

## ARTICLE III.

[by the Rev. Francis Patrick Mullally]

MAN'S SYMPATHY WITH MAN, AND THE MEANS  
OF GRACE.

All the ordinances of God referred to by the general expression, "the means of grace," are as well suited to the end of winning men to embrace heavenly wisdom as if they were designed to be the efficient causes in the great work of gospel persuasion. Suppose an educated gentleman, say twenty-one years old, has never before seen a Bible, and that the sacred volume is now before his eyes, and he is perusing its divine pages for the first time. He knows that the Church receives the book as the very word of God, and he cannot help forming some general idea of its style and structure and contents. How signally must most of such a reader's expectations be disappointed! The historical form, the progressive, time-consuming development, the minute, human, often revolting details of the inspired production; the local, definite, narrow direction of many of its composing units; the Jewishness of its psalms and prophecies, and of much of its narratives and laws, would broadly contradict his pre-formed impressions. Not only so; he would find the whole mode of the Bible to be the opposite of what he has looked for in a divine revelation. He would wonder to find it a book of principles rather than of statutes; a book which relies on reason more than on authority; a book not addressed to church officers, with the exception of one or two small parts, but to individuals in their private capacity; a book constantly requiring the exercise of judgment and discrimination on our part in order to be useful to us; a book not only encouraging but demanding investigation, and the full and free exercise of all the powers of the soul in reference to its claims, its doctrines, its duties, and its application; a book which on the side of its authorship is *thoroughly human*, while it claims to be absolutely divine. Yet however perplexed our supposed student may at first be by these strange discoveries, he may soon come to see in them all only a

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most beautiful, humbling, and worship-inspiring display of divine prudence and wisdom.

Among all the contradictions of an *a priori* judgment in reference to the character of a revelation from God, not the least striking is the prominence of the human element on the side of its authorship. The Psalms of David are far more truly the utterances of the sweet singer of Israel than are Moore's melodies the utterances of Erin's most musical bard. The songs of the poet may or may not vent his own convictions and sentiments. Not so the hymns of the prophet. He really saw the visions he records; he had the convictions and the feelings he inculcates; he experienced the sorrows he recounts, and basked in the hopes he communicates. In David's Psalms we have David's unique personality brought to bear upon our spirits as truly as we have the word of God. So, too, the Epistles of Paul have more of the Apostle of the Gentiles in them than the "*Letters to His Son*" of Philip Dormer Stanhope have of their titled author. In them Paul himself, in his own marked individuality, lives, and breathes, and thinks, and feels, and worships, and persuades. They are Paul's spirit, and temper, and faith, and hope, and love, and zeal, placed before us alive and palpitating and mightily working. In nearly all the sacred books their human writers appear not merely as the accredited pensmen of the Spirit, but as veritable authors. With perfect freedom and boldness they come before us in their own personality, and reason and reprove and exhort with all freedom of mind and emotion. And what is further very remarkable is that the most pious student of the Holy Scriptures is, other things being equal, the most likely to excel in his admiration of the lofty, poetic genius, the fervid overpowering energy, intellectual and logical, the deep and mighty pathos of the men chosen by God, not only to write, but also to be, his revelation; and who, because thus chosen, give, so far as they give any, a true indication of their experience and characters. How different, for instance, the relation of the "Night Thoughts," and the scorn of worldly ambition they profess, to the real life of the servile courtier who penned them, predominated as it was by an appetite for earthly

preferment too greedy to be nice in reference to the way of its gratification! How different this relation from that of the book of Ecclesiastes to the life and biography of its royal scribe! How little does the one let us into the experience of its author; how greatly the other! How different the relation of the writings of Lord Bacon to Macaulay's view of this philosopher's real character, from that of the writings of Paul to Luke's presentation of the apostle's experience and real predominating aspiration! Indeed, it is not too much to say, if only it be said reverently, that so far as the infinite disparity between the two personalities, that of Jesus Christ and that of Paul, will allow, the latter is as largely revealed in the Scriptures as the former. But let us imagine that our supposed novice reads the first verse of the twelfth chapter of Romans, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, etc." Would he not be apt to say, Why, this is the word of Paul himself! The amanuensis has the audacity to obtrude himself and to use his own influence. Not content to be the mere instrument by which the Holy Ghost reveals the bearing of the mercies of God on human duty, this apostle in his own person beseeches me. Is this a manner befitting even the private secretary of a human monarch, and how much less one expected to write under the dictation of Almighty God, and who is the instrument of revealing the will of the King of kings, the Sovereign of the universe?

