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Sympathy

Earl Clement Davis

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Subject, Sympathy.

Scripture

Text. Hebrews. 13³ Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, we are associated by tradition by habits of thought, by habits of life with a way of living which is called Christianity. In all the diverse forms in which this way of life has found expression in written word and in noble life since the days when Jesus of Nazareth lived in Palestine, the real force and the real power has been in the spirit of it. Whether we read the story of Mark, who sees in Jesus the doer of great and noble

deeds, or the story of Matthew
 who presents him to us as the
 promised messiah, or of John
 who sees in him the incarnate
 origin of the logos, we find
 there the glimmer of a great
 soul, the spirit of whose life
 so inspired itself upon the
 people of Palestine, that his
 life gave a new impulse to
 the religious world. We do not
 care much whether Jesus said
 this particular thing or that particu-
 lar thing or not, but we do
 rejoice that Jesus lived his life
 with such devotion to the highest
 possibilities within himself,
 and with such love for his fellow-
 men, that they become inspired

with the spirit of his life, and by word and deed has transmitted to us the impression that he would do for them. The same spirit that was in Jesus has been trying to express itself in deed and in life all through the centuries of history, and is still working in the lives of men towards the realization of all that is good and noble.

So great has been the fruits of the spirit, - so many noble lives have been lived, so many heroic deeds have been done, so many fine souls have done great sacrifices for what is true and noble, as men have

tried to live their lives in the spirit in which Jesus lived his, that we have come to believe that to live a life in that spirit is the highest and worthiest aim of a human being. As we meet in our daily life the noble types of men and women whose lives make the world ~~us~~ ~~is~~ a better and a finer place to live in, we see in them the same spirit that the people of Palestine saw in the life of Jesus so long ago, the same spirit that is found in every noble life. When we see a person whose life seems unsatisfactory and weak, and selfish, we believe that if such a person

could only be made to understand
 the spirit of a Christian life, that
 the gloomy discouraging life
 would become rich and fruitful
 and happy. In our efforts to
 be noble, and to help others in
 being noble, we try to infuse
 into their lives the spirit of
 Christianity, which has long
 run like a fine stream of pure
 fresh water through the plain
 upon which have been enacted
 the living drama of history.

To this work of leading men into
 the Christian way of life, of helping
 men to understand its spirit
 and ~~to~~ inspiring them to
 commit themselves to its
 principles many men

of great power and ability
have devoted themselves.

So this some work in one
form or another we are devot-
ing ourselves. From the results
of our limited observation, and
rather meagre experience we
believe that the world needs
to realize and become vital-
ized by the spirit of Christianity.
We are setting ourselves about
this tremendous task of persuad-
ing men to live in the spirit
of Christianity.

Now we are at work trying to
persuade men to live their lives
with the same kind of spirit
with which we try to live ours.
That is a delicate and a

difficult result to attain. A man does not easily give up old habits and long established and perhaps dearly cherished ideas, simply for the sake of adopting the way of life which another points out to him. If we are to meet with any kind of success in influencing men's lives, we must study the social conditions of our work and try to find out what kind of men we are going to deal with.

Now I believe that the first thing that must realize is that we are dealing with individual human beings. As a matter of convenience we roughly group men into great classes. We speak of the rich

and the poor, the educated & the uneducated, the criminals and the non-criminals. Politicians, educators, business men, laborers, ministers are convenient terms under which we group large numbers of men who have a common interest. For purposes of writing and talking such classificatory may serve a practical purpose, but when it comes to living, such distinctions disappear before the contact of man with man. The man who regards himself as human is made up of these various classes, has yet to learn some of the very rudimentary facts of a real life. We may speak

in our off hand way of the criminal class, and group these in all men who happen at the time to be under the bon of the law. but should we ~~try~~ ^{hesitate} to become one of the number ourselves, I fancy that we would find them to be not so very much unlike other men. They have the same ^{degree} of growth and development that other men have. The same great fascions of life are present in them that we find in other people. The degrees of criminality both within and without the law are so diverse that we cannot draw the line. When it comes to real life

in the living world, there is no such class of men as criminals. We may meet individuals, or perhaps groups of individuals who have once stepped the boundaries of social and moral regulation, but we can know nothing of a criminal class for we do not live in classes, but as individuals, who come in contact with each other in daily life. In the same general way we speak of the educated and the uneducated, but if we seek out the uneducated class, we shall find that it vanishes before our quest. We meet men where education does not run

