

PRINCIPLES FOR CHURCHMEN

A MANUAL OF POSITIVE STATEMENTS
ON SOME SUBJECTS OF CONTROVERSY

WITH AN

*EXPLANATORY INTRODUCTION ON THE PRESSING DANGERS
WHICH BESET THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*

BY THE RIGHT REV.

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"LIGHT FROM OLD TIMES" ETC.

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CONTAINING THE BISHOP'S FAREWELL LETTER TO THE DIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

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XVI.

CAN THE CHURCH REACH THE MASSES?

It is a great fact which, I fear, admits of no dispute, that the working classes of England, as a body, are “conspicuously absent” from the public worship of God on Sundays. Census after census in our large towns has lately brought this painful fact before the public mind. My own eyes continually see proofs of it, when I preach in some quarters of Liverpool. I often see things which make my heart bleed. After making every allowance for defective, unfair, and unfriendly enumerations, there remains a mass of evidence which cannot be gainsaid. A vast number of English working men never go either to Church or Chapel, and, to all appearance, live and die “without God.”

This state of things, we must all feel, is eminently unsatisfactory, and deserves the best attention of all loyal Churchmen. But it is much more than unsatisfactory. It endangers the very existence of the Established Church of England. We cannot expect to prosper and hold our position without “the masses.” The Church, whose adherents are a minority in the land, will not be long allowed to retain her endowments and her connection with the State in this age; and without the working classes our Church is in a minority at any Parliamentary age election. A regiment consisting only of officers and band, without rank and file, adds nothing to the strength of an army. A Church which can only number the rich among its members, and is deserted by the poor, is in a most unhealthy condition, and not like a servant of her Divine Master, whom “the common people heard gladly” (Mark xii. 37). I repeat that we are in front of a dangerous and unsatisfactory state of things. It is high time to search our ways, and try to “set our house in order,” if we would not die, but live.

The subject is wide, and I can do little more than touch the fringe of it. I shall simply try to clear away three common delusions, and to point out four remedial things which, in my opinion, are much wanted in this day, and, by God’s blessing, might improve our position. As Napoleon said at Marengo, “It is not too late to win the battle.”

(a) For one thing, then, I do not believe that the absence of working men from public worship arises from *the spread of systematic infidelity* among them. I know that this is an opinion held by many; but I take leave to call it a delusion. My own impression is decided, that even among the rudest and roughest ranks of English society, there is often a deep-seated vein of sturdy faith in a God and a world to come. No doubt there is a large quantity of most offensive infidel literature, of a common nature, which is exclusively circulated among the poorer classes, and is far too coarsely fla-

voured to suit the taste of the upper ten thousand. But of real reasoning and argumentative scepticism, there is just as much (and perhaps more) among the rich as among the poor. It does not strike us, probably, for the simple reason that the poor are many, and the rich are few. But at this very moment, I shrewdly suspect there are more agnostics and sceptics, in proportion to the population, in the West End of London than in the East! Nor is this all. The Tower Hamlets unbeliever is often a more honest man than his rich brother in Belgravia. Erring as he is, he has the courage of his opinions, and never goes to Church at all! The rich sceptic, on the contrary, will often attend religious services for respectability's sake, or by way of example to his servants, while in reality he despises the whole thing in his heart.

(b) For another thing, it is a complete delusion, in my opinion, to suppose that the working classes in England have any *inherent dislike to the Established Church*, and, if left to themselves, prefer the Dissenting Chapel. I believe nothing of the kind. I grant that our poorer brethren are very apt to judge the Church by the parson, and if he is not a satisfactory *persona ecclesiæ*, to take a dislike to the body which he represents. If, for instance, he is a thoroughly worldly man, “a Nimrod, a ramrod, or a fishing-rod,” who neither does his duty as a preacher or a pastor,—or, if he is one who, in his zeal for ceremonial, does things which they think are Romanism,—it is very likely they will forsake the Church, and stay at home, or go to Chapel. But whenever the Church is properly represented, both in the pulpit and the parish, I maintain that, as a general rule, the working men will stick to her, and prefer her ministrations to any other. They like her Prayer-book, her orders, and her general system, and will stand by her to the last.

(c) Once more, but not least, I regard it as a rank delusion to imagine that *Christianity is an effete and worn-out system*, that the old gospel has lost its power, and that the nineteenth century requires a new religion. This is a sadly common idea in certain quarters. Men of intellect, as they are called, sneer contemptuously at such grand old verities as the atonement of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the reality of miracles, the need of the grace of the Holy Spirit, the personality of Satan, the judgment to come. They coolly tell us that these things will never move the working classes in this day, and that they will not come to Church unless we give them a broader, more rational theology, stripped of everything supernatural. I do not admit this for a moment. It is empty talk and baseless assertion. I fail to see the slightest evidence that the old religion, which “turned the world upside down” eighteen centuries ago, has lost any of its power. I can discover no new system of teaching which regenerates heathen tribes, relieves burdened consciences, binds up broken hearts, checks sin, changes characters, deprives death of its terrors, compared to the old-fashioned gospel of

Christ. If there is such a new system, let men show it to us, and show us its fruits. The working classes, I am convinced, are not to be won to public worship by modern wind-bags and fireworks, but by the old story of the Cross.

