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I.

RITSCHL'S THEOLOGY.

THE rapid growth of the Ritschl school of theology in Germany during the last twenty years is a phenomenon which, whatever may be one's estimate of the theology itself, is deserving of careful attention. Though it may not yet have produced any marked impression in our own country, past experience shows that it cannot in the long run fail to find zealous representatives and advocates among us. It is well, therefore, to inquire what its merits and defects are. If our judgment is on the whole unfavorable, it will have to be in spite of the most extravagant claims of the adherents of the Göttingen theologian. They have inherited from him, as we may say, an arrogant assumption, a claim to little short of infallibility for themselves, accompanied by an almost contemptuous condemnation of all opinions dissonant from theirs. While such a tone naturally provokes opponents to vigor, or even bitterness, in their opposition, we shall seek to exercise a dispassionate judgment in the examination which we now undertake.

I. Let us first attempt to state the causes of the favor which Ritschl's theology has received. For the mere pretense of having found the only correct statement of Christian truth would not of itself have secured so large a body of devoted adherents. We shall find that the theology in question has characteristics suited to commend it to large circles of Christians. What are these characteristics?

1. It emphasizes the moral element in the religious life. It exalts the practical above the theoretical. According to some, it makes religion identical with morality; but its representatives insist that they make a distinction. As Herrmann puts it: "The founda-

IV.

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

SOCIAL problems are dividing public interest with Biblical problems. They are certainly neither unpractical nor unimportant to the Christian Church and its present and future ministers. Church Congresses and Congresses of Labor, Lambeth Conferences, Presbyterian and Evangelical Alliances, charges of Bishops to their clergy, and sermons and addresses of Moderators of General Assemblies on both sides of the sea, and baccalaureates of college presidents are challenging serious attention to them. The press—daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly—concerns itself with them, sometimes seriously and wisely, sometimes in the spirit of a shallow sciolism or a bitter, scurrilous partisanship. The most ancient and venerable scientific associations deal with them. New societies, learned or popular, are formed to study them impartially, or to advocate some particular theory or measure with reference to them. They have, year by year, taken larger and stronger hold upon collegiate and university instruction, and have gained a secure place in the curriculum of theological institutions. Some of the most popular novels select this theme. And plainly, these problems should not be left for discussion and decision to statesmen and politicians, to economists and sociologists and men of letters and professional “workingmen” only. The truth is more clearly recognized day by day, which Prof. Francis G. Peabody, in his Lowell Institute lectures of last winter, expressed so aptly and forcibly in these words (as they were reported): “Every social question is at heart a moral question; the highest ethical ideas alone can solve the pressing problems of the family, charity, temperance and labor: only as men can be brought to recognize their duties to society, as well as their rights as individuals, can a better social order ever prevail.” A Western correspondent of the *Congregationalist*, in a recent number of that paper, asks the pertinent question: “When will it be the pulpit’s turn to cause more light to break forth upon the political chaos?” Mr. Lowell’s question: “What bonds of love and service bind this being to the world’s sad heart?” ought surely to stir to deeper thoughtfulness and more earnest action the Christian conscience. With our views on the vital connection of morality

with religion, and on the fundamental position and importance of religion, we must maintain the right and duty of the Christian Church and her ministry, to take a warm interest and an effective part in the study, discussion and solution of these social problems. With reference to these great living questions, the Church in her ministry and her members has a right of utterance and of action not yet, we think, adequately recognized and exercised; a duty by no means fulfilled. If patriotism, philanthropy, piety and even an enlightened self-interest were aroused and enlisted, much might be at once accomplished towards the relief of undeniable distresses and wants, and much be done positively towards a better social order. There are problems within this field, complex and intricate, which are by no means ready as yet for solution.

We propose to consider *some of the offices of Christianity in respect to the social problems of to-day*. And we must look not merely at the problems themselves, but at the spirit of the age with reference to them, if we would understand these services. The temper of our time is certainly not, in all respects, favorable to the wisest, safest, most thorough dealing with the great questions of social life and order. It is a time of unrest, of deep dissatisfaction and perplexed questioning, rather than a time characterized by clear discernment and well-reasoned conclusions as to the nature, the needs and possibilities of society, evils and their remedies, good and the mode of its attainment. The Church and the world confront on different sides the same grave problems, and each in its own way; disquieted by what it sees to exist, and what it apprehends to be desirable or urgently necessary; by the way in which it construes and interprets the present situation and its own responsibility (or that of others) for it; by the belief which it entertains as to the powers that are requisite to relief, reform, or progress, and the way in which those powers may become available and be applied.

The Church is ill at ease in view of the social situation. We, who believe that for society, as well as for the individual man, godliness has "promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come," cannot be content with things as they are. Surely neither we, nor our fellow-men, are enjoying the complete fulfillment of this promise. Neither can we who believe that earth's realization of the hopes of the future is to be ushered in by larger gifts of the Spirit and the fuller development and application of the inherent power of the gospel, rather than by convulsions and catastrophes and new miracles of power in the physical sphere, be satisfied with what these eighteen centuries have wrought. We cannot exonerate ourselves (the Church), and hold the gospel and other agencies, outside of and above or below ourselves, responsible for the

slow and partial triumph of Christianity in the social life of earth. It is not of the gospel that we have cause to be ashamed, but of our understanding and use of the gospel. Just so far, therefore, as spiritual life has been quickened within the Church, bringing a profounder sense of the obligation of Christians to do the whole will of their Lord; just so far as the Church has come to the recognition of the fact, or been stirred by the apprehension, that in any direction or relation she has come short even of the endeavor to do her whole duty; just in that proportion her unrest is reasonable and right.