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along the same line of interests
as ours, but they have collected
their facts from experience and
are able to use them to their own
advantage. The farmer with
his knowledge of the soil, and
plant life, and the stock of the
farm may not know much
about the history of the ancient
world, but he has the knowledge
of his way of life. The laborer
whose work seems so mechanical
and apparently requires so little
skill still has his education.
Both he and the scholar may
agree that his education is
not broad, but to classify him
among the uneducated, simply
because his learning is not

the same as ours, is a presumption which a few hours talk with such people will transform into a folly. There are degrees in the quality and the quantity of education, but the wholly uneducated man does not present himself.

To work on me ~~front~~ groups of people into word and in word classes. Should you and I know the facts of the worst degraded being, and understand the causes that were a factor in these sad results, I fancy that we might heretofore to clear him among the misdeeds of the world, and then assert our right to a place among the respectable. We come

in contrast with men who are
 doing things that are unmerciful
 and selfish and cruel.
 The sins of the flesh we worry
 but the sin of the intellect
 and the sin of the spirit
 are equally bad. The classifying
 of men according to good or
 bad is precarious business.
 As a matter of fact none of us
 are educated thoroughly, nor
 are we perfect in our lives,
 We are all climbing the moun-
 tain, some may be a little
 higher than others, but none
 of us are at the top. In our
 journey, we meet with various
 human souls, some are educated
 some are not, some are good

some are not, some are noble
 some are not, but the first
 fact to remember is that
 while we are not entirely
 alike, yet our common points
 are greater than our individual-
 istic peculiarities. In the every
 day life we meet as men
 to men, or soul to soul, and
 the artificial barriers of our
 talk and book life are obliter-
 ated by facts. If you and I
 are to lead men into the Christian
 way of life, we must meet
 men, not as a minister meeting
 a layman, not as an educated
 man instructing the uneducated
 not as a good man seeking
 to convert the bad, but as

man meet man, realizing
 the common ground upon
 which we stand, and the
 common end which we
 are seeking to attain. Whether
 she a man is, he is a human
 soul, with divine possibilities,
 and will not stand favorizing.

But in addition to meeting
 these people as man and man
 if we are really going to lead
 them we must understand
 the inner workings of their
 nature. Humourity is like great
 forest. If we looked down
 upon it from the top of a
 distant hill, it presents itself
 to us in its great grandeur

relieved by the varying shades
and tints of the leaves which
we exposed to the view of
the outside observer, but if
we enter the forest and roam
about among the individual
trees which go to make up
the picture which we had
seen from the hill top, we find
great charm, greater variety
of beauty, more exquisite
bits of scenery from within
than we had ever imagined.
To know and understand the
real charm of a humor being
we must get beneath the
surface, and see into the
inner workings of the humor
soul, and ferret out the con-

flexibility of camera and clever
 which makes up the forces
 that nourish the leaves. Bolger's
 millage doctor could see the
 struggling efforts of a divine
 soul even in the simplest
 of the men to whom he gave
 his life. The keen insight
 of Victor Hugo could analyze
 the ^{inner} criminal life of Jean Valjean
 whose conduct lead him to the
 life of a Galley slave, but his
 life, when we come to know it
 is transformed into great beauty
 and strength. It takes Hugo's
 insight to reveal the inner
 life of a Fortune, who in the midst
 of all the sadness and cruelty
 of her misery and stone steel

commends our pity and respect. Though the form of Hawthorne the scarlet letter of Hester Prynne is transformed into the image of the noble struggle of an injured soul reaching out through her misery after the face of the divine life. In our efforts to help such souls, we must see into their lives, understand the conflicts of desires and passions, of hopes and ambition. We must find the strong places and build upon them as foundations, we must seek the weak places and strive to strengthen and mend them. The unfortunate victims of