But, after all, what *positive* suggestions can be made in order to meet the evil which we deplore? What is it that is wanting in the present day, which would be likely to draw the working classes into our Churches, if we could supply it? I will briefly name four things which, in my judgment, are secrets of strength, and commend them to the consideration of my readers.

I. My first suggestion is this. If we want to get at the working classes, the Church must have a *great increase of living agents* in the large overgrown parishes, where working men chiefly reside.

No man, however zealous, can do more than a certain amount of work. To suppose that the incumbent of a parish of 10,000 people in a mining, manufacturing, or seaport district, can keep pace with, or overtake the spiritual wants of his parishioners, so long as he is single-handed and alone, is simply absurd. The thing is physically impossible. When he has every week read the services and preached sermons, married, baptized, and buried according to requirement, visited a few sick, and superintended his schools, his week will be gone. There will be hundreds of houses which he has no time to enter, and even thousands of men and women whom he does not know, and who hardly know his name. Can any one wonder if the isolated incumbent of such a parish often breaks down in health and heart, and resigns or dies? Have we any right to be surprised if the working classes in such a parish live without religion, and are a prey to drunkenness, gambling, extravagance, improvidence, Sabbath-breaking, unchastity, and general immorality? What else can be expected from human nature, if half-educated men and women are never visited, and are left to themselves? What right have we to be surprised and indignant if many of them join some Nonconformist body, or go over to the Church of Rome? Why should they care for a Church which does not seem to care for them? To frown on seceders in such a case as schismatics is senseless and foolish. If the Church of England really wants to get hold of, and keep hold of, the working classes in such a district as I have described, she must send more living agents among them. If she does not begin here, she will certainly lose them, and in many cases has lost them already. If she does not go down to the people, the people will not come up to her.

When I speak of living agents, I mean missionary curates, Scripture-readers, lay agents, Bible-women, and voluntary lay helpers. To begin spiritual operations by building churches in huge, overgrown, neglected parishes of working-folks, is useless waste of money and time. It is beginning at

the wrong end. You may build the churches, as certain well-meaning men did in Bethnal Green, forty-five years ago, and find them, by and by, as empty as barns in July. The right course is to walk in the steps of the apostles, and begin with living agency. There was a grand heathen temple of Diana when St. Paul was at Ephesus, but I do not find that this great servant of Christ reared a church or a cathedral. He lived and died a tent-maker! Our first step should be to send living agents from street to street, and lane to lane, and alley to alley, and house to house, and room to room, and garret to garret, and cellar to cellar, until there is not a working man or woman in the parish who has not been looked in the face, or shaken by the hand, and until not one can say, "The Church of England does not care for my soul."

Only let us distinctly understand that the agents we send forth must be men and women of the right sort, whose chief weapon is the written word of God, the Bible. The missionary curate must not be a man who stands on his dignity as an ordained minister, and never feels at ease unless he has a Prayer-book in his hand and a surplice on his back. He must walk in the steps of the apostles. He must be content with the first elements of the gospel on his lips, and the simplest possible kind of religious services, held anywhere and in any place when he can get together a few, in a barn, a cellar, a garret, a warehouse, or even in the open air. The lay agent must be eminently a man of love and patience, not discouraged by opposition and coldness, but always the same, however he is treated, and always full of Christ, the Bible, and readiness to do good.

Lastly, but above all, it must never be forgotten that no living agent, whether clerical or lay, will ever be of use unless he knows something of saving religion by his own heart's experience. Unless he has some real experimental knowledge of the sinfulness of sin, the excellence of Christ's Gospel, and its suitableness to the wants of man's soul, the beauty of holiness, the value of the Bible and prayer, the unspeakable importance of Sabbath-keeping, temperance, and chastity, he will do the Church of England very little service. The working classes have a keen sense of *reality*. They have an instinctive horror of formalism, ceremonialism, priestcraft, hypocrisy, and false profession. They hate all this with a perfect hatred. But if a living agent comes among them who is a real, thorough Christian, and full of zeal and love to souls, he will generally see "signs and wonders" following his work. Even those who will not take his advice will respect him, and allow no one to do him harm.

So much for my first suggestion. If the Church of England wants to reach the working classes, her first and wisest course is to multiply her living agents. If her wealthy children among the laity will not come forward and enable her to do this, she will be ruined.