The Spirit and providence of God have wrought and are working like results in other relationships of hers. The wail of the heathen world, the cry of the unevangelized masses within the borders of Christian lands and Christian communities, have begun to disturb her contentment with the narrow activities, the stinted consecration, the petty sacrifices of the past. The demand of the world upon her is breaking in upon her from many sides and in many ways. She is forced to think of the account which she must render as steward of manifold grace. For the very reason that she is not of the world she has it all the more in her power and is all the more under obligation to be to the world a mighty agency for good.

While sociologists, economists, jurists, statesmen and philanthropists are studying with new zeal and seriousness the many important theoretical and practical problems of sociology, the Christian Church has begun to be alive to her peculiar and practical interest in them. And her disquiet is intensified by her discovery of her ignorance and indifference in the past, and her want of preparation and competence in the present, to do what she plainly has the call and should have the power to do towards healing the hurt and promoting the welfare of society.

While the Church is thus ill at ease, the world is vexed by fiercer agitations. Whatever may prove to be the quarter from which or the shape in which the help must come, these social questions concern in the first instance and most directly secular relations and rights and duties—relations of man to man and class to class and interest to interest—relations of "the classes and the masses," the services and the privileges, the toils and perils and rewards, both of labor and of possession. It is there that the turmoil and the strife manifest themselves, there that the inequalities and rivalries and competitions appear most clearly in themselves as well as in embittering contrasts, which are wrought out in their results. It is there that the loud complaint of wrong and outrage is most clamorous, and that swift and often violent redress is sought.

Even where no volcanic outburst of the grosser socialism, com-

munism or nihilism has disturbed the peace and at times threatened the very existence of organized society, unrest is prevalent. Neither is it relieved by the multitude of counselors and the confusion of their counsels. When action follows so promptly upon the utterance of a specious theory or the shouting of a popular watchword, the conditions of the problems under debate are often suddenly and surprisingly altered. Discussion and actual conflict must both be taken into account as present factors in the situation; sometimes the one precedes, again the other.

As for the multitudinous counselors and counsels that show no sign as yet of allaying the unrest, of which they are at the same time witness, exponent and fomenting factor, they cover the widest ground and present themselves in bewildering contrast one with another. At one end of the line we are presented with the calmest and coldest of reasonings and speculations; at the other, the favorite argument is the bullet and the bomb. No ancient philosopher rivaled in assumed dignity and pretension the leaders of the extreme right; the extreme left is marshaled by the most Hibernian of Fenians and the most savage of the assailants of the czar.

On the philosophic and scientific side theories are propounded, some of which are wide as the universe in their ambitious scope, and which by their very terms cut off the very possibility of help or relief, even through the highest interventions of wisdom, experience and sympathetic and self-sacrificing devotion. There is, *e. g.*, the doctrine which describes social science, or sociology, as having for its object "to explain the constitution and movement of human societies considered as natural phenomena, and the laws which such bodies obey irrespective of any individual volition" (*Academy*, Nov. 29, 1890). So far forth as the view is consistently held that these are purely natural phenomena—words being used in their natural sense—what is there to do but wait until these phenomena work themselves out? The intervention of any "individual volition" whatever, human or divine, is an impertinence. Involuntary interventions may be watched and studied, but cannot be supplied. And, at the other extreme, stands the brutal assault of nihilism on all existing social order. Whatever is must be swept away. Nothing more unequal, unjust or oppressive can take its place. The mere doctrine of chance promises some improvement. This multiplication of proposals and methods, broad and narrow, comprehensive and specific, offers a wide opportunity for future comparison and choice. But plainly the hour of relief is not yet.

This being the general state of mind in the Church and in the world in regard to the many serious and intricate social problems, which are for us in part an inheritance from some crisis in the past,

in part a development of our own time, in part a *κτῆμα ἐς ἀσί*, what has Christianity to say to men and to do for men with reference to the relations and interests of this life? The fact that the intervention of the Church is not on all sides earnestly solicited, and if proffered would be, by some, vehemently rejected, neither relieves the unrest of the Church nor can be allowed to silence her voice or arrest her action. It becomes her only the more diligently to learn what it is given her to say, and what she is bidden to do. She is under authority, but not that of the world. She has a trust to fulfill, and learns its conditions not from its beneficiaries but from Him who devised it and gave it to her in charge. And the unfavorable temper of the world only redoubles her obligation to carefulness and faithfulness. Meekness of wisdom and undaunted courage and loyalty become a more essential endowment.

