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THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION.

By the "Social Question" we mean those "scattering problems", such as "the family, philanthropy, industrial life, racial divisions and collisions", which grow out of the relations of men to each other. The inquiry, then, before us is, What is the duty of the church with regard to this group of questions?

Few subjects could be more important, and certainly none could be more pertinent. Prof. Stein has remarked¹ that as the fifteenth century had for its task the renaissance of art, and the sixteenth century the reformation of religion, and the seventeenth century the development of science, and the eighteenth century the promotion of democracy; so the task of the twentieth century is to be the reformation and reconstruction of the social world. "A new renaissance," he says, "must break upon the modern world, a deliverance from the gloom of pessimism, which is the symptom of an overworked and weary period; a transformation of the instincts of social evolution into rational laws; a quickening of the glad and confident service of the social world as it is and as it is to be". Such a prophecy Prof. Francis Greenwood Peabody pronounces² "too restricted to cover the infinitely varied life of the twentieth century". "Other problems", he rightly says, "are pressing besides that of social redemption." 'Art seems likely to receive fresh attention. Religion is more widely applied than it was. Democracy must be redeemed by more democracy.'

"Yet even if one may hesitate to prophesy about a cen-

¹ *Die soziale Frage im Lichte der Philosophie* 1897, p. 773.

² *The Approach to the Social Question*, p. 1.

ture, he can hardly be mistaken as to his own generation and time." The problems of the social world are undoubtedly the problems of to-day. Social unrest is the fact of contemporary life. No institution of society—the family, the state, or the church—is too stable or too sacred to be assailed. "The growth of the great industry with its combinations of capital and its organizations of labor, the unprecedented accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few, and the equally unprecedented increase of power in the hands of the many,—these, and many other signs of the times, point to new social adjustments, and awaken a new social spirit." It is the age of the Social Question. Art, if it is to flourish, must minister to the masses. Religion, that it may appeal to them, preaches the redemption of society at least as earnestly as that of the individual. "Democracy, having won its political victory, has now before it a further conflict with feudalism, paternalism, and privilege, entrenched in their industrial strongholds." In a word, all the questions of the day seem to be summed up in the Social Question. What inquiry, therefore, could be more pertinent than that as to the church's relation to it? Loyalty to Christ demands an answer. He, because "Lord of all", must inspire and guide and develop and glorify the new and all-dominating social spirit.

What, then, precisely is the inquiry? It is not a question as to the relation of the individual Christian to social problems. The sphere of the church and that of the individual Christian are not identical. The Christian belongs to the world as well as to the church. God has put him in the world. Christ expressly refrains from praying that he may be taken out of the world (John xvii:15). The Holy Spirit, speaking by Paul, teaches that he must live in intercourse with the world (I Cor. v:10), and should 'shine as a light in the world' (Phil. ii:15). He is a member of the family, of the state, and, as the case may be, of the school, of the business community, of the art circle, of the scientific association, etc. Hence, to these he does and

must sustain relations and owe duties. He is so placed that he can not help it. Nay: just because he is a Christian, he ought not to try to help it. Christ's kingdom means his dominion in all spheres and over all relationships. He "shall reign until he has put all things under his feet" (1 Cor. xv:27). "Every thought even must be brought into captivity to the obedience of him" (2 Cor. x:5). Therefore, his followers must live in the world and come into relation to its interests and take part in its business that Christ may be recognized as "Lord of all". It is for a mission which is as broad and as comprehensive as the world that he has called them out of the world. Nor, again, is the inquiry whether the church ought to be interested in the Social Question. The church herself belongs to the kingdom of God. As truly as the family, as the nation, as the individual Christian, is she a part of it. Beyond this, she is God's chosen and appointed and specially fitted instrument for introducing that ideal order of things in which the kingdom is to express itself. Christ has been made "head over all things" to her that through her all may bow at his name. For the church, therefore, to be indifferent to the great questions which concern society is inconceivable. Her mission is the redemption of society. The kingdoms of this world she must transform into the kingdom of her Lord and of his Christ. She could lose interest in the social question, therefore, only by becoming untrue to her mission and so to her Head. To save society for Christ is the church's work.