II. My second suggestion is this. The Church ought to provide facilities for *an organized system of aggressive evangelization* in her large parishes.

This subject is a very delicate and difficult one, and I approach it with some diffidence. But the extremely critical position of our beloved Church in many of our large parishes makes plain speaking a positive duty. When a ship is among breakers, it is no time to stand on ceremony. Let me therefore explain fully what I mean.

The parochial system of our Church—the system by which every incumbent has a territorial district assigned to him, and represents the Church of England within it— is an admirable system, when properly worked. I know no system so likely to do good, so wisely conceived, and so eminently calculated to promote the salvation of souls. It marks out definite work for every clergyman, and prevents him becoming the minister of a few picked, petted, and partial adherents. It secures spiritual oversight for every family in our population, so that no one can ever say, “There is no one to care for my soul.” I do not hesitate to say that an English parish rightly worked, with right preaching in the pulpit, right education in the schools, right visiting from house to house, and right machinery for assisting the sick and poor, is one of the pleasantest and most refreshing sights in this evil world. Granted a faithful administration, and I know nothing so good as the parochial system of the Church of England.

But just in proportion to the good which the parochial system does when it is properly worked, is the harm which it does when it is worked badly, or not worked at all. The old saying is true, “The worst thing is the corruption of a good thing.” Grant for a moment that the clergyman of some huge overgrown parish is aged, worn out, or thoroughly out of health,—or grant that he is poor and obliged to take pupils or write for his livelihood, and so unable to give his whole time to his parochial work,—or grant that he is oppressed and bowed down with private family troubles,—or grant that he is unfit, from his turn of mind, for the charge of a large town population,—or grant, what is worst of all, but unhappily quite possible, that he is unsound in doctrine and does not preach the gospel, or worldly in life and cares nothing for spiritual things,—grant any of these things, and the parochial system becomes a most damaging institution, a curse and not a blessing, a hindrance and not a help, a nuisance and not a benefit, a weakness and not a strength to the Established Church of this realm.

Now, it is nonsense to deny that there are some large parishes in almost every diocese in England where the parochial clergyman, from one cause or another, does little or nothing. The parishioners are not visited, and are like sheep without a shepherd. The bulk of the people never come near the church at all. Sin, and immorality, and ignorance, and infidelity increase and multiply every year. The few who worship anywhere take refuge in the

chapels of Methodists, Baptists, and Independents, if not in more questionable places of worship. The parish church is comparatively deserted. People in such parishes live and die with an abiding impression that the Church of England is a rotten, useless institution, and bequeath to their families a legacy of prejudice against the Church, which lasts long if not for ever. Will any one pretend to tell me that there are not many large English parishes in this condition? I defy him to do so. I am writing down things that are only too true, and it is vain to pretend to conceal them.

But what does the Church of England do for such parishes as these? I answer, *Nothing, nothing at all!* It is precisely here that our territorial system fails and breaks down altogether. So long as the parochial minister does his duty up to the bare letter of legal requirement, it is a ruled point, both in theory and in practice, and a matter of ecclesiastical etiquette, that nobody must interfere with him! His people may be perishing for lack of knowledge! Infidels, Mormonites, and Papists may be going to and fro, and beguiling unstable souls! Dissenters of all sorts may be building chapels, and filling them with the families of aggrieved and neglected Churchmen! The children of the Church may be drawn away from her every year by scores! But no matter! The Church cannot interfere! The Church of England looks on with folded arms, and does nothing at all. Can any one imagine a more ruinous system? Can any one wonder that some irritated and disgusted Churchmen become confirmed Dissenters, and that others despise or loathe the Church which allows such a state of things to go on, and that thousands relapse into a state of semi-heathenism? Can any one feel surprised if the inhabitants of such parishes complain bitterly that they are left without remedy until their parson is either converted or dead?

I write strongly because I feel warmly. I do not believe there are five Bishops on the bench who would not admit they have large parishes in their dioceses which are in a most unsatisfactory state, and yet under our present ministerial system they cannot be improved by the Church of England. No! If the incumbent likes to shut his door against improvement, and entrench himself behind a perfunctory discharge of his duties, the Bishop can only sit still, and wait, and hope, and pray! And while this goes on for twenty or thirty years, the Church suffers, Churchmen are driven into Dissent, the world mocks, the infidel sneers, the devil triumphs, and souls are ruined. In short, a neglected parish is at present a keyless Bramah lock, and cannot be picked. Like the Englishman's house, it is the incumbent's castle, and nobody can enter it to do good, except a Dissenter! It was a common joke of O'Connell's, that a certain Irish town had over its gates the inscription, "Jew, Turk, and Atheist may enter here, but not a Papist." I fear that the case of a neglected English parish is somewhat parallel. You may write over its boundaries, "Infidels, Papists, and Dissenters may enter here and do

what they like, but not a Churchman.” If this is not a weak point, a flaw, and a blot in our ecclesiastical system, I know not what is. It is an abuse that cries to heaven against the Church of England, and it ought to be redressed. Here, if anywhere, there is need of reform.