We shall speak further and briefly only of the attitude to be taken and held by the representatives of Christianity with reference to these social problems and their solution. The very shape which these questions take in the Christian mind will be determined by its conceptions of God, man and the world. There was, therefore, good reason why the fourth course of the well-known apologetic lectures delivered by Prof. Luthardt at Leipsic, a few years ago, should deal with "modern views of the world and their practical consequences." He examined accordingly rationalism, pantheism, materialism and pessimism not so much as philosophical or scientific systems, as in their bearing on the great living interests of society. In the same spirit Martensen, Uhlhorn, Von Sybel, and others of like mind have upheld the banner of Christian morality and sociology in the very high places of the most atheistic social democracy of Germany. We have not yet heard so often as Europe has done declarations like these from the press and the platform: "God is the people's greatest enemy, for He has cursed labor" (the *Proletario* of Turin). "All authority, human or divine, must disappear, from God down to the meanest agent of the police" (*Campana*, of Naples).

The Church, listening to the one authoritative voice that speaks from above for her direction rather than to the confused and clamorous voices about her, some appealing, some protesting, and none quite sure what they should say, finds that she has three functions assigned her in this sphere. She understands them better when she studies them in the light of her own endowments and opportunities and the world's needs. These offices are a *conservative*, a *reformatory* and a *mediating* office.

This is the order in which we shall consider them, for this is the order of their natural relationship, dignity and importance. If the Church has a reformatory or a mediating work to accomplish

among men, it is because she has first received a divine commission under which she is to act; she has become the repository of divine truths and gifts and equipments which she is to hold fast, and on which she is to rely both for her own continued security and progress, and for her success in all work that she attempts for others. She will reform nothing unless she keeps in mind the divine ideal that has been set before her, and subordinates every impulse, purpose and effort to the reproduction of this in the condition and life of those whom she would reclaim. If she proffers her service as mediator she must seek to bring divided and contending men together as she brings them nearer to God after the method and by the instrumentality of His truth. Otherwise it will be the rejection of her service rather than its acceptance that may bring about a temporary reconciliation, as it was common and intense hatred to Christ that brought Herod and Pilate together, uniting them against Him.

When her work in the world is described as a warfare her antagonists are designated. The promises of divine guidance and help are given only for her battle against enemies who are both God's foes and man's. The only armor and weapons that will avail are divinely appointed and "mighty through God." She has no roving commission to visit ancient armories or modern arsenals to choose what may please her fancy or commend itself to her judgment as promising well. God's call summons her, God's truth instructs and directs her, God's provision supplies her. Her characteristic and constant attitude, whatever else it may be, must be conservative; it cannot be original and inventive. This will be more evident when we presently come to particulars.

And her mediating office among the men, the classes, the interests, the measures with which she has to deal must be secondary to the reformatory. There is room for a mediator's service, and need of it only where and because evil has introduced confusion and strife. Her grapple must be, therefore, first and chiefly with the evil.

Following, then, this order, we look more closely into the *conservative* office of Christianity and the Church in relation to social problems.

We shall regard the Church in its organization, its members, its instrumentalities and their use, as a representative, and a true representative, of Christianity in the world. Whatever other ends were to be secured by the institution, the maintenance and the development of the Church, we are concerned for our present purpose with the Church as ordained, equipped and commissioned with special reference to the condition and needs of the great human society, from some of whose members it is constituted, within which

it continues to exist and grow, and for the service of which it is designed and qualified. Whatever the Church may be as a monument to "the grace of God that bringeth salvation," whatever it may be as a nursery of the children of God, and a training school for heaven, it has a witness to bear and a work to do for God among men with reference to the relations and interests of this life. We shall concentrate our attention, therefore, upon the Church viewed in this aspect.

The Church is to be conservative in the first instance of *the position assigned her in the world*. Seeking constantly and with all docility to gain clearer conceptions and a fuller understanding of this part of the divine counsel, the Church is to maintain with a vigilance and resolution which nothing can weaken, and with which nothing can be allowed to interfere, the place which she is to occupy and fill. She may desire, she may accept no other. She does not go out to find a place for herself and a work which she can do to advantage, where she may be able to discover or make a lodgment for herself. She is not to advertise for a home or an employment. She does not throw herself upon the chances of life and livelihood. She does not appeal to the charity or the favor of men. She does not rely on the variety or the sufficiency of her capacities and qualifications, her versatility, her power of adapting herself to circumstances, her willingness to become "all things to all men." Her place is appointed, and she is to hold it to the end.

She is to be conservative, moreover, of *the instructions given her*. She may be bidden to keep herself unspotted from the world, but she may not limit herself to this, for this is not all her charge. She has seen the grave and harmful error of those who would have her seclude herself, and refuse her appointed work for fear of spot. She is to enter the homes of men, not the refined and pure only; the manifold and diverse forms and spheres of the activity and industry of men; the most transient and the most permanent of the relationships of men, to execute a commission, and do a great work, from which she cannot come down to go into retirement. If she is to be fertile in invention, ready in resource, facile in adapting her testimony, her appeal, her protest, the manifestations of her sympathy, and her productive effort to the endless variety of the conditions in which men are found, this must always be strictly within the line of her commission. Where the letter of her instructions is not at once clear, and she seeks to learn and fill herself with their spirit, she must see to it with the utmost carefulness and the extremest jealousy, that she do not negligently or unwittingly allow some other spirit to mingle with and vitiate or supplant the spirit of the divine orders under which alone she has warrant

to act at all. If the appeal in the days of the old prophets of Israel (Is. viii. 20) was "to the law and to the testimony," in judging of necromancers and soothsayers and their pretended wisdom, she must ever have recourse for herself, as she is ever to point men, to the divine directory of life and conduct. From this she is not to make or suffer appeal. Going out into and doing a work in a world in which the declared will of God is usually the last and least object of concern to men, she must for herself be most exemplary and scrupulous in exalting and executing her commission.