The explanation of this wonderful paradox is the law underlying all saving ordinances, *that God uses the sinner's sympathy with the human as a means of lifting the sinner up into sympathy with the divine*. By the fall the life of holiness was expelled from man's heart, and enmity to God introduced into its place. But man was not by the fall thus alienated from his fellow-man. Social morality, and what we distinctively call the natural affections, survived the dire catastrophe of Eden. The fallen man is not dead to the convictions of a soul formed like his own, considered merely as the convictions of his fellow mortal, or dead to the sufferings or pathos of a being having a body and soul like his. He still believes in humanity and friendship and patriotism and philanthropy. The parental, the filial, the social,

the humane elements of his life remain, and retain great liveliness and susceptibility. Hence in God's first approach to the sinner he uses as his agent, not simply a man but, humanity—the mind and heart of a man in full exercise and demonstration and display. By this agency he appeals to the sinner's sympathy with the human, and thus moves him towards sympathy with the divine. "Ye became," says Paul, "followers of us and of the Lord." First of us, and then, by means of us, of the Lord. First sympathy with us, your fellow creatures, in our intellectual and emotional experience, and in our painful desire for your welfare, and then from this you moved onward under the gentle, unfelt, and, save by after reflection, unnoticed impulse of the Spirit, to full direct sympathy with God. This is an explanation of the human element in the Scriptures on the side of their authorship, so far as the work of conversion is concerned. As to the regenerate, it may be remarked that they, alas, often become torpid on the divine side, practically dead to the direct appeals of God, and even worse, under the power of an evil conscience, averse to hearing the divine voice; and that when they are in such a condition they need the love and zeal and painful pleadings of humanity, as what they can best be aroused and attracted by, to the exercise of holy consideration and faith. Hence the Lord sent Nathan unto David, instead of arresting the prayerless, guilty, torpid-souled king by a direct voice from the throne of heaven. But the *progress*, and even the *perfection* of Christian character do not annul the law which regulates the influence of spirit upon spirit. On the contrary, in what the Scriptures reveal to us of the worship of heaven, we have reason to believe that the law of sympathy has in the world of perfect holiness its largest influence. One who has taste to appreciate external beauty standing alone gazing upon a lovely landscape, and drinking in its loveliness, is delighted. But let him go again to admire some equally lovely scene, but not alone; let him have with him one whose taste he knows to be of the most refined, cultivated, and poetic order; let both look and admire and exchange feelings and thoughts by eyes and lips. Does he not see and feel now what he never could have perceived and felt were he alone? So it is

that “the things which are above” are better appreciated when contemplated in fellowship with those who are most exquisitely affected by them, and who are objects of our reverence, confidence, and love. We better comply with the exhortation, “Be followers of God as dear children,” for having been imitators of or sympathisers with his holy apostles and prophets. And thus it is that the epistles of Paul, for instance, are much more valuable to the most advanced Christian for having Paul himself living in them.