discipline may become a strong force for us, through the influence of a little strength, every force from a friend, for after all he is not wholly bad for the very qualities which woke him a joyful confession of his life, are also the same qualities that bind men together in their common love for the good life. It needs but a change of emphasis to wake him a good noble man. The much abused politician often needs but a slight amount of the right kind of influence applied in the right way to transform him into the good citizen. The physician, when he is called

to treat a person who is ill, very carefully studies the particular case in hand, and discovers where the weakness is, tries to trace it to its cause, then when he has learned all that can be learned, he gives a medicine which will remove the cause of the disease, will check the progress of it, and give the natural forces of the body opportunity to build up the affected parts. Our work must be done with even greater care and precision. Each case that comes to us must be studied and traced back to the causes of the evil, then the ~~evil~~ cause

must be renewed, and upon the foundation of the unaffected former, the process of repair and rebuilding must be carried on. As the success of the doctor's work depends largely upon his ability to diagnose his cases, so will the success of our work depend very largely upon our ability to understand the inner workings of the man, to appreciate ~~the~~ his point of view in life.

But to be able to lead the man whom we meet, even though we do understand them, to be able to give them the impulse to the Christian way of life, we must be the living embodiments of the spirit that we wish

Jesus. Water cannot rise higher
 than its source, neither can
 the influence of our words
 and our deeds rise above
 their source. The formal
 negative type of goodness which
 sets it self up as an example
 of abstinence, and propriety
 is a poor apology for the strong
 positive, definite spirit of
 Jesus life. ²² But the beautiful
 protected inland lake that furnishes
 the great fountains, but the great
 strong flowing river, which
 has gathered together into one
 was the the little streams of
 water from the hills. In the
 work to which we are devoting
 ourselves, we must take up with

our lives the spiritual truths
that flow from the mountains
of history, and from the hills
of living fervor, and which this
great war of truth which
we have become how we have
we have taken it up into
our very inmost lives, and
strengthened it with our own
fervorality, we are equipped
to lead men into the spirit
of the Christian way of life.
The roaring torrent which we
hear over on the other side of
the mountains, does not go to
swell the force and volume of
our stream of influence. The
truth which we have heard
of but have not feared and

Tasted by the experience of
 our own lives, or the sympathetic
~~time~~ observation of another life,
 does not become a part of our
 stream of influence, and the
 less we have to do with it
 the better we are off. The final
 value which our words and our
 life will have will be determined
 by the dynamic of the spirit
 with which we live it. It
 was the spirit of Jesus life that
 enabled him to help the men
 among whom he lived, it will
 be the spirit of our lives that
 will be the source of whatever
 force we may have in
 helping men to live the
 Christian life.

Div. Chapel.

April 15, 1904

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Sympathy

Earl Clement Davis

April 15, 1904

Harvard University Divinity Chapel

Cambridge, MA

Scripture

Text: Hebrews 13:3

"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them;..."

We are associated by tradition by habits of thought, by habits of life with a way of living which is called Christianity. In all the diverse forms in which this way of life has found expression in written word and in noble life since the days when Jesus of Nazareth lived in Palestine, the real force and the real power has been in the spirit of it. Whether we read the story of Mark, who sees in Jesus the doer of great and noble deeds, or the story of Matthew who presents him to us as the promised messiah, or of John who sees in him the incarnation of the logos, we find there the glimpse of a great soul, the spirit of whose life so influenced itself upon the people of Palestine, that his life gave a new impulse to the religious world. We do not care much whether Jesus said this particular thing or that particular thing or not. But we do rejoice that Jesus lived his life with such devotion to the highest possibilities within himself and with such love for his fellow men, that they became infused with the spirit of his life, and by word and deed have transmitted to us the impression that he made upon them. The same spirit that was in Jesus has been trying to express itself in creed and in life all through the centuries of history, and is still working in the lives of men towards the realization of all that is good and noble.