And now, to enter more into detail, in respect to *the truth which she is to hold and to proclaim*, with reference to the order and the disorder of society, and the social problems in regard to which the Church must speak and act, what shall she emphasize, and how? High pretension has not elsewhere always brought relief to the men whom it has addressed. How shall the profession of the Church be proved to be no presumption; her interposition become anything better than a new element of confusion in a society already sorely perplexed and in great distress? If neither a decorous scientific remonstrance, nor a boisterous communistic clamor is to bow her out or thrust her out from this field of service, where need is so great and so little has as yet been effected, to what great truths and principles is the Church to bear her unvarying, unfaltering witness? To what law of life and power of life is she to invite and summon men to subject themselves, as she submits herself, in all things and in all circumstances?

In this sphere, and for our time perhaps more than for any that has gone before it, it is especially necessary that the Church be conservative of a high and pure doctrine in regard to such truths and principles as these: The reality and efficiency and rightful supremacy of moral and spiritual entities and forces; the reality and the transcendent importance of moral and spiritual interests; the maintenance of a due proportion and a right relation of things material to things spiritual; and therefore, of course, the supremacy of God and things divine; the uncompromising assertion of the reality and the authoritative nature of God's revelations of Himself in His Son and in His written Word; the dignity of manhood, in the assertion and exposition of which the Church has a witness to bear, which, whatever the appearance, is higher in fact and more far reaching in significance and bearing than the most pretentious and delusive offer ever made by the great tempter to our first parents, or by modern philosophy to its adherents; the divine order and constitution of humanity and of society; the true mutual relations of the present life and the life to come; the truth that here "man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he pos-

sesseth," while yet possession is no proof of extortion, usurpation or fraud; the great principle in the divine economy, whose importance is indicated to the Church by the fact that her Lord took occasion so often to reaffirm it, that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath"—a principle so utterly opposed to the communistic tenet that "to him that hath not shall be given, and from him that hath shall be taken away that which he hath;"* the principle that there are distinctions—natural and circumstantial—in essence, in power, in possibility, in right, not to be obliterated, because they owe their existence to the creative and providential orderings of God, so that to enter, as much modern revolutionism does, upon a war of extermination against them is to join issue with God;† the principle that the second table of the divine law, the second great commandment, upon which many without and some within the Church would concentrate an all but exclusive attention, can never be duly honored or fulfilled, except in its secondary relation to the first; the grand principle of the dignity and blessedness of honest, earnest toil; the law of increase and conquest in many of the most important departments and relations of life, that losing is finding, that sacrifice is acquisition, that submission is ascendancy, that surrender is triumph. Now these are social truths and principles of the first magnitude. Their special relevancy to the social needs of our time, and their peculiar significance with reference to the social questions that are under debate, need no proof. Nor is this the time and place to array the evidence that these are truths and principles clearly set forth in that Word which is for the Church the charter of her existence, and the law-book for her faith and action. A Christianity that should doubt or question them is at once put on the defensive in regard to its right to its own name.

Such truths may be unpalatable among men—in unequal degrees perhaps—but all distasteful, and some of them irritating, to the world, and particularly to the classes of men and the types of thought that in our time assume most confidently, not only to be "advanced" and "enlightened" and "emancipated," but to be supported by the general suffrage. Nothing could be more suicidal to the Church as healer and helper to disordered and distressed humanity than that she should, either at the outset or by any sub-

* For interesting illustration of our Lord's use of this principle see Latham's *Pastor Pastorum*, p. 312.

† For a startling exhibition of the way in which and the extent to which civilization and progress rest upon, perpetuate, and in their way even intensify these inequalities, see Archbishop Magee's *Gospel and the Age*, p. 37, in a sermon on "The Final Overthrow of Evil."

sequent concession, accept the world's tastes and judgments as the criterion of truth or a rightful rule of action. She looks in another direction for her standards of truth and of duty.

Where these truths have simply been overlooked, the steadfast acceptance of them by the Church, and her loyal and reverent recognition of them, should secure from men about her at least the acknowledgment that they are worthy of account. Where they are more positively challenged and denied, the witness of God's Word in their behalf to the Church, and through the Church, should go far to establish them against the conclusions of individual reason, or the impressions derived from personal consciousness. The profounder the conviction of the Church, and the more staunch her adherence to that which she accepts as from the Scriptures, and from the Spirit of God illustrating its preciousness and proving its power, so much the more weighty becomes the obligation of all sincere inquirers after truth to consider this testimony and to confess the force of the supporting evidence.