The suggestion I have to make is this. Let the Bishop of every diocese be empowered to call into existence a new class of ministers, to be named “Evangelists.” Let him be empowered, with the advice of a select Council of presbyters and leading laymen, to arrange with any incumbent of a large overgrown parish to separate from such parish a district of 3000 or 4000 people, and place them under the charge of an evangelist, to work in any way that he can. Let the evangelist be licensed to the Bishop, and responsible to him and his Council only, they undertaking to superintend and maintain him. Let the incumbent of the mother Church be set free from any responsibility whatever for the separated district. Let the main object of these evangelists be to proclaim Christ’s Gospel in its simplest form, to arouse the careless, to arrest the attention of the indifferent, to inform the ignorant, to gather together the scattered believers, and to show them how to keep their souls in the right way. Let them, in short, use the same weapons that were used a century ago, with such mighty power, by Grimshaw and Berridge. But, unlike these noble-minded men, let them be sanctioned, authorized, commissioned, and encouraged by those in authority, and not snubbed, threatened, frowned upon, and rebuked. Above all, let them proclaim, as Berridge and Grimshaw used to do everywhere, that they come as members and friends of the Established Church of England, and desire to strengthen and assist her cause.

Now, I am well aware that the suggestion I now make is open to a host of objections, and could only be carried into effect with great difficulty. But I have yet to learn that the objections are insuperable. As to difficulty, there never was any good thing done in this world without it. The great enemy of souls never allows his kingdom to be invaded without a struggle. One thing, at any rate, is very certain. The plan I suggest has been tried in the dioceses of London and Rochester with great success, and with much benefit to the Church of England. This is a simple fact. It is an old saying that an ounce of fact is worth a pound of theory.

(a) Some men will tell me that the plan I suggest is not Scriptural. I am not so sure of that. I find a text in which an inspired apostle says, “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, *evangelists*; and some, pastors and teachers” (Eph. iv. 11). Moreover, if we talk of Scriptural authority, I think we might be puzzled to find any direct express authority for parishes, dioceses, and rural deaneries, or for rectors, vicars, archdeacons, and rural deans. At any rate, there is nothing contrary to Scripture in the idea of “an evangelist.” Nay, rather it might easily be shown that the first preachers

we read of in the Acts were much more like itinerant Evangelists than settled parochial clergymen!

(b) Some men, again, will tell me that the plan I suggest is entirely new. This, again, admits of considerable doubt. I find in the early Church, according to Dr. Burton, "there appear to have been, in addition to presbyters and deacons, who may be called resident ministers, preachers of the gospel who were not attached to any particular Church, but who travelled about from place to place discharging their spiritual duties. These men were called in a special manner Evangelists." (See Riddle's "Christian Antiquities.") I find in the reign of Edward VI. that our own Reformers appointed certain preachers, among whom were Bradford, Knox, and Grindal, who had a general commission and went everywhere in England preaching the Word. In short, the charge of novelty cannot be supported.

(c) But some man will object that the scheme I propose would break up the parochial system, and greatly damage the Church of England. I do not believe it a bit. I believe, on the contrary, to begin with, that it would do immense good among the laity. It would rally them round the Church of England, and show them that they were not entirely forgotten. It would keep them within the pale of the Church, and preserve them from being carried off by Dissenters and Plymouth Brethren. But I go a step further. I believe it would do good eventually among the parochial clergy. They would see at last that the diocesan evangelist did not come into their parishes as an enemy, but as a friend. They would gradually learn to value his aid, and might even be provoked to emulation by hearing and seeing what he did.

The truth must be spoken on this matter, however offensive it may be to some. The Church of England *has made an idol of her parochial system*, and has forgotten that it has weak points as well as strong ones, defects as well as advantages. To hear some men talk, you might fancy the parochial system came down from heaven, like the pattern of the Mosaic tabernacle, and that to attempt any other sort of ministry but a parochial one was a heresy and a sin. It is high time that we should change our tone, and humbly acknowledge our mistake. It is useless to ignore the fact that neglected or unworked parishes weaken the Church of England, and that they cannot be safely let alone, however difficult the application of the remedy may be. We must face this difficulty if we want to win back the affections of myriads of our fellow-countrymen. We must break the bonds which black tape has too long placed on us, and cast them aside. Parishes must no longer be regarded as ecclesiastical preserves, within which no Churchman can fire a spiritual shot, or do anything without the licence of the incumbent. This notion ought to go down before a new order of things, sanctioned and directed by the Bishop and his Council. Of all possible reforms, there are few

that I desire, more heartily to see than the institution of an order of diocesan “Evangelists.”