How, then, should *she* do this? This is the question before us. With respect to it there are three parties:

1. Many have for some time held, and many more are coming to hold, that the church ought herself, as an institution, to undertake to solve the social problem. It is so, and only so, that she can fulfil her own great mission. Indeed, this is her mission. Hence, she should preach sociology rather than theology. She should turn her preaching stations into social settlements. She should go into and

should control politics. She should initiate and lead reform movements. She should connect with and direct every effort being made for the betterment of mankind. Thus Rauschenbusch says:³ "The ministry, in particular, must apply the teaching function of the pulpit to the pressing questions of public morality. * * They must lift the social questions to a religious level by faith and spiritual insight." Thus Macfarland in a lecture delivered before the Yale Divinity School, after referring to what he calls "the great gospel of Socialism" and "the great gospel of Labor" and "the gospel of Anti-Tuberculosis" and "the gospel of the Fraternal Orders" gives it as his thesis⁴ "that the minister is to become the minister, the guide, the director of all these great movements of mankind". Thus Reginald Campbell writes a book as earnest as it is revolutionary,⁵ in which he would have the church openly avow socialism and be the leader in a world-wide socialistic campaign. In a word, there is a marked and a growing tendency to have the church as an institution deal directly with the social question. Social redemption, which now means social reconstruction, is her mission.

II. Another party takes the same position, but does not do so on the ground that the normal mission of the church is social and secular. On the contrary, it is freely admitted that the true mission of the church is individual and religious. We are, however, at a crisis. The times are out of joint. The emergency demands the extraordinary. Society is so corrupt that it is disintegrating. We may not, therefore, stand on proprieties and contend for special spheres of action. The ship is going down; and we must turn to—crew, passengers, officers, pilot, all,—and man the pumps. It is not our work, but the exigency demands it. And there is a further reason why we should do so. It is only as the church addresses herself directly to the social

³ *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, p. 412.

⁴ *The Part and Place of the Church and the Ministry in the Realization of Democracy*, p. 21.

⁵ *Christianity and the Social Order*.

question and so takes the lead in social reconstruction that she can command respect for her own work. The social crisis is so pressing as to be all-absorbing. Hence, the church as an institution must grapple with it or the masses will give her, as they are giving her, the cold shoulder. If men are to heed her demand for the regeneration of the individual, they must recognize her leadership in what is just now of supreme importance, and that is the struggle for civic righteousness and social betterment. When the masses are being crushed by the classes it is only as you take sides with the former that you can get them to listen to exhortations to industry and thrift, not to speak of consecration to Christ.

III. A third position differs radically from both of these. As regards the first, it denies that the mission of the church is fundamentally or even chiefly social. It is primarily and characteristically individual, and it is above all religious. It contemplates saving men from sin rather than society from poverty, making them "new creatures in Christ Jesus" rather than surrounding them with opportunities for education and culture. It holds that it is thus, and only thus, that the church can do her work in the world and for the kingdom of God. It maintains, too, and as regards the second position, that the more acute may be the social crisis, so much the more should the church devote herself to her own special and spiritual mission to individuals. It is thus that she will best meet the crisis and redeem society and bring in the kingdom.

It is for this third view that we hold a brief, and we do so for the following reasons:

1. The transcendent importance of the religious. It is so in itself. Art expresses our taste for the beautiful. Science systematizes our knowledge of facts. Philosophy gives our conception of truth. Morality reveals our appreciation of law. Religion realizes our consciousness of God. By as much, therefore, as all other objects or interests are nothing and less than nothing in comparison with

him, 'by whom and for whom all things were created, and who is before all things, and by whom all things consist', by so much must religion, just because of what it is, transcend all else.