We do not press the consideration that the Church surrenders her only peculiar vantage ground, which is a matter of no small moment, when she fails to be conservative and steadfast here. She has no right to any vantage ground that is not given her by the truth which she represents, and for which she should stand at all times and at all hazards. She is not manœuvring for position, as skillful generals do, or as adroit yachtsmen do at the start and at every turn in a hotly contested race. She has received a trust, and holds it. Ancient Rome, at the end of the first century, ignorant of and indifferent to Christian truth, could marvel at Pliny's report concerning the early Christians that their *sacramentum*, their military oath, most inviolable of all engagements, was, *inter alia*, that they would not deny a trust or disown a deposit. Let the Church of all ages be emulous of a like fame in regard to the trust and deposit of the faith "once for all delivered to the saints." Holding and proclaiming these truths on the ample warrant that is hers, she exhibits to the world one of her most marked qualifications for helpful and efficient dealing with social relations and problems.

These are truths and principles which society greatly needs, bearing as they do directly on many of the most undeniable of human wants, and throwing as they do light from heaven on many points in respect to which human wisdom and experience are in the greatest straits. It is for the Church to reassure herself in respect to these truths, not solely by considering their source and their primary credentials, but also constantly by putting them to the proof which they invite. They demand application. Let the Church then confidently claim for them this trial, using them first

within the sphere of her own life where none can gainsay her right so to employ them, and then challenging like use of them by others. They offer to society in all its forms, and parts, and exigencies, a basis solid and durable enough, and a bond flexible and strong enough for any crisis or any strain. No necessity of the whole will prove large enough to exhaust their resources, no want of the individual too minute and transient to be touched by them with saving power.

We were to consider next the *reformatory* office of Christianity. There are those who deny us the right to make any such claim in its behalf.

Writers of the school of Mr. W. R. Greg (author of *The Creed of Christendom*) declare Christianity to be essentially anti-reformatory. Their mildest arraignment charges it with being apathetic towards social and other secular improvement. Their sharper attacks lay stress on its characteristic "other worldliness," which leads it to look to another life, not for retribution only to evil-doers, but for the correction of the inequalities and other ills of this life, instead of summoning it to present and energetic action for their mitigation or removal.

Within the ranks of socialism, while there are "Christian socialists" who find the highest warrant for their beliefs and efforts in the truths and spirit of Christianity, and who only claim for these a more complete and consistent application, and while some of the more distinctively socialist assemblies (like the Gotha Congress of 1877) have prudently contented themselves with declaring religion a private affair, the prevalent feeling in socialist circles is that of sullen or pronounced hostility to Christianity. Those whose doctrine is "pan-destruction," as an indispensable prerequisite to the needed reconstruction of society, are not alone in their denunciation of Christianity as essentially anti-reformatory. Less destructive reformers of this school will yet be found to hold religion and Christianity "main pillars of the established order of things, and irreconcilable obstructives to all socialist dreams."* Even tenets as innocent in appearance as this—that each individual should have complete command of his own powers of labor and entire possession of their product—will hardly claim the support of Christianity in the face of its conspicuous and emphatic teaching as to the mutual obligations and ministries of the "members" and the "body." Has the hand, *e. g.*, exclusive right to the entire enjoyment and product of its powers and their use? The wider prevalence and the more rapid progress of socialism within the last generation is traced by some of our most thoughtful observers and students to a decline of

* Rae's *Contemporary Socialism*, p. 224.

religious faith among the masses.* This is often seconded, if not caused, by the disappointment of their visionary and unfounded expectations.

In the face of these and all like arraignments of Christianity, and in the presence of the appalling multitude and variety of human ills, we vindicate for our faith a reformatory purpose and power, purer, higher, kinder, more thorough and effectual than the world can show beside. Our present concern is with the proof and illustration of this within the field with which current social problems have to do.

Christianity while conservative, as we have been insisting, is not blindly so—conservative of all that exists. It does not assume that all is right and needs only to be kept right. On the contrary, the reason for its appearing in the world is that evil is so prevalent, so malignant, so pestilent, that it controls so many of the active forces in human life, and that the agencies which are not ruled by it are so utterly inadequate to its subjugation and expulsion. It appeals to every man in his own behalf and in behalf of his fellow-men. It intervenes to protect and serve all imperiled interests.

Its concern is for salvation, and that in no narrow sense. Its reformatory work derives all its vitality and power, its breadth, its prospect of permanence, from the fact that Christianity is the religion of redemption; and this includes, with individual rescue, "the transfiguration of society" (Bishop Westcott). Its grapple is with man's estrangement from God, in all the spheres, and all the forms, and all the degrees, in which this shows itself. Because moral and spiritual evil take such advantage of natural evil, and make such powerful use of it to God's greater dishonor and to man's more complete undoing, Christianity deals with man's relations to it. Many of the forms of natural evil it must leave unassailed, except as moral evil misuses them. Then it cannot be indifferent even to the temporal aspects and the earthly relations of the cares, privations, distresses and calamities of life. It seeks to transmute them into spiritual treasures to those who are subject to them, and into the bonds of a more tender and sacred union, and a more watchful and efficient helpfulness between man and man.