The subject is one which requires great plainness of speech. In true love to the Church of England I will give place to no man. I daily pray for her peace and labour for her prosperity. But I dare not shut my eyes to the fact that my Church is sadly wanting in elasticity and power of adapting herself to circumstances. Its organization is stiff and rigid, like a bar of cast-iron, when it ought to be supple and bending like whalebone. Hence its machinery is continually cracking, snapping, and breaking down. Churchmen talk and act as if a system which did pretty well for five millions of Englishmen 250 years ago, when there were very few Dissenters, must needs be perfectly suited to the thirty millions of today! Like some fossilized country squire, who lives twenty miles from a railway, and never visits London, the poor dear old Church of England must still travel in the old family coach, shoot with the old flint-locked single-barrel gun, and wear the old jack-boots and long pigtail. And all this time Dissent is netting the Church’s children by scores, and laughing in her sleeve at the old gentleman’s folly. Surely it is high time to awake out of sleep and attempt some reform of our parochial system!

I leave this suggestion here. If I have said enough to set some minds thinking, I shall be abundantly satisfied. I have learned by sorrowful experience that the plan I propose is not acceptable in some quarters. An excessive tenderness for the supposed rights of incumbents makes people shrink from the very idea of interfering with their parishes, however unsatisfactory their condition may be. But nothing will alter my opinion, that unless such a system of aggressive evangelization as I propose is adopted, the working classes in many districts will never be brought into the Church of England, and will live and die outside.*

* The following passage appears in a leading article of the *Times* newspaper of February 14th, 1883. It supplies such a remarkable confirmation of some of the opinions expressed in this part of my paper that I make no apology for inserting it:—

“The Church sees thousands of her children committed for no one knows how long to the spiritual care of some one who has long ceased to care for souls, if, indeed, he ever did. Such a man may have his merits, and may have run up in a long course of years some score of good service. By every rule of public affairs, not only ought he to have the liberty to retire—he ought to be encouraged, nay, compelled, to retire. The first rule of public service is that it be done, and that it be done as well as possible. Having, then, due regard to the great end for which Churches are founded and maintained, it is straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel to make scruples about ‘simony,’ as it is called, and leave large congregations in incapable and indifferent, if not unwilling, hands.

“There is no Church, there is no Government, there is no institution in the world, that so little adapts its means to its ends, its resources to work, its men to its positions, as the Church of England. The fact is proved, the want supplied, and the evil mitigated by the surrounding atmosphere of Nonconformity, everywhere pressing in to fill the void. Always

III. My third suggestion is this. We want a great deal more *direct lively preaching of the gospel* in all our pulpits, whether in the full liturgical service of the Church or the simpler elementary service of the mission room.

In saying this I would not be mistaken. I ask men to remark that I lay stress most emphatically on the words “direct” and “lively.” That the distinctive doctrines of the gospel are far more frequently found in the sermons of this day than they were in the sermons of last century I have no doubt whatever. The wretched moral essays which our forefathers often heard, and which brought out the bitter remark that the clergy were only “apes of Epictetus,” are no longer tolerated, and, I trust, will never return. But still, I must express a suspicion that the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel are often placed before the working classes in such an unattractive way that they will not listen, and will rather stay at home.

It is vain to deny that when Christ’s gospel has been preached by such men as Whitfield, and Wesley, and Venn, and Grimshaw, in days past,—or by Spurgeon, or Guthrie, or Moody, or Aitken, in our own age,—there was, and is, little difficulty in getting working men to hear them. Where is the defect, then? What is it that is wanting? I fear there is only one simple answer:—Our clergymen, as a body, do not pay sufficient attention to the *way of putting things*. They forget that it is not enough to have good tools, if

and everywhere there are to be found those who will reap a harvest of souls wherever it may offer itself. The kingdom of grace has a spontaneous development, which ever supplies the shortcomings of human government and administration. No Bishop, however exalted, no theologian, however narrow or however Quixotic, can deny, even upon his own theories, a Divine origin and order to the self-denying zeal of the men who do their best, by the simplest means at hand, to raise the surrounding tone of morality and religion, to rebuke vice, and to encourage the virtues that all alike recognise, even if they practise them not. The good work to be done is as plain and as universal as the sun in the heavens. The school and the field of true faith is all the world, and knows no demarcations or prohibitions. An artificial and cumbersome establishment, standing upon gone-by ages, and inheriting innumerable anomalies, hindrances, and scandals, may be too sacred a thing to be rudely handled. But it cannot cover the ground or reap the harvest. Part—indeed, the greater part—must be left to those who, if less privileged, are less trammelled, and who have the power not of authority, but of freedom. In such a case there must be some jarring, some antagonism. How shall it be cured? How shall the Established Church acquire for itself that full liberty of action which it continually sees employed against itself? It must condescend to gather all the lessons it can from the organization and tactics of those whom it only too naturally regards as its rivals, if not foes? How do they get possession of the ground? How do they advance everywhere and hold the ground they win? They do it by the use of common sense. That is what the Church of England will have to submit to. The ministry—that is, the entire system of employment in the service of the Church of England—will have to be adapted to the work everywhere to be done, unless the Church is to find itself one day the shadow of a great name.”