So great have been the fruits of the spirit, so many noble lives have been lived, so many heroic deeds have been done, so many fine souls have made great sacrifices for what is true and noble, as men have tried to live their lives in the spirit in which Jesus lived his, that we have

come to believe that to live a life in that spirit is the highest and worthiest aim of a human being. As we meet in our daily life the noble types of men and women whose lives make the world a better and a finer place to live in, we see in them the same spirit that the people of Palestine saw in the life of Jesus so long ago, the same spirit that is found in every noble life. When we see a person whose life seems unsatisfactory and weak and selfish, we believe that if such a person could only be made to understand the spirit of a Christian life, that gloomy discouraging life would become rich and fruitful and lofty. In our efforts to be noble, and to help others in being noble, we try to infuse into their lives the spirit of Christianity, which has run like a stream of fine fresh water through the plain upon which have been enacted the living clamor of history. To this work of leading men into the Christian way of life, of helping men to understand its spirit and inspiring them to commit themselves to its principles many men of great power and nobility have devoted themselves. To this same work in one form or another we are devoting ourselves. From the results of limited observation, and rather meagre experience we believe that the world needs to realize and become vitalized by the spirit of Christianity. We are setting ourselves about this tremendous task of persuading men to live in the spirit of Christianity.

Now we are at work trying to persuade men to live their lives with the same kind of spirit with which we try to live ours. That is a delicate and a difficult result to attain. A man does not easily give up old habits and long established and perhaps dearly cherished ideas, simply for the sake of adopting the way of life which another points out to him. If we are to meet with any kind of results in influencing men's lives, we must study the condition of our work and try to find out what kind of men we are going to deal with.

Now I believe that the first thing that must [we] realize is that {???) we are dealing with individual human beings. As a matter of convenience we roughly group men into great classes. We speak of the rich and the poor, the educated + the uneducated, the criminals and the non-criminals. Politicians, educators, businessmen, laborers, ministers are convenient terms under which we group large numbers of

men who have a common interest. For purposes of writing and talking such classifications may serve a practical end, but when it comes to living, such distinctions disappear before the contrast of man with man. The man who thinks that humanity is made up of these various classes has yet to learn some of the very rudimentary facts of a real life. We may speak in our off hand way of the criminal class, and group therein all men who happen at the time to be under the ban of the law, but should we happen to become one of the number ourselves, I fancy that we would find them to be not so very much unlike other men. They have the same hopes of growth and development that other men have. The same great passions of life are present in them that we find in other people. The degrees of criminality both within and without the law are so diverse that we cannot draw the line. When it comes to real life in the living world, there is no such class of men as criminals. We may seek individuals, or perhaps groups of individuals who have over-stepped the boundaries of social and moral regulation, but we can know nothing of a criminal class for we do not live in classes, but as individuals who come in contact with each other in daily life. In the same general way we speak of the educated and the uneducated, but if we seek out the uneducated class, we shall find that it vanishes before our quest. We meet men whose education does not run along the same line of interests as ours, but they have collected their facts from experience and are able to use them to their own advantage. The farmer with his knowledge of the soil, and the plant life, and the stock of the {??} may not know much about the history of the ancient world, but he has the knowledge of his way of life. The laborer whose work seems so mechanical and apparently requires so little skill still has his education. Both he and the scholar may agree that his education is not broad, but to classify him among the uneducated, simply because his learning is not the same as ours, is a presumption which a few hours talk with such people will transform into a folly. There are degrees in the quality and the quantity of education, but the wholly uneducated man does not present himself.

No more can we group people into moral and immoral classes. Should you and I know the facts of the worst degraded being, and understand the causes that were a

factor in these sad results, I fancy that we might hesitate to class him among the wicked of the world, and then assert our right to a place away the respectable [sic]. We come in contact with men who are doing things that are wrong and selfish and cruel. The sins of the flesh are many but the sins of the intellect and the sins of the spirit are equally bad. The classifying of men according to good or bad is precarious business. As a matter of fact more of us are educated thoroughly, nor are we perfect in our lives. We are all climbing the mountain, some may be a little higher up than others, but none of us are at the top. In our journey, we meet with various human souls, some are educated, some are not, some are good, some are not, some are noble, some are not, but the final fact to remember is that while we are not entirely alike, yet our common points are greater than our individualistic peculiarities. In the everyday life we meet as man to man, as soul to soul, and the artificial barrier of our talk and book life are obliterated by facts. If you and I are to lead men into the Christian way of life, we must meet men, not as a minister meeting a layman, not as an educated man instructing the uneducated, not as a good man seeking to convert the bad, but as man meets man, realizing the common ground upon which we stand, and the common ends which we are seeking to attain. Whatever else a man is, his is a human soul with divine possibilities and will not stand patronizing.