If the reformatory function of Christianity promises to be of any special value, justifying its demands and warranting its grand pretensions, it must be on the ground of the largeness of its scope, the elevation of its aim and standard, the purity of its spirit, the effectiveness of its methods and instrumentalities.

If we would do justice to the largeness of its scope, we must redeem this word "reformer" from some of its narrow and techni-

* See Laveleye, Mehring, Rae, etc.

cal associations. Christianity does not claim to be a reformer of morals and manners only, of the vicious and criminal classes alone, of defective or distorted educational systems, or industrial maladjustments, primarily and chiefly. There are reformers on every side to represent each of these and other single interests like these. Christianity restricts itself to nothing narrower than moral evil, social evil, everywhere in humanity.

In carrying out its behests there is a place for specialists—for a Wilberforce, a John Howard, a Dorothea Lynde Dix, an Earl of Shaftesbury—devoting the energies of many years to the redress of some one great wrong, or the mitigation of one great evil. All honor to them! But let us not conceive of Christianity as a specialist, in the line of some particular sympathy of our own, interested in some one behalf and for naught else. "The supremacy of Christianity," says Bishop Westcott, with rare force and eloquence,* "extends to all social organizations, to all civil compacts, to all imperial designs, no less than to all doctrines of God and the single soul." Christianity recognizes humanity as of one blood, establishing the unity of society and giving the whole a valid claim upon its service. It finds each unit in this great aggregate stamped with one image—the image of the King—though he be poor, careworn, sorrowing, erring, sinning. It can, therefore, never despise a real burden that weighs on a human life, or any disadvantage that retards the progress or threatens the welfare even of the humblest and feeblest of men.

Nothing is more contrary to the spirit of Christianity than contempt for the working classes and their occupations. Luthardt, Uhlhorn and Friedländer, Pressensé and Schmidt have shown us how far-reaching and fatal was this error in the philosophy and the practical life of ancient Greece and Rome. If we would do more complete justice to the aim and standard of Christianity, we must emphasize the fact that while it makes serious account of all the conditions and accompaniments of man's life, its chief care is for man himself. And here it is content with nothing less than the best results both to the individual and to society. It respects both to such extent that it will sacrifice neither to the other. It will have holiness in the heart and life of individual men, and therefore in their homes, their social life, their industries and trade and commerce, their art and politics. In behalf of God and man alike it resents with indignation the claim of the politicians and economists who warn ethics and religion away from their domain. It searches for sin as a fact and as a factor in social evils, the cause of many, the aggravation of all. Reform will be superficial, circumstantial,

**Social Aspects of Christianity*, p. 6.

transient except as Christ makes men "the obedient ministers of the divine will."*

Christianity aims to secure for man all that corresponds with the dignity of his origin and being, all that is demanded by the wants and capacities of his nature. And therefore it wars against all that impairs or degrades that nature through human act or neglect, whether one's own or that of others. It is reverent, and endeavors to discriminate, as many modern reforms and reformers fail to do, between the things that God has made and ordained, and that which man's ignorance, error and sin have made of God's works and ordinances. It hesitates to put forth its hand against any real work or ordinance of God. And while the work is going on, whatever may be true of the final issue, it is as Archbishop Magee says: "Not by the completeness of her conquest over evil, but by the completeness of her antagonism to all evil, that we are to judge how far she (the Church) is true to her mission." †

Recognizing the permanent and ineffaceable distinction between moral evil and natural evil, Christianity cannot wage its warfare against all those things which enter into the social agitations of our time (and of past ages as well)—inequality, poverty, care. Whatever aggravates these and brings them into confederation with moral evil it opposes to the end, and not in vain. But it can have no war with the constitution of things, as it came from the hands of God, and was by Him pronounced "very good." It accepts this as a divine verdict upon the original creation, rather than as an element of doubtful value in a poetic effusion of uncertain origin, which is no more likely to be reliable than the quasi-science of the same mythical story. It accepts social inequalities, as well as physical and intellectual inequalities, as certainties while the earth lasts, and as having unquestionably been in the past, tributary to civilization and progress; so with poverty and sorrow, conflict and suffering.

Yet if its view of these forbids it to have any such quarrel with them as it has with moral evil, it does not pass them by on the other side. It has ministrations to them that are all its own. It gives cups of cold water in Christ's name, which infuses a blessing into the draught. It teaches men by bearing others' burdens to fulfill the law of Christ. Its sincere and sympathetic grief carries a peculiar balm to hearts that are sad and sore. But with all this and beyond all this it looks to the reformation of souls.

As for its spirit we need say further only one or two things. Its earnestness is tempered and made convincing by its distinguishing

* See Archbishop Thompson's sermon before the Social Science Congress of 1865, *Life in the Light of God's Word*, p. 197.