they do not handle those tools in the right way. Will any one tell me that Whitfield, last century, or Moody, in our own time, would ever have assembled myriads of working men, by their preaching, if they had only read to them, in a kind of monotone voice, dry, heavy, stiff, dull, cold, tame, orthodox theological essays, couched in the first person plural number, full of “we” and “we” and “we,” and destitute of warmth, vivacity, direct appeal, or fire? I will never believe it. But surely, if their style of address arrests and attracts the working classes, it seems a thousand pities that it is not more generally adopted. It is perfectly amazing to me that at this late period of the world men should need to be told, what Greeks and Romans knew well, that it is not the speaker’s thoughts only which arrest the attention of hearers, but the style and manner in which those thoughts are conveyed.

I hear people complain, sometimes, that “Mission Services” produce no lasting effect; and too often the complaint is just and well-founded. Yet the explanation, in many cases, is simple and easy. A mission preacher is invited to come into a parish, and when he comes he addresses the people with “thoughts that breathe and words that burn.” He brings, very probably, no new doctrine. He tells them nothing that they have not heard before. But he tells his story with such vivacity, and fire, and personal application, that he rouses the whole parish, and makes all classes want to hear him. The church is filled. The incumbent is delighted. The old clerk and sexton keep awake. The empty benches are all occupied. The whole place seems stirred. And then what happens, far, far too often? The mission preacher goes away, and the fire cools down. The innocent, well-meaning incumbent returns to his old style of preaching and gets into his old groove, and in two months undoes the missionary’s work, and empties the church again! And all this is because he will not see that fiery liveliness and directness of style are one grand secret of pulpit success. “Be awake yourself, if you want to keep your people awake,” is an excellent pulpit maxim. For my part, I heartily wish that clergymen who invite missionaries to address their people would remember, that if they would keep up the missionary’s work, they must preach in his style. I suspect it would be a great gain to the Establishment if a huge bonfire were made, and myriads of dull, essay-style sermons were dragged out of parsonage studies, thrown into the bonfire, and burned!

After all, it is vain to shut our eyes to the fact that there is great room for improvement in the preaching of the Church of England. At present it is certainly below the mark. Neither in matter, nor in style, nor in delivery, does our pulpit come up to the requirements of the day. There never was a time since the beginning of the world when powerful speaking of any kind had more influence than it has now. There never was a time when it was so important for the clergy to speak for Christ with eloquence, life, plainness, and power. But, alas, how sadly rare this kind of preaching is! How far a

man may travel before he hears a really striking sermon! How few clergymen command the attention of their congregations! How many forget that “the foolishness of preaching” is not foolish preaching! These things ought not so to be.

One reason, no doubt, is the utter want of training for the pulpit which the Church of England provides for her young ministers. Few men, I believe, ever go into orders with any clear idea of what a sermon ought to be, or how they ought to set about making one. Their sermons for the first few years of their ministry are nothing better than experiments, and they often end with giving up in despair, and regularly preaching the compositions of other men. “Alas! master, it was borrowed,” would be the true comment on many a clergyman’s sermon. This is an evil which might partly be remedied by the Universities providing instruction in sacred rhetoric, and partly by the Bishops laying more stress on the composition of a sermon in their examinations for orders. But it is a matter in which something ought to be done. There is real need for reform.

The main reason why the pulpit of the Church of England is so weak is, I fear, a much more serious one. A stupid notion has lately possessed many clerical minds, that preaching is no longer of importance,—that education and the increase of reading make men think little of sermons,—that the prayers of the Church are the principal thing, and the sermon is of little moment,—that our main effort should be to improve the ceremonial of the Church, and that we need not think much about the pulpit! A greater mass of delusion than all this line of argument I cannot conceive. It may suit those who want excuses for laziness in preparing their sermons. It will never satisfy those who open their eyes and look at facts. There never was a period in the history of our Church when men were more ready to listen to really good sermons, if they can only get them, or more quick to show their dislike to bad sermons, if you will preach bad ones. Shrewd men of all schools of opinion are wide awake on this point. Wise men, whether High, or Low, or Broad, do not think lightly of sermons, or hold them in low esteem. Let us all look this matter in the face, and see if we cannot improve. Let us strive to reform our preaching.

