manner, that it is a grief to him to do it; and that it is in very love that he must find fault. It is the fault-finding spirit which grates so harshly upon the soul. We need not upbraid a man who has long ago and often upbraided himself. If we have learned religion in the schools, we must practise it in the lanes and thoroughfares of life. If we have found good for our own souls in the closet, or in the sanctuary, we must take it with us to the housetop, and tell all whom we can reach that it is equally good for them. Sympathy with sinners in their sorrows, in their struggles, in their mistakes, in their failures, this must be an ever-present element in the work of any man who shall truly represent his Master, and rightly recommend His message.

There is another position from which this subject may be examined with peculiar interest now—*there must be sympathy with the truth as it is in Jesus.*

One of the very greatest dangers of the day is a modern dislike of doctrine. We are nothing if we have not some distinctive message to deliver, as God has given it, and because God has given it to us. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" We shall never convince others while we are not convinced ourselves. So it is essential to our Christian work that we have a very clear conviction about the Christian faith. To have only a half-hearted confidence in the trustworthiness of the written Word, will issue in our throwing little power into our use of "the sword of the Spirit." But to have full sympathy with the revelation given, fills a man with a holy enthusiasm, by which he works on and holds forth the living truth, which he does not question and cannot doubt.

And more than that; the members of our own Church of England, so worthy of our love, need to be conspicuous for loyalty and sympathy towards the testimony which their forefathers have left about the truth as it is in Jesus. Her articles and formularies are to be held most dear by all her servants and her children. Secret yearnings after some other community; hidden preferences for doings and thinkings which she has put aside; hesitation, when she has been plain-spoken; or tentative advance in directions which she has warned her followers to avoid, and to stand firm on the old ways—these will weaken work and deaden men's confidence in the workers. There is no unhallowed narrowness in our mother's counsels. There is no hazy uncertainty about her meaning in the documents she has put into the people's hands. In no section of the universal Church is legitimate freedom more conspicuous than with us; but in this age of controversy and change we are bound to be faithful, not to some mere opinion of our own, not to the cry of a party or the challenge of some leader among men, but to the natural, obvious, honest interpretation which our historical Church has given of the terms and conditions under which we hold membership or ministry in the Church of England section of the universal Church of Christ. Mind, conscience, heart, testimony must be in harmony with the written Word of God and the living Church of God, as both are faithfully explained and represented in the National Church to which it is our privilege to belong. If movement is needful, in the direction of new modes of thinking or acting, we must move as a body, with authority in front of us, as God by His grace and truth may lead us on. But unauthorized novelties, in whatever way they may take their course, are dangerous at all times, and full of danger now. We have to tell poor sinners how salvation is to be found; and it is a wise thing to put the simple truth first and foremost, leaving the disputed matters

to wait for their settlement after the salvation work has been advanced beyond the point at which souls come short of the glory of God. The business of us all, the business of the whole Church, in this age of ungodliness and ignorance of things divine, must be more and more of an evangelistic and missionary type. It is a time of ingathering into the Church of Christ, and the process of arrangement may be left for more peaceful days. And one great resolve should fill all men's souls, that they are to be out upon the mountains, seeking for the wanderers, bringing the wounded ones home into the fold.

And this leads to the last particular, viz., *there must be sympathy with others engaged in the same service.*

The great work of the Gospel runs through the ages, over the world, and unto all the races and generations of mankind. And narrowness, littleness, selfishness, accord but little with the genius and the scope of the work which Christians have in hand. In one age there may be differences among brethren, and difficulties or discouragements which seem to stop or shake their action. But sympathy puts a man in contact with all the ages. He distinguishes between the set of the stream and the seemingly contrary ripples upon its surface. The ebbing tide reminds him of the full flood which will come back to say that the sea is not going back from its victories. The Church of God is like one of our own grand old cathedrals, one building marked by the varied labours of many heads and hands. Individual Christians are grouped round their particular centres; but the grand fact is to be kept in mind that all the centres and their circles are parts of one system, of which the pivot is the Lord Jesus Christ. If we only think about congregational and parochial interests, and if the outer world sees that we are caring most about our own organizations and personal credit or influence, they will see that our work has a stunted appearance and a suspiciously selfish look. And so whatever binds us together in an outspoken manliness, both concerning truth and error, and with an honest tenderness for our Master's honour more than our individual credit—that should be constantly, conscientiously kept in mind. Sympathy with other minds, so that we may find out what they really think and mean—sympathy with other situations, so that we may take in the circumstances and surroundings which lead to decisions which we might never have taken—sympathy with motives which may be as pure as our own—such things are of primary importance, when men look one another in the face.

But if men will assume that all are dishonest who differ from themselves, that every system must be unreasonable

which they have not adopted, peace must depart and charity will be trodden under men's feet. And while the brethren bite and devour one another, the world looks coldly on, and men will say, "When Christians have settled their quarrels, and not before, we will proceed to a consideration of the claims of Christ." Let us all pray, and strive, and unite, so that every Christian man, ordained or unordained, may have more things in common—sympathy with the Saviour whose servants they all are—sympathy with souls, for which they can all care—sympathy with the Gospel, into which they are all bound to look—and sympathy in work, which is the honour, the privilege, the happiness of being employed, under grace, in leading other beings to God and glory everlasting. This vast South London of ours contains every element to keep us busy—size of population, sorrows, sins, enemies to all that is holy and true and good; and we, with our limited powers and shortening lifetime, must not turn our hands against the brethren, but lifting them up to our Father, and stretching them out to our poor perishing fellow-creatures all around, let us bear in mind that we never more truly represent our Master and His Gospel, than when we are working for peace, labouring out of love, turning the soft look and tone and temper to win one another's confidences, and calling out their sympathy by showing how much we feel.

JOHN RICHARDSON.



ART. III.—EMIGRATION AND THE POORER CLASSES.

1. *The Expansion of England.* Professor SEELEY. Macmillan and Co.
2. *Colonists' Handbooks.* Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
3. *State Emigration; a reply to Lord Derby.* MR. ALFRED SIMMONS, 84, Palace Chambers, S.W.
4. *Why Sit we here till we Die?* The Report of East End Emigration Fund.
5. London Colonization Aid Society.
6. *Justice: the Organ of the Social Democracy.*

"**H**ISTORY," says Professor Seeley, in his interesting and fascinating lectures—"history should pursue a practical object. That is, it should not merely gratify the reader's curiosity about the past, but modify his views of the present, and his forecast of the future. The interest of English history ought therefore to deepen steadily to the close, and, since the future grows out of the past, the history of the past of England ought to give rise to a prophecy concerning her future . . . The English State, then, in what direction, and towards what goal,