† *The Gospel and the Age*, p. 45.

love and grace. These culminate in the self-sacrifice, of which its Lord gave the universe the great example, and in which it strives through Him to walk in His steps. Dean Merivale, the historian of *The Romans under the Empire*, emphasizes this as the great contrast between pagan and Christian society.* The contrast is yet to be wrought out in all its completeness. Christianity insists upon personal relationships and personal interest as the condition of all healing and lasting helpfulness to needy men. In poverty, in sorrow, in perplexity, in vice and crime man needs the touch of personality. This ministration cannot be made over to laws and institutions. And Christianity, while developing to the highest sensibility and strength responsibility for self, rebukes the disposition to exculpate one's self by charging other men and society with their faults, and accepts to the full measure man's responsibility as his brother's keeper.

As for its methods and instrumentalities it approaches the reformation of society through the reformation of the individual, instead of relying, as socialism does, on the artificial, summary and, if necessary, violent reconstruction of society, as the means of attaining the good desired for the individual. It seeks the truest liberty of man—liberty under the divine law—with the greatest stability of society. It works from within, outward. It works as leaven, interpenetrating, and so transforming the life, or the mass, into which it is introduced. It is not used like the sculptor's chisel, on the assumption that the material is all that it should be, or good enough for its purpose, and needs only to be externally fashioned to proportion and beauty. Inasmuch as here is a mighty transformation of the material itself, and not simply an external improvement, it claims command of the powers of a higher life, reaching down into and perfecting the man himself in all the conditions and relations of this life. There was a time when Christianity was accounted little more than a philosophy, a doctrine. The reaction of our day tends indisputably, in many quarters, to belittle both doctrines and institutions, emphasizing only the moral, the practical. An entire Christianity is needed. The irregular, sporadic enunciation even of a divine truth and a divine law is not enough. This must be supplemented by and embodied in the institutions of Christianity, securing permanence, stability, consecutiveness, progress in the religious and in the social and secular life. Because the powers and relations of manhood are what they are, Christianity insists on the obligations of man to work. It protects and defends work and its products. It maintains the rights and expounds the uses of property and capital, and that in the interest of the masses, as well

* Lecture in *Faith and Free Thought*, pp. 343-387.

as in that of the prosperous classes.* It holds masters and rulers to their responsibility. In view of the growing complexity of society, and the advances of civilization, it becomes only the more serious, earnest, vigilant in watching the new complications that arise.

Many of the sorest temptations and most serious perils to men come in connection with undeniable rights and unquestionable advantages, *e. g.*, the development of industry, increased mastery over nature, the triumphs of machinery, the division of labor. Dependencies are multiplied, *e. g.* the dependence of employed on employers, who, in their turn, are in the grasp of conditions existing perhaps on the other side of the globe. The insecurity which thus threatens employed and employers alike, subjects to the severest tests the manhood, the morality, the piety of all. Nothing less than the divine transformation which Christianity works, the mutual forbearance which it inculcates and develops, can stand the strain of the social problems which are before us and upon us. Our welfare will otherwise be our destruction.

We may speak much more briefly of the *mediating* function of Christianity. In the spirit of her Lord (Luke xii. 14: "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?") the Church may well refuse to be made directly an arbiter in the strifes of men. But her mediation is always timely, and should contribute much to the solution of the vexed social problems of the day. As her Lord is the "only Mediator between God and man," she is often the only promising mediator between man and man. Her intervention is of peculiar and unique worth because of that which she represents, and because of her rightful attitude with reference to the questions that agitate and divide men, the parties to these controversies, and the settlement which it is her aim to bring about. She can speak with a disinterestedness and a conciliating kindness that are all her own; as well as with a firmness and an authority that no other may assume to use here.

One of the most interesting papers presented at the recent meeting of the Social Science Association, at Saratoga, was that of Mrs. Charles R. Lowell, of New York, on "Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration," which she characterized as the civilized rather than the uncivilized way of adjusting controversies between employers and employed. The success of this method of voluntary arbitration she held to be dependent on increase of intelligence, love of justice, honor and faith. If the Christian Church cannot contri-

* Pope Leo XIII, in his late Encyclical, on "The Condition of Labor," says with good reason: "Our first and most fundamental principle, when we undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property."

bute, beyond all other agencies, to the development of these conditions, then the very nature and claims of Christianity need reëxamination that we may see to what extent and for what it is to be received.

The Christian Church never assumes to speak the only word that is to be spoken on the delicate, complicated and important problems with which we are now dealing. It was not mere courtesy to guests assembled in his own Cathedral church, nor shrewd policy, but profound and genuine Christian wisdom, that prompted Archbishop Thompson to say to the Social Science Congress in York in 1865:* "There is room enough for us and you. . . . If the minister of Christ and the social philosopher can consent to recognize each other's functions, and to forego mutual prejudices, there is much that they can do in common. . . . The Christian minister needs to check and correct first impressions by the deliberate observations of the philosopher. The philosopher needs the kindly influence of the minister to clothe in love the somewhat hard doctrines which he receives, and to commend them to those for whom they are intended. Their work is one and the same and they may help one another."

In the presence of the substantial facts of life, so often sad and stern, and little relieved by "the somewhat hard doctrines" of the philosophers, there is sore need of wise and effective mediation; for the facts alone, and much more the facts and doctrines together, develop misconception and misunderstandings, jealousies and rivalries and competitions, antipathies, antagonisms and bitter conflicts on every side. And the tendency in many quarters seems to be steadily and strongly away from "righteousness, joy and peace," for which Christianity stands, if need be, like Athanasius, *contra mundum*.