This is so, again, because of the relation of religion to the secular. Not only does it transcend all else: all else depends on it. Art need not be religious; for the world is full of beauty: but the highest art must be religious; for all the beauty of the world vanishes before that of the holiness of God. Science need not be religious; for religion embraces only one sphere of facts: but the most profound science must include religion; for God is the fact of facts. Philosophy need not be religious; for truth is of many kinds: but philosophy to be adequate must be religious; for God is the truth of truth. Morality can exist apart from religion; for all atheists are not immoral: but aside from religion, morality can be neither completed nor justified; for he who ignores God can not do his whole or his chief duty, neither can he explain why there should be such a thing as duty. Nor is this all. If art is to rise, nay if it is even to continue art, it must become the devotee of religion: purely secular art soon shows a tendency to deteriorate. If science is to progress, nay, if it is even to abide, it must be the handmaid of religion: the science of this world alone is ere long so arrogant that it can not be trusted. If philosophy is to develop, nay, if it is not to go back, it must take counsel of religion: the history of human thought teaches nothing more clearly than that the wisdom of this world passes away. If morality is to strengthen, nay, if it is even to maintain itself, it must be the servant of religion: the mere sense of obligation, though based on the idea of self-realization, is not strong enough to bind us to duty that happens to be irksome, and it certainly is not winning enough to make us delight in it. In a word, if art or science or philosophy or morality or other great human interests are to hold their own, art must find its supreme model in the beauty of the Lord,

science must find its ultimate object in the fact of the Lord, philosophy must find its final conception in the truth of the Lord, morality must find its norm and reason in the law of the Lord. That is, all right human interests must find their life in religion. From the nature of the case it could not be otherwise.

All this is true to-day as never before. *The* need of the age is a revival of religion. This is its need, not only that individual men and women may be saved from sin, but also that the great interests of humanity may not go backward. As to these we are at a crisis, and there has been none greater. Art counts her devotees by hundreds of thousands and some of them are artists indeed: but while the works of the old masters are diligently studied and often wonderfully reproduced, there are no creations like the Madonnas of Raphael and the cathedrals of mediaeval Europe; and the reason is that we wait for the outpouring of that spirit of religion which caused the painters and architects of the Middle Ages to feel that they wrought under the eye and with the inspiration of the All-glorious One himself. Science has her investigators in almost every village, and she conducts her researches with instruments of precision hitherto unrivalled and even unconceived: but while she explores the poles of the earth and uncovers the depths of the oceans and resolves the mysteries of the stars and discovers how to utilize for human interests one after another of nature's forces, she is failing more and more to grasp the meaning of the universe, and so is missing the real worth of her achievements; and the reason is that we wait for such a baptism of the Spirit of God as shall constrain us to see and to adore Him in all his works. Philosophy never numbered so many students as now, and they are not deficient either in industry or in logical acumen: but while each one of them is ready with an answer to Pilate's old question, "What is truth?" these answers lack characteristically any grasp of absolute truth; and the reason is that those who make them have yet to be taught

by the Holy Spirit of truth himself. Morality is more and more becoming the message of the pulpit, and we have societies distinctly for ethical culture: but while in the business and the industrial world we are in the midst of what is being called an ethical reformation, our efforts seem to be as powerless to touch men's hearts and so to affect themselves as mere legislative enactments and changes of environment simply must always be; and the reason is that even the churches are fast forgetting that to grow like God one must be born of Him. In a word, if our age, the most splendid that the world has seen as regards material progress, is not to be intoxicated and debauched by pride in its own achievements, we must realize God: we must lose our paralyzing consciousness of self in appreciation of his glory, his power, his justice, his grace: that is, religion is the supreme demand of the hour.

What, then, shall we say of the Gospel of Christ? He is "the way, the truth, the life" (John xiv:6). 'His is the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved'. His truth and life are to all other religions what religion in general is to all other right human interests, and that is their Saviour. You see the point. The church, which is "the pillar and ground" of this truth, ought to give herself wholly to its proclamation and application. Its transcendent importance to society makes this the only rational interpretation of the church's relation to the Social Question. The most extreme social distress does but emphasize society's need of the Gospel.

2. Our contention is true because of the demand laid on the church if she is to realize this which we may call the spiritual conception of her mission. This demand is so exacting that she can have neither time nor energy for anything else.

It is so in view of the preparation which such a mission necessitates. From one point of view the Gospel is a very simple thing. It is just "the old old story of Jesus and his love". From another point of view it is quite different.