But in addition to meeting these people as man and man, if we are really going to lead them, we must understand the inner workings of their natures. Humanity is like [a] great forest. If we looked down upon it from the top of a distant hill, it presents itself to us in its great grandeur relieved by the varying shades and tints of the leaves which are exposed to the view of the outside observer. But if we enter the forest and move about among the individual trees which go to make up the picture which we had seen from the hilltop, we find great charm, greater variety of beauty, more exquisite bits of scenery from within than we had ever imagined. To know and understand the real charm of a human being we must get beneath the surface, and see into the inner workings of the soul, and ferret out the complexity of causes and desires which makes up the forces that nourish the learner. Balzac's village Doctor could see the strong glowing efforts of a divine soul even in the

simplest of the men to whom he gave his life. The keen insight of Victor Hugo could analyze the inner life of Jean Valjean whose conduct lead [sic] him to the life of a galley slave. But his life, when we come to know it is transformed into great beauty and strength. It takes Hugo's insight to reveal the inner life of a Fontine, who in the midst of all the sadness and cruelty of her misery and shame still commands our pity and respect. Through the power of Hawthorne, the Scarlet Letter of Hester Prynne is transformed into the image of the noble struggle of an injured soul reaching out through her misery after the peace of divine life. In our efforts to help such souls, we must see into their lives, understand the conflicts of desires and passions, of hopes and ambition. We must find the strong places and build upon them as foundations, we must seek the weak places and strive to strengthen and mend them. The unfortunate victim of dissipation may become a strong powerful man through the influence of a little strengthening power from a friend. For, after all, he is not wholly bad for the very qualities which make him a {??} companion of his life, are also the same qualities that bind men together in their common labor for the good life. It needs but a change of emphasis to make him a good noble man. The much abused politician often needs but a slight amount of the right kind of influence applied in the right way to transform him into the good citizen. The physician, when he is called to treat a person who is ill, very carefully studies the particular case in hand, and discovers where the weakness is, tries to trace it to its cause, then when he has learned all that can be learned, he gives a medicine which will remove the cause of the disease, will check the progress of it, and give the natural forces of the body opportunity to build up the affected parts. Our work must be done with even greater care and precision. Each case that comes to us must be studied and traced back to the causes of the evil, then the cause must be removed, and upon the foundation of the unaffected {??}, the process of repair and rebuilding must be carried on. As the success of the doctor's work depends largely upon his ability to diagnose his cases, so will the success of our work depend very largely upon our ability to understand the in[ner] workings of the man to appreciate his point of view in life.

But to be able to lead the men whom we meet, even though we do understand them, to be able to give them the impulse to the Christian way of life, we must be the living embodiments of the spirit that was in Jesus. Water cannot rise higher than its source, neither can the influence of our words and our deeds rise above their source. The {??} negative type of goodness which sets itself up as an example of abstinence, and propriety is a poor apology for the strong positive, definite spirit of Jesus' life. It is not the beautiful protected inland lake that furnishes the great power, but the great strong flowing river, which has gathered together into one river the little streams of water from the hills. In the work to which we are devoting ourselves, we must take up into our lives the spiritual truths that flow from the mountains of history, and from the hills of living persons, and with this great river of truth which has become {??} because we have taken it up into our very innermost lives, and {??} it with our own personality, we are equipped to lead men into the spirit of the Christian way of life. The roaring torrent which we hear over on the other side of the mountain does not go to swell the power and volume of our stream of influence. The truth which we have heard of but have not found and tested by the experience of our own lives, or the sympathetic observation of another life, does not become a part of our stream of influence, and the less we have to do with it the better we are off. The final value which our words and our life will have will be determined by the dynamic of the spirit with which we live it. It was the spirit of Jesus' life that enabled him to help the men among whom he lived, it will be the spirit of our lives that will be the source of whatever power we may have in helping men to live the Christian life.