When men maintain that economics is a science of natural fact and law, from which all moral considerations are to be as rigorously excluded as from our study of the growth of the wool on a sheep's back, it is time for Christianity to call for a more serious and satisfactory dealing with the question: "How much is a man of more value than a sheep?" (Matt. xii. 12). Where men are confessedly dealt with as "animated tools," the cast-iron law of inhumanity needs to be tempered by the Golden Rule. When merchants and manufacturers, grinding the faces of the poor, insist that they must act on "business principles," Christianity does well to call for the revision of those principles. Such a revision should at least divide attention with the revision of the creeds of Christendom.

Not officiously, nor in the spirit of self-righteousness, but with a

* *Life in the Light of God's Word*, pp. 198, 199.

humility and a penitence and a quickened earnestness becoming her in view of her own frequent forgetfulness of unquestioned truth, and her neglect of duty and opportunity, the Church of Christ and her members may well proffer their mediation. We suggest a few of the oft-forgotten truths and the neglected rules of life which she does well to hold up by word and deed before and among needy and perplexed men.

The great departments of social science—a reformed and progressive jurisprudence, industrial relations, education, charity and beneficence, and the rest—suggest also the regions in the actual individual and social life of men where the need is sorest, the complication most serious, the contention most acute and embittering. Christianity should be the most ardent and worthy representative of such truths and principles as these: the humanity of man and the brotherhood of men; the binding obligation and the healing power of the Golden Rule, not in the negative form in which Greek philosophers and sages of India and China have propounded it, but in the affirmative form in which Christ announces it; the relative importance and proper order of duties and rights, which moral philosophers may still discuss, but which Christianity, slighting neither, establishing and securing both, sets forth thus—your rights and my duties, rather than my rights and your duties; the subduing of the spirit of self-assertion and self-seeking everywhere, and the enthronement of the divine spirit of self-sacrifice; the subordination of material gains and advantages to the attainment of spiritual progress and unity of spirit among men; deeper concern for the removal of wrongs and the alleviation of evils, than for the prevalence of any favorite theory or policy with reference to them. If in these points, to speak of no others, the mediating office of Christianity be discharged eagerly and faithfully, she will have done what she can to make of society a very kingdom of God. Such natural evils as are irremovable will have lost most of their bitterness, and oppression and injustice and the spoliation of man by his fellow will be a memory of the past.

Social life, society, will be acknowledged and treated as the ordinance of God. This divinely ordained society is an organism which becomes more highly and variously complex. Its primary, permanent and indestructible elements—the family, the State, the Church—providing for home life, civic life, and the religious life of men, in fellowship with God and with one another, continue to the end, fulfilling their appointed office. The industrial life of men, protected and promoted by less fixed and unchanging institutions, finds shelter, honor, nurture, in its largest expansion and its most diversified development, proving the reality of the dominion con-

ferred on man over lower life and matter, and ministering to varied enjoyments and rich and satisfying usefulness.

Every individual being within this ever-unfolding society will be held to possess a divinely conferred dignity and worth, which none may violate or question. This distinguishes humanity from all beside, and guarantees its unity. Within the largest variety of the relationships and activities of men a divine law rules, controlling ends, method and spirit. The lawful ambitions, competitions and emulations of men will be chastened by supreme love to God and genuine and unfeigned love to fellow-men. Whatever man may become, whatever he may acquire, the original capacities of his being, physical and spiritual, will be held as a trust; all that he comes to be by development and culture is still a trust; all that he acquires in the use of any and all of these powers is yet a trust for God and for fellow-men. Divine favors, human successes, only widen the sphere, vary the opportunities, and intensify the obligations of man's stewardship. The ideas of "liberty, fraternity and equality," so often sundered from their divine connections, emptied of their true meaning, and filled with new and strange content, will be again put into right relation to the supremacy of God, and His appointments and providential ways with respect to men.* They will be held in harmony with the truths of man's real and manifold dependence and subordination, and of ineffaceable differences in original capacity and opportunity, the natural results of man's activity, and the allotments of God's providence to him. Respect, sympathy, love, helpfulness, hearty coöperation, will make of life among the children of our Heavenly Father, something infinitely more and better than the most visionary theories of encyclopædists ever saw in it. Industry, trade, commerce, and all the legitimate activities of men, will be restored to their proper place as instrumentalities for the general good. They will be redeemed from their present enslavement to greed and in general to personal and selfish ends. Man's dominion over the earth will be extended, perfected and exercised not for his own aggrandizement, but for the honor of God and the service of men. He will be greatest in the kingdom of earth, as he is declared by Christ to be chief in the heavenly kingdom, who serves most and best. This dominion itself will supply an enlarged and solid basis for ever-advancing spiritual enjoyment and attainment. There will be an easier transit from earth to heaven.

CHARLES A. AIKEN.

PRINCETON.

* This was one special aim of men like Kingsley and Maurice in the hot controversy that was in progress in England forty years ago. *Kingsley's Memoirs*, abr. ed., p. 145.