That old old story is "the mystery into which the angels desire to look", and in that Jesus whom even the little child can love are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge". As the great Apostle writes, he is "the gift that never can be told through". Can, then, even such an apostle afford to know anything else "save Jesus Christ and Him crucified"? For another reason is this so. Christ is no less comprehensive than great. He touches the world on all sides. No human interest is without relation to Him. Therefore, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is not the sum of the preacher's message. Or rather, it is this only when it is conceived to mean not merely, Come to Jesus as your Saviour from sin, but Come to Him as your Lord in the home, in the work-shop, in the study, in the senate-chamber, in every legitimate sphere of human life. Now, to preach this adequately demands preparation as exclusive as it must be exacting. If, for example, we would know how Christ's Gospel ought to control social life, it will be the Gospel rather than sociology that we should consider. Suppose that our medical men were to discover a remedy which was a panacea. It would be to the study of it itself that they would give their days and nights. They would cease tabulating statistics as to the ravages of tuberculosis. They would no longer inquire what conditions were most favorable to the development of typhoid germs. They would devote their attention wholly to the panacea; to what it was, to what it could do, to how it could best be used. All other questions would be subordinate. All other questions would be asked only as they might throw light on the supreme inquiry. The very comprehensiveness of its reference would make it supreme. It is thus in the case of the Gospel. Because its "leaves are for the healing of the nations", because its end is not only saved individuals but a redeemed race, because its salvation is to embrace the whole man with all his right interests—in a word, because its aim is so comprehensive as well as its subject so great, it must demand of the institute

put in trust with it, and, hence, of her ministers, a preparation which shall require the concentration of their best energies on it and on it alone. It is just because the Gospel is for society as such and not for individuals only that it rather than society should be the object of the church's study and endeavor.

This is so again because of the opposition to the Gospel. We would reason thus in like cases. When all the forces of the enemy are massed against the citadel, it is for this itself that the army of the faithful must contend. It will make no difference that they can do much else. It will make no difference that there is much else that needs to be done. It will make no difference that there is much else that under other conditions ought to be done. The whole territory of the enemy may invite and may seem even to demand attack. But the invitation may not be heeded. The demand may not be believed. We must rally for the defence of the citadel, and for this alone. If it be lost, all is lost; and this would be so, though all else were gained.

Now, the opposition to Christianity has always been against her very citadel. Rome would have made her a "religio licita" and would have given Christ an honorable place in her pantheon but for Christianity's claim to exclusiveness, and Rome's course was typical of all subsequent opposition to our faith. The world has not objected often to our ethics. On the contrary, even when denying Christ's deity it lauds Him as the teacher of the purest and highest morality. It appreciates in particular the love inculcated in the New Testament; and even when it ventures to doubt the historicity of our Lord, it affirms the reality and praises the beauty of his spirit. What the world has not been able to tolerate is Christianity's claim that there is 'none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus' (Acts iv:12).

This, however, is the citadel of Christianity. Our faith is powerful because it is exclusive and so far as its ex-

clusiveness is accepted. This may seem to be a hard and a narrow doctrine, but is it not true? Let Christianity be regarded as one of the religions of the world; and though it be held to be the best of them, it can have no higher authority than the world chooses to give to it. Of this world, the world must have the right to sit in judgment on it. If, therefore, it is to speak with authority that none may gainsay or resist, it must speak from heaven, not from earth; it must be supernatural, not natural. If, however, it be supernatural, it must by the necessity of the case stand alone. If, consequently, it professes to be a way of salvation, it must be the only way. That is, Christianity's claim to exclusiveness is the result of her claim to supernaturalness. Where you have the latter you must have the former, and so to yield the former is virtually to give up the latter. A supernatural plan of salvation would be an absurdity and so an impossibility, if it were not exclusive. If Confucius or Buddha or Mohammed or modern science or twentieth century ethical culture or present-day sociology could save, God could not and would not have given his Son to die for sinners. Hence, there must be another and urgent demand on the church to devote herself solely to making known the Gospel. It arises not simply, as we have seen, because of the greatness and the comprehensiveness of the Gospel and because of the consequent demand for broad and continuous preparation if it is to be presented adequately; it arises even more from the fact that it is the very stronghold of the Gospel's claim, its exclusiveness, that the world opposes.