But not alone in the structure of revelation do we find a provision made for engaging the sinner’s sympathy with the human to aid in the great work of converting and sanctifying the sinner. The manifestation of our Saviour’s humanity, as made in Palestine, and as recorded by the Evangelists, is evidently designed to appeal to man’s sympathy with humanity, and is so applied in apostolic sermons and epistles. The humanity of our Lord was indeed necessary to a far higher end; but much in the history of its manifestation was not necessary to the atonement, so far as we can see, but was written, doubtless, for the purpose of touching and awakening man’s sympathy with the human, and of thus leading the sinner on to sympathy with the divine. Here, too, we first become followers of the man, and then are, in an inscrutable way, enabled to perceive the infinite preciousness of the divine Saviour. The practice of praying to the departed saints is unnecessary, unwarranted, and dangerous. Yet it obtains; and its existence proves, that such are the inferences which the sinful heart is apt to draw from the purity of Jesus and his separation from sinners, and such in man, the sinner, the antipathy to perfect holiness, and such the fear inspired by one so evidently and fully in communion with the Supreme Lawgiver as Jesus appears to be, that it is manifestly wise in God, as well as a merciful condescension to our weakness, to make his first approach to the sinner through one who has been involved in a common ruin with himself, and who is as really a sinner as himself. The human writers of the Scriptures are indeed no longer sinful, but it is as sinners, as men not perfectly sanctified, that they address us in the Sacred Scriptures. Moreover, whatever in the way of a powerful appeal to man’s sympathy with the human in behalf of re-

ligion the world has been deprived of by the death of inspired men, is fully made up to us by the organisation, and ordinances, and officers, and endowments, and prescribed life of the Church, and, very especially, *by her living ministry*. The saying of Christ, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil," is as applicable to the great law of social influence as it is to the moral and positive laws of revelation. It has been said that "the flutterings of an insect's wing send its vibrations to the remotest orb in the great field of space." Be this as it may, that man influences man is a law whose operation is coextensive with our race. No one is either above or beneath the modifying touch of this subtle, all-penetrating, and ever-flowing element of power. By it man multiplies his moral self-gives immortality and universality to the ideas that spring from his intellect and the principles that shape his life. The words that drop from his lips fall as pebbles into the centre of a placid lake, creating a series of undulating and ever-widening circles over the whole expanse. Thus the spirit of past generations throbs in us, and down through posterity it shall flow and be the moral life blood of the men that are to be. Whether conscious or unconscious, designed or unintended, man's influence on man is constantly operating. Through the channels of physical relationship and of universal interdependence; through the love and authority of the parent and the affection and duty of the child; through the diversity of intellectual powers, mental attainments, secular positions, and of the ages and general capabilities of men; by the voluntary language of the tongue and the pen, and the involuntary expression of the lip, the brow, the eye, the tone of voice; by all that is contradistinguished as the natural language of the sentiments, does the character of the individual pour itself out upon the world, and through the ear, the eye, the understanding, the sensibilities, the instinct of imitation, the desire of approbation, and through all that in one man corresponds to the feelings and impulses of another, and makes them contagious, does the world receive from its intelligent constituents, according to the measure of each, that powerful, assimilating, though intangible fluid, of sympathetic influence, to send it forth again in constant circulation. This

great law of sympathy Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil—that is, to make its operation a blessing instead of a curse to the race of man. Accordingly, the end for which he established his Church almost wholly resolves itself into the utilisation and direction, unto the promotion of God’s glory through the gospel, of man’s sympathy with the human, or man’s influence upon man. Who can fail to see that a recognition of this great law underlies the statement and command of the Redeemer when he says to his disciples, the representatives of his Church, “Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The Saviour assumes that men have a tendency to notice and feel all striking manifestations of human thought and emotion; and from this premise he infers that when the members of the visible Church zealously reveal and illustrate the character of their Father in heaven, their works can no more escape the notice and attention of men before whom they are done than could a city set on a hill remain unseen; and that there is a powerful tendency in such an earnest Christian life to bring men to glorify the God of the Church, and hence that it is such a means of saving sinners as the Spirit of wisdom and grace will accept and bless.

What has now been said must suffice to direct attention to the human element in all the means of grace, as beautifully manifesting divine condescension and prudence, and as being of very great importance in God’s method of converting and sanctifying sinners. But while this has been the immediate, it has not been the principal end aimed at in our discussion. The result we have reached has all the time been pursued as containing an answer to the most important practical questions that can be asked relative to the work of the Church as a propagandist of truth and a co-laborer with the Holy Ghost in seeking the salvation of men.