I cannot, however, leave this part of my subject without adding the expression of my own firm conviction, that there is *far less preaching of the whole Gospel* than there ought to be. When I say that, I mean that there is not enough made of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and His office and work for our souls. We are all apt to forget that it is quite possible to make an orthodox statement of doctrine, and yet not to *present Christ* to our hearers in the manner and proportion in which He is presented to us in the New Testament. I am struck with the undeniable fact that all preachers who succeed in getting hold of the working classes—whether Whitfield, or

Moody, or any other—give a very marked prominence in their sermons to the atoning death, the ever-living intercession, the boundless mercy, the almighty power to save, of that blessed Person in whose name Christian worshippers meet together. You have only to read reports of their preaching in order to see proof of what I say. And I will not hesitate to declare my firm belief, that if we would get hold of the working classes, we must make “Christ crucified and risen again” the sun and centre of our sermons, far more than we have done in the Church of England. It is a lever which shook the world eighteen centuries ago, and is able to shake it now. It is a great magnet which in every age, from the apostles downwards, has drawn men whom nothing else could draw. And it is a magnet, I am convinced, which has lost none of its attractive influence. I need hardly say that it would be easy to enlarge on this point, if time permitted. But I cannot leave it without quoting the words of a mighty layman, which deserve attention,—a layman of great experience and observation,—a layman who in his day has taken great interest in religious questions. The layman I mean is the late Prime Minister of England—Mr. Gladstone. He said on the 22nd March 1877: “It is the preaching of Christ our Lord which is the secret, and substance, and centre, and heart of all preaching; not merely of facts about Him, and notions about Him, but of His person, His work, His character, His simple yet unfathomable sayings,—here lies the secret” (*Times*, March 23rd, 1877.) That witness is true. Mr. Gladstone never said a truer thing in his life. The sermon full of Christ is the sermon which the Holy Spirit most usually blesses to the souls of all classes.

IV. The fourth and last suggestion, which I venture to make, in order to solve the problem discussed in this paper, is one which I hold to be of vast importance.

I say, then, that if we want to bring the working classes to church, *there needs, throughout the land, a great increase of sympathy and friendly personal dealing with them on the part of the clergy.*

I confess that I have immense faith in the power of sympathy and kindness. I believe the late Judge Talfourd hit the nail right on the head when he said, in almost his last Charge to a Grand Jury, at Stafford Assizes: “Gentlemen, the great want of the age is more sympathy between classes.” I entirely agree with him. I think an increase of sympathy and fellow-feeling between high and low, rich and poor, employer and employed, parson and people, is one healing medicine which the age demands. Sympathy, exhibited in its perfection, was one secondary cause of the acceptance which Christ’s Gospel met with on its first appearance in the heathen world. Well says Lord Macaulay: “It was before Deity taking a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weep-

ing over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the fasces of the lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust." And sympathy, I firmly believe, can do as much in the present century as it did in the first. If anything will melt down the cold isolation of classes in these latter days, and make our social body consist of solid cubes compacted together, instead of spheres only touching each other at one point, it will be a large growth of Christlike sympathy.

Now I assert confidently that the English working man is peculiarly open to sympathy, and the clergyman has peculiar opportunities of showing it. The working man may live in a poor dwelling; and after toiling all day in a coal-pit, or cotton-mill, or iron-foundry, or dock, or chemical works, he may often look very rough and dirty. But after all he is flesh and blood like ourselves. Beneath his outward roughness he has a heart and a conscience, a keen sense of justice, and a jealous recollection of his rights, as a man and a Briton. He does not want to be patronized and flattered, any more than to be trampled on, scolded, or neglected; but he does like to be dealt with as a brother, in a friendly, kind, and sympathizing way. He will not be driven; he will do nothing for a cold, hard man, however clever he may be. But give him a clergyman who really understands that it is the heart and not the coat which makes the man, and that the guinea's worth is in the gold, and not in the stamp upon it. Give him a clergyman who will not only preach Christ in the pulpit, but come and sit down in his house, and take him by the hand in a Christ-like, familiar way during the week. Give him a clergyman who realizes that in Christ's holy religion there is no respect of persons, that rich and poor are "made of one blood," and need one and the same atoning blood, and that there is only one Saviour, and one Fountain for sin, and one heaven, both for employers and employed. Give him a clergyman who can weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice, and feel a tender interest in the cares, and troubles, and births, and marriages, and deaths of the humblest dweller in his parish. Give the working man, I say, a clergyman of that kind, and, as a general rule, the working man will come to his Church. Such a clergyman will not preach to empty benches.