Now both of these considerations are strengthened by the existing crisis. Christ was never so great as He is to-day. That is, He never appeared so great. The creator and governor of all the worlds, science, in magnifying the universe far beyond all previous conception must to the same degree have magnified Him. Nor may we say that this is a reason why we should study science that she may further interpret Christ rather than a reason why we should study

Christ that He may interpret science. The latter alternative is the true one. The Creator is so revealed by his works that we are without excuse if we do not acknowledge Him; but, darkened as are our eyes by sin, we can not now understand either Him or his works save in the light of those Scriptures which, as He said, "testify of Him". We would not minimize the general revelation of nature: we would only insist that special revelation would not have been given, were not general revelation to be interpreted by it. You would not write a supplementary letter, unless you meant that what you had said before was to be understood in the light of it.

Nor is it otherwise as to the comprehensiveness of Christ and his religion. It is precisely this aspect of Christianity which the best philosophy of our day, the only philosophy worthy of the name, emphasizes and must emphasize. The principle of unity which from the first she has sought she insists on now as never before. In doing so, however, must she not, with all her authority, call the world, and much more the church, to the exclusive study of the Lord of both, inasmuch as in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" and in Him are summed up all things? That comprehensive principle which philosophy makes her sole quest is to be found in Christ alone.

It is the same as regards the opposition of our age to the Gospel. As perhaps never before, this is directed against the citadel of our faith. If the exclusiveness of Christianity condemned it, as we have seen, in the first century, the reason for this exclusiveness, the supernaturalness of our religion, is the *bête noire* of the twentieth century. God is not denied, but He is identified with humanity, with the world. Thus nature is enthroned "Lord of all". Hence, atonement and regeneration and all the precious truths connected with them are ridiculed when they are not forgotten; and instead we may hear what, as has been remarked, Macfarland calls "the great gospel of Labor and the great gospel of Socialism and the gospel of Anti-Tuberculosis and the

gospel of the Fraternal Orders". Does not such a condition of fatal blindness on the part of the world call on the church to give herself with absolute singleness of purpose to proclaiming "Christ crucified, the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation"? Not only has she been put in trust with this only Gospel, but it is to its very spirit that the spirit of our day is most opposed.

3. The argument is strengthened by the fact that the church is disqualified for what is called social service.

By the complexity and consequent difficulty of it. Social service presupposes both exact and varied knowledge. Without this it is labor thrown away; for it is likely to miss the mark. Nay, it is worse; for it is likely to be as poison rather than medicine, as the wrong medicine which, however good the intention with which it is given, is often more harmful than poison. We all know, that paupers ought to be relieved; that they ought to be relieved in a way that will not pauperize them further; that if this is to be done, they must be required to work and must be made self-respecting. But how are these principles, which the Bible teaches, though sociologists seem often to forget that—how are these principles to be applied? They are an indispensable and the most important factor in the solution of the problem of pauperism as distinguished from that of temporary poverty, with which, for special reasons that may not here be set forth, the church of both dispensations has been charged; but by themselves they can never abolish pauperism. Charity may be Christian and yet may be misdirected; and if it is not to be misdirected, there must be exact and varied knowledge of physical, economic and social, as well as of religious conditions and pre-suppositions.

Take the labor question. We all know, that work is honorable; that "the laborer is worthy of his hire"; that he has the right to strike for such hire as he thinks that his toil and skill deserve; and that he has the further right so to organize as to make his strike effective. These, too, are biblical

principles. It would be interesting to inquire whether they would have become generally recognized, had they not been at least implied in the Bible. But while they are the conditions of the solution of the problem, they do not solve it. They do not tell us when work is so exhausting as to be degrading, how much in a given case is the hire of which the laborer is worthy, how far he is justified in disregarding public interests when he strikes, to what degree his unions may interfere with individual liberty. These are questions which present themselves in connection with almost every labor difficulty. Yet they are questions which can be arbitrated intelligently only by experts. The church preaches that justice must be done and in the spirit of the love of Christ—and in teaching this she teaches what is indispensable, what is incomparably the most important thing, what it sometimes seems impossible to make sociologists with their ever ready short-sighted test of expediency appreciate,—but if justice is to be done, if the love of Christ is really to be manifested, the church must take counsel of the men who have studied at close range physical and economic and social conditions, who have tabulated such statistics and who have then made their inductions. In a word, for social service special and profound sociological knowledge and training are demanded.