It is from the value attached by God himself to man’s sympathy with the human as a means of begetting in him sympathy with the divine, of bringing him to the knowledge of the truth,

that architecture and music and posture in prayer and eloquence, derive their importance in relation to the mission of Christians; and their adaptation to this end is the standard of their perfection. Our doctrine tells us that art has a place, and defines the place it has in the operations of Christianity. When either by excess or imperfection, it fails to prepare for the reception of the truth, it fails of its legitimate end; and when it hinders the perception of truth, it is a positive evil. It should, on the one hand, be suited to awaken man's sympathy with man, and, on the other, to awaken it so that it shall be a preparation for and an advance towards sympathy with the divine. The Church's appeals to sinners should have in them art enough to gain their natural emotions; but it should be such art as will gain these emotions, not as an end, but as a means—as the means best adapted to lead souls to the perception of the truth and the experience of spiritual emotions. The Church should use art as a means of saying to men, I beseech you be reconciled to God; and moved by the mercies of God through Jesus Christ, present your bodies, living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, a reasonable service.

The great means of saving sinners is the preaching of the gospel. There are in preaching as in all the means of grace two elements—the divine and the human. If you take either away, what you have left is not the divine ordinance of preaching at all. But granting that the truth of the gospel is essential to preaching as a means of salvation, the inquiry is very important, What must the preacher himself supply in order that his deliverances may be what God demands? To this inquiry attention to the human element of the Bible and on the side of its authorship gives answer that the preacher should contribute to the sermonic deliverance not only the results of a mind skilful in inward composition and the display of a refined and nice invention and the product of a rhetorical pen and well adapted action; that not all the elements of the dramatic grace of authors and actors combined, which constitute the perfection of theatrical mimicry of the real, would suffice to make one true sermon, even although they may produce a discourse full of God's truth, and



containing no error; our doctrine teaches that the preacher must, in a proper way, put into his sermon his whole humanity—all in him that is suited to awaken the affections of his auditors; that the direct immediate end of preaching is too bring men to feel with the preacher in reference to his intellectual and spiritual experience of divine things. It is for the sake of the sinner's sympathy with the human that God calls and ordains men to preach. Were that sympathy of little importance in the sight of God, we can see no reason why instead of preachers he should not have given us a great commentary on the Scriptures, to be read for themselves by, all who can read, and to be read to all others by persons appointed to that comparatively very simple and easy duty. Besides, it is only when we regard the ministry as a provision immediately directed to the enlisting of the sinner's sympathy with the human in behalf of religion that we see any compensation for the evils necessarily proceeding from the appointment of sinful men to preach the gospel. How many grievous scandals, how many cruel persecutions, how much bitter controversy, would have been kept out of the history of the Church, had God sent the inhabitants of the other world, who are free from infirmity and sin, to be our instructors in the knowledge of salvation! If, then, it is to man's sympathy with man that preaching is to be immediately addressed, it is easy to see that perfection in the art of preaching requires that the preacher bring his whole humanity to bear on his hearers in favor of divine truth. It is plain from this that in order to be a preacher at all, the man's humanity must be engrossed, occupied, pervaded, dominated by gospel realities, personages, and glories. This leads us to submit that, so far as the human element in preaching is concerned, its perfection lies in its thorough, sanctified individuality. The preacher himself must operate on his audience—*himself*, not as wrought by the force of mere fancy into a sentimental frame of pulpit fervor and piety, but himself as actually confronting eternal realities, and moved by a perception of their nature and grandeur, as different from any exercise of the fancy as seeing with our bodily eyes and hearing with our bodily ears are different from the illusions of a dream.

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“Eloquence is the emission through speech of all the soul’s virtues, energies, of thought, of sensibility, and especially of will.” Can a human soul be thus active, moved upon, engrossed in one pursuit, tax its every nerve to the uttermost, and not display marked individual traits? Not if it is true that diversity in unity is a law of creation, and that God has never made two souls any more than he has made two faces that are not distinguishable.