I invite the special attention of my clerical brethren to this point. We live in days when public work of all kinds seems every year to absorb more of a clergyman's time. Committees, Bible classes, semi-secular lectures, meetings, frequent services and Communion, are rapidly increasing so much that they seem to leave ministers no time for old-fashioned house-to-house work, family work, and winning the confidence of individual souls. I warn them to be on their guard. A house-going minister is one secret of a church-going people. All the public work in the world, however good, will

not compensate for the loss of opportunities for cultivating relations of sympathy between yourselves and your people. Make time for going among them, sitting down with them, holding friendly converse with them, talking face to face, and in the long run you will find no time so well bestowed.

I am not speaking theoretically only. I have seen proof upon proof that I have warrant for what I say, both in colliery districts and in towns. I will give one, and so conclude my paper.

I know at this moment a parish of 5000 people in Liverpool with not a rich man in it, but only small shopkeepers, artisans, and poor. There are only thirty families in it which keep a servant, and not one family which keeps two. There are 195 houses with more than one family in each. There are 133 families living in cellars. Many of these cellars are within a few yards from the church, and under its shadow. In short, that this is a thoroughly poor, working class parish, I think no one can deny.

Now, what does the Church of England do in this parish? Listen reader, and I will tell you.

In a plain brick church, holding 1000, built thirteen years ago, there is a simple, hearty service, and an average attendance of 700 on Sunday morning, 300 in the afternoon, and 950 in the evening. About half the sittings are rented and half free.* In three mission rooms there is an average attendance of about 350 in the morning, and 450 in the evening.

The communicants are almost all of the working classes, and nearly half men. I myself helped once to administer the consecrated elements to 395 persons, and I saw the hands which received them, and I know by those hands that many of them were dock labourers and foundry men.

The worthy minister of this parish began his work *alone* about fourteen years ago, with four people in a cellar. After his church was built, he had only eight communicants at his first administration of the Lord's Supper. He has now 800 communicants, and is aided by two paid curates, one paid Scripture reader, one paid Bible-woman, and one paid organist. But he has besides, 82 voluntary Sunday school teachers, 120 Church workers, 18 Bible classes, with 600 adults on the register, and 1700 Sunday scholars. There are six services in church every week, and four services in mission rooms, throughout the year, besides two prayer meetings every month.

* Let me here remark that I do not believe for a moment that the working classes are to be drawn to church by an immense amount of sensuous ornament and decoration, or by the "free and open" system. The best attended working man's Church in Liverpool is not a free and open one, and I cannot hear that the congregation wish for a change. As to excessive decoration, I believe the intelligent working man regards it as childish, and does not care to see it. On both points I could say much. But opinions differ, and for peace sake I forbear.

The practical and moral results of the Church's work in this parish are patent and unmistakable. Of course some of the people remain to this day irreligious, careless, unchanged, and, like the "wayside" hearers in the parable of the sower, the wheat and the tares will grow together till the harvest. No minister can give grace, however faithfully he may preach it. But there are plain proofs in this case that labour is not in vain. It bears "fruit that remains." The congregation raises £800 a year for the cause of God. There are 1100 pledged abstainers in the district. There is not a single house of ill fame or a single known infidel in the parish.

These are facts, simple facts, which any one who visits Liverpool may, if he likes, verify for himself. The incumbent of this parish is a quiet, unpretending man, who perhaps would not gather a congregation in the Temple, Westminster Abbey, or St. Paul's, or fascinate an Oxford or Cambridge University audience. But of one thing I am certain, he is a man who tries to preach Christ in the pulpit, and to visit his people in a Christ-like, sympathizing way as a pastor, at the rate of 75 families a week, and to these two things I attribute his success.

Of course man cannot command success under any circumstances. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Nor can such results as those I have just stated be reasonably expected in huge, overgrown, long-neglected parishes of fifteen or twenty thousand people. In such districts it is no wonder if thousands are slaves of drink, or live in ignorance, worldliness, and sin, and cannot be got at. Yet even then much may be done by a right incumbent, with a good staff of curates and lay-helpers, and by steadily keeping in view territorial subdivision.

But nothing shall make me flinch from the position that, with a proper supply of clergy and lay-helpers of the right sort, and a reasonable subdivision of our large parishes, we have no reason to despair about the working classes. I will never admit that they are hopelessly sunk in ignorance and infidelity,—never, never! I will never admit that they cannot be got to church,—never, never! Give us right preaching in every pulpit, accompanied by right house-to-house visiting in every parish, and I believe the working classes will be found the best friends and members of the Church of England. She will become in deed as well as in name "the Church of the people."

I assert emphatically that by the use of right means, and with God's blessing, the Church can reach the masses.