Why, however, should not the church set herself to acquire these? Two answers should be sufficient. The Gospel, as we have seen, is "the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation." Can, then, society need anything so much as its universal application and, consequently, its full proclamation? And can the church or any human institute that honestly and intelligently tries to do this have time or energy or heart for anything else?

Again, sociology, as just shown, is a very complex and difficult science. It is incomparably the most complex and difficult of all the sciences except theology. Could anything, then, be more absurd than for a man or an institute to attempt to qualify in both? From the nature of the case the

theological sociologist and also the sociological theologian must be neither a theologian nor a sociologist. No man or angel could be a specialist in two such fields.

But though the church were not actually disqualified for social service by its complexity and difficulty, especially in view of the all-absorbing demands of her own peculiar mission, it would seem that she must be by what we may call the law of specialization. By this we mean that everything has an end of its own and can realize that end only by confining itself to it. Thus the end of the family is to develop the life of affection, but it fails to do this just in proportion as it undertakes the work of the nation or the vindication of rights. When her son commits a crime, the mother makes a poor policeman; and she would lose all her influence as a mother, if she assumed the part of the policeman. The end of the nation is to define and maintain rights, but it fails to do this just in proportion as it attempts the mission of the church or the development of the life of worship. When the nation essays to teach religion it commonly happens not only that religion is secularized, but also that the nation's own sense of right becomes confused. Why should it be otherwise in the case of the church? One of the social institutes, will it not be governed by the law which we have seen to control the others? If it pushes its activity into spheres beyond and different from its own, will it not, not only not succeed in them, but fail also in its own? In a word, God's purpose in the case of each one of the institutes of society would seem to be so exacting that not one of them can surmount it and not fall.

All this is true to-day as never before. Society has become complex beyond what could have been conceived even twenty-five years ago, and it is growing more complex every hour.

Moreover, as if in recognition of this, the demand for specialization is far clearer and more insistent than ever. There is scarcely a department of knowledge or of activity in which the specialist is not the only one wanted or toler-

ated. The only sociologist to whom men will long listen is he who has studied his subject at first hand and has given his whole time to it. In like manner, the only minister of religion whom the world will bear with or the church will honor must be, it would seem, one who knows his message as others can not, and who so appreciates its comprehensiveness and its indispensableness that, if he could, he would not, and if he would, he could not, do anything else than study and give it. In short, no lesson of our age is clearer than, as none is so important as, this, that if the church is to fulfill her mission and so assure her existence, she must discern and confine herself to its distinctive spiritual purpose. Our day has no place for indefinite general well-doing.

4. Nor are the conclusions thus far drawn mere speculations. Were there time, each one of them could be confirmed by facts. The following general considerations are all that may now be presented:

The first three centuries of our era were conspicuous as no others have been for the growth and influence of our religion. At the opening of the fourth century the Christians amounted to one-fifth of the population of the civilized world. They came from all classes of society. They had transformed all departments of human life. Not long afterward Augustine could say without the possibility of an answer, "Let those who profess that the Christian religion is hostile to the Republic, give us military men, provincials, husbands, parents, sons, masters, servants, kings, judges, and administrators equal to those that Christianity has formed" (*Ep.* 138).

Now, the characteristic of the church of this period was its spirituality. This was developed almost to the point of exclusiveness. As Neander has said⁶, "The Christians stood over against the state, as a priestly spiritual race; and the only way in which it seemed possible that Christianity could exert an influence on civil life was (which it must be

⁶ *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, i, p. 272.

allowed was the purest way) by tending continually to diffuse more of a holy temper among the citizens of the state." That is, while, as Tertullian pointed out, the Christians entered as individuals into all the legitimate business of life, as a society they separated themselves from it. Here we believe was the secret of their unique influence on it. The church regenerated society just because she as an institute would have nothing to do with the reformation of it.