Let the next question be, What is the Christian’s best preparation for winning souls to Christ, whether he be a preacher or a private member of the Church? Our doctrine of sympathy plainly answers: a desire for the glory of God and the good of our fellow-men, so strong that it must express itself—yea, compel its subject to oppose his whole weight against the downward movements of the sinner, and apply his whole force to move him heavenwards. When men see that you are yourself deeply impressed by the claims of God and the preciousness of Jesus Christ, and that you sincerely long that others should be thus impressed also, the principle of sympathy will mightily tend to incline them, and, under the grace of the Holy Ghost, will actually incline them, to take your views of religion, and to feel and obey as you do. Men will judge by our lives whether our words are sincere, and truly express our feelings. Paul's entreaty was sustained by his constant conduct. Men knew that his words unveiled his heart; hence their power. Ah, it is a sad thing when a Christian’s life is such that he dare not say to his brother, “I beseech thee, serve God.” If the earnest desire of a Christian heart may be the effectual means of another’s salvation, how important is it that we should keep our religious emotions and interest always in a lively condition!

“I've known the pregnant thinkers of this time,  
 And stood by, breathless, hanging on their lips,  
 When some chromatic sequence of fine thought,  
 In learned modulation, framed itself  
 To an un conjectured harmony of truth;  
 And yet I've been more moved, more raised, I say,  
 By a simple word—a broken, easy thing  
 A three-years' infant might say after you—

A look, a sigh, a touch upon the palm,  
Which means less than I love you. \* \* \* than by all  
The full-voiced rhetoric of those master mouths.”

But, finally, our doctrine contains the answer to the tremendous question, What is the most pressing need of the perishing world in which we live? We see, in the light of Paul's entreaty, and of the human element in the Scriptures, and in all the means of grace, that what is most needed by perishing men is to have the most powerful appeal to their sympathy with the human made to them in favor of Christianity. How then is this appeal to be made? The structure of the Bible, the records of God manifested in the flesh, and the very design of the Church as taught in the Scriptures, in answer point to an embodiment, an incarnation, a living manifestation of the truth by the Church of Jesus Christ. Suppose the Church and the truth to be one, somewhat as the humanity of Jesus and the Divine Logos were one; that she manifested the truth as Jesus did the divine nature; or, if this too far transcends the power of our poor aspirations, suppose the Church to be under the influence of divine truth as Paul the apostle was, to realise her mission as he did his; suppose Zion to travail with an agony proportioned to her profession, her promises and work, what results might we not expect to behold! See what happens in a particular congregation when the members of the church feel and manifest a deep and operative interest in the salvation of souls. Every revival of religion proves the inestimable value of hearty, earnest, and vigorous appeals made by the church to the sinner's sympathy with the human in favor of religion. The sinner's sense of the reality and importance of religion is very apt to be graded according to the church's earnestness in promoting the divine glory. That old, hoary, oft-quoted aphorism, "Great is the truth, and it will prevail," should find some iconoclastic Carlyle to test its merits and show how far it should be permitted to shape our hopes. Moral truth can prevail over moral error only by meeting it in its own form. When error clothes itself only in abstract theories and fine speeches, then truth may put it down by abstract arguments and eloquent harangues. But, when error concretes not alone with the brain, the

tongue, and the folio, but with the very life of men, is ensouled and embodied in them, then, if truth is ever to prevail, it, too, must become flesh, and dwell amongst men; it must dominate all the capacities and powers of the Church. To overcome paganism, irreligion, and wrong religion and sin, truth must operate in and through the Church, as these operate in and through the world. Let the Church's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth, and then its light will so shine before men that they will see her good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

But, even as things are, how tremendous is the human appeal made to each one of us, urging us to receive and enjoy the mercies of God. There is the appeal of prophets, and apostles, and evangelists, addressing us under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; there is the appeal of the man, Christ Jesus, speaking on earth, and from heaven—an appeal of blood and agony, and of victory and glory; there is the appeal of many martyrs of the primitive Church and the Reformed Church; there is the appeal of what the Bible has wrought in reference to man's temporal interests; there is the appeal of home, of Sabbath-school, and Church; there is the appeal from the glorious Humanity, which is this day enthroned above angels and archangels, and vested with unbounded dominion. Can we remain unmoved, while thus entreated to be reconciled to God, and to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, a reasonable service!

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