With the accession of Constantine a radical change took place. He elevated the church, and the church was willing to be elevated, to the throne of the empire. The church, then, became the reformer of society and ceased to be its regenerator. She added the methods of politics and of economics to those of the Spirit, but before she was aware of it the Spirit was grieved away. Instead of continuing to reform society, therefore, society transformed and degraded her. Departing from the example of her inspired founders and especially of her Lord, she lost her unique power and glory. For—and this, it would seem, should be decisive—the apostles, and notably Paul, had inculcated precisely this attitude towards society on the part of the church which as we have seen, the church at first adopted and which it is the aim of this paper to advocate. Thus, as Mr. Archibald B. D. Alexander has brought out in his recent exposition of the ethics of Paul,⁷ "there is no elaboration by Paul of the modern idea that all labor has a moral worth in the civilization of the world and the development of its resources." In his view everything is to be subservient to the evangelization of the world, and all secular work has its justification for the Christian only in so far as it affords him the means of furthering that object. Paul is not unmindful of poverty and ignorance and misery and other results of sin; but sin itself bulks so large before him that it is from it alone that he thinks of saving men. He could not have been unaware of the power of social influence; but he was so persuaded of the indispensableness and comprehensiveness

⁷ *The Ethics of St. Paul*, p. 251.

and unique saving efficacy of the Gospel when demonstrated by the Holy Spirit that he determined to be only the minister of it and as such to "know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

This was precisely the position of our Lord Himself. Even Rauschenbusch, who tries to read socialism into early Christianity and the spirit of the revolutionary into Jesus grants our contention. "But in truth," he says⁸, "Jesus was not a social reformer of the modern type. Sociology and political economy were just as far outside of his range of thought as organic chemistry or the geography of America. * * Only in so far as the social questions were moral ones did he deal with them. * * And he was more than a teacher of morality. * * Religion was the heart of his heart. * * All that he said on social relations was said from the religious point of view." And his religious point, I may add, was exclusively that of the evangelist. As Stalker has said,⁹ "The duty of evangelizing the world lay nearer the heart of Jesus than most of those features which have been put forward as the leading characteristic of his teaching. And even from the point of view of benevolence, its virtue goes deeper than any other service that can be rendered by man to man." As Stalker elsewhere shows¹⁰, it was the salvation from sin of individual men and women that our Lord regarded as the greatest possible work for society and so as the great work of the church for the world. Nor is the significance of our Saviour's position affected by the social crisis of our day. Only by the densest ignorance of history can we suppose that society needs reforming now more than it did in the age of the Caesars. If, then, the commission of the church is distinctly spiritual and individual, as our Lord put it to "preach the Gospel to every creature", what

5. Is the relation of the Christian minister to social service?

⁸ *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, chap. 2.

⁹ *The Ethic of Jesus*, p. 328.

¹⁰ *The Ethic of Jesus*, p. 28.

We may summarize as follows :

a. Movements for social reform. To these the Christian minister sustains a double relation. On the one hand, because he is a man and a Christian, he is to give them his intelligent support as an individual. On the other hand, because he is a minister, he is to refrain from leadership in them. For this he will have neither the time nor the expert knowledge, if he has been faithful as a minister. To identify the church, moreover, with political parties or benevolent associations is to dim her distinctness and so to lessen her efficiency as a spiritual force. Indispensable though such work is, it presupposes the regeneration of individuals, if it is to issue in real reforms; and while the church and society may and ought to co-operate in bringing in the kingdom of God, to unite them must tend to weaken the former and to embarrass the latter.

b. The use of the pulpit for social reform. With respect to this, the duty of the minister will vary according to the relation of the questions at issue to the Bible.

In the case of extra-biblical questions, such as whether the railroads should be run by the state or, as with us, by private corporations, the minister may express his opinion as an individual; but he should never use his pulpit for this purpose. It is absurd for him to suppose, unless he has deserted his ministry for such side issues, that he can have the expert knowledge of these subjects that alone warrants one to arrogate with regard to them the authority that the public speaker assumes; and then the minister speaks from his pulpit with the authority of God, and neither in his Word nor in his works has God pronounced on these questions.

In the case of social issues which, though not referred to in Scripture, seem to us covered by its principles, the minister should proclaim and illustrate the principles, but he ought not to refer them to particular persons or movements. Thus, if he believes, as it would seem that a careful Bible student must, in the right of property in land, he ought so to preach ;

but he ought not in doing so to mention or to attack the Single Tax theory. Again, if he believes, as it would appear that he must, that our responsibility even as citizens is directly to God and to the state only mediately through him, he ought to preach this; but he ought not to use his pulpit, for an anti-socialistic crusade. The reason is that while what the minister honestly believes the Bible to teach is the interpretation which he must put on it, he may not with regard to the application of principles deny the right of others to apply them for themselves. Hence, while he ought vigorously to affirm the scriptural principles which the Single Taxer and the Socialist seem to him to deny, he ought not to denounce *them* for doing so. They may be as earnest, if not so intelligent, Christians as he is, and they have a right to insist that they be not publicly assailed in the house of the God and Father of us all.

c. In the case of sins explicitly forbidden in the Bible, such as the social evil, drunkenness, extortion, the duty of the minister is clear and simple. He ought not to be any less direct and emphatic than the Word of God itself, and, hence, he should be as direct and emphatic as he can be. He must neither spare nor forbear. While, of course, tact is always to be observed, directness like that of Nathan before David will often be of all methods the most tactful. Because God is with the minister, he cannot have too much holy boldness when the Bible assures him that he is with God.

And yet it must be added that even with regard to evils explicitly condemned in Scripture the minister must be constantly on his guard against becoming only or chiefly a reformer and agitator. Regeneration rather than reformation should be his aim. The Gospel rather than the Law should be the burden of his preaching. Though men will heed the call to salvation only as they have been convicted by the Law, and though they can live the saved life only as they understand the Law, and though for these reasons the minister above all must be the preacher of righteousness, still, he has a commission as much higher than this as it is higher

than the mission of the mere social reformer. His great commission is to preach to the whole creation the "everlasting Gospel of the grace of God."

All this, and more, has been put so effectively by an English scholar and expert in the subject which we have been considering, Dr. W. Cunningham, in his very recent book "Christianity and Social Questions" that this paper may well conclude with his closing words¹¹. "The church indeed consists of men, each of whom as a citizen of an earthly kingdom, is called upon to do his political duties, as well as his other duties, in the name of the Lord Jesus. For ordinary purposes, in ordinary life, it may not be important, or even perhaps possible, for a man to distinguish that which is incumbent upon him as a citizen of an earthly realm from that which is incumbent upon him as a child in the family of God. But the distinction is of vast importance in regard to those who are called to office and ministry in Christ's Church. The terms of their commission lay down the limits of what they are to do by Christ's authority; they have no commission to put the affairs of society right, or to eradicate the evils in this present naughty world. In the Gospel of the grace of God, they have committed to them the supreme means of touching men personally, and inspiring them with high but practicable ideals. This is the grandest work to which any man can give himself; and it is a miserable thing if he fails to put his best energies into this task, and prefers instead to compete with journalists and politicians in guiding some project for social reform. It is to forsake the fountain of life, and to strain at accomplishing some apparent improvement by taking up implements that are less certain and less effective, even for securing human welfare, than the means of grace instituted by Christ himself. In his official capacity, as called to preach the Gospel of Christ, the minister is bound to set forth that which is good and to strive to attract men personally. The Old Testament prophetic office, with its denunciations of evil-doers survived in

¹¹ *Christianity and Social Questions*, p. 223.

St. John the Baptist's time, and his bold rebuking of vice; but it is at all events a very subordinate part of the Christian minister's duty, and one which is not to be discharged in a wholesale fashion without serious risk of alienating those whom it might have been possible to win. It is needful to look to the terms of Christ's commission, both as to the duties that are to be done and the manner of doing them. He sent his apostles on evangelistic work, and bade them administer the sacraments and exercise pastoral care; but He did not enjoin them to agitate for social reforms."

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