

Our Contributors.

CLOSE OF THE CONVENTION ON UNEXERCISED RIGHTS AND UNUSED PRIVILEGES

BY KNOXIAN.

The Rev. Calvin Commonsense then addressed the convention. He said: I wish to make a few points for the special benefit of the Presbyterians present. You followers of Knox and Calvin are great sticklers for your rights. If a man interferes with what you call your rights in Church or State he generally retreats, thinking he has run against a porcupine. You, or at least some of you, live in a condition of chronic jealousy about your rights. You dream about your rights during the night and want to fight somebody about them during the day. You have written a great deal about the rights of the State, the rights of the Church, the rights of Assemblies, the rights of Synods, the rights of Presbyteries, the rights of ministers, the rights of elders, the rights of private members, the rights of adherents, the rights of conscience, the rights of everybody and everything. If there is not a standard work on the rights of the beadle it is because the beadle can assert his own rights so vigorously that he does not need anybody to help him. Some of these days we may have a work on the right of a precentor to sing through his nose. Somebody may publish a pamphlet showing that choirs have a right to quarrel. There is no need for a book to prove that people have a right to sleep in Church. Church-going people have been in undisturbed possession of that right since the days of Eutychus. It is in accordance with "use and wont" to sleep in church occasionally, and you Presbyterians have a most profound respect for those twins use and wont. Now I don't blame you for being vigilant in regard to your rights. These rights cost somebody blood and treasure, though I must admit some of you never paid much for them. What I do blame you for is that you talk so much about rights you never exercise, and want to fight about privileges you don't think worth while to use.

Now let us come down to some particulars. Presbyterians have a right to manage their own congregational affairs. How many of you attend the congregational meeting regularly? How many? In a membership of say three hundred, how many could you be reasonably certain to find at the annual meeting? Would you be certain to find two hundred, or even one hundred and fifty? If Sir John Thompson or some other statesman should bring in a law prohibiting Presbyterians from attending congregational meetings, every man able to get out of bed would be present, and sleighs would be sent for the invalids. The women would all be present too. What a grand turnout there would be! What fiery speeches! What defiant resolutions! The air would be filled with allusions to claymores and muskets and various other weapons. Men who could not hit a barn at fifty yards would proclaim their willingness to go to the front and die fighting for our rights. A greater than any human Government commands us to attend to the duties of the Church, and a kind Providence gives us an opportunity to do so peaceably if we don't raise a disturbance ourselves. Why are the duties so often neglected? If the right of self-government in Church affairs is worth fighting for surely it is worth exercising.

Supposing the Presbytery of the bounds were to say to any congregation: "You must stop governing yourselves and managing your congregational business. The Presbytery will appoint your managers and elders and other office-bearers. You just pay the money and keep quiet and the Presbytery will take charge of the concern. All you need do is furnish the funds." What a lively time there would be if any Presbytery were to take that position. The strongest Presbytery in the Church could not do it with the weakest congregation in the Church. The people would kick until the Presbytery thought it was struck by a cyclone. Well, if our rights are so precious that we would raise a rebellion in the Church rather than lose them, why not exercise them, and give more attention to congregational business.

Let me give you another illustration. Presbyterian people have a right to call their own minister. This is one of the rights they would fight for in the last ditch or any more comfortable place. Sometimes I am sent to moderate in calls after the people have been hearing candidates—abominable word that—for months. Usually I find about one-third or one-fourth of the members present. If the Government or the Presbytery wished to induct a man without consulting the people, all the members and adherents would be there with clubs to keep him out, but when they are asked to do the work themselves, quite frequently the attendance is not large and the unanimity is often conspicuous by its absence. Now if all the people would come with clubs to keep a minister out that they didn't want, why might not a respectable number of them turn out to exercise the right of calling a minister themselves? Quite often after the call has been moderated in it has to be carried around and the people asked to sign. If the right of calling a minister is worth fighting for it ought to be worth exercising.

I wish I had time to say something to the convention about the privileges some of you talk about fighting for but rarely use? What is the use in having an open Bible if you don't read it? Of what use is the privilege of going to church if you don't go? The privilege of social prayer is a precious one, but some of you never darken the door of a prayer-meeting. One of our highest privileges is to send the Gospel

to those who have it not. How much do you give for Home and Foreign Missions? It is a most precious privilege to be permitted to help the poor. How much do some of you give to the poor? One of the highest honours and most blessed privileges a man ever enjoys on this earth is to work for and with Christ. Are you all working for Christ?

Far be it from me to say that Presbyterian people are sinners above all others. I address you specially because I know you best and because most of you are ready to do the fair thing when the fair thing is pointed out. Nothing can be made of some of these other people. Now I ask this convention to say less about fighting for their rights and pay more attention to the discharge of their duties and the enjoyment of their privileges.

Mr Commonsense's speech made a profound sensation, and the members of the convention went home thinking that a man who talks about fighting for rights he never exercises and privileges he never uses isn't as wise as he might be. Some of the members inwardly resolved to say less about their rights and attend more faithfully to their duties.

THE CHURCH AND SOCIALISM.

BY J. H. W. STUCKENBERG, D.D.

Ought all persons to have an equal chance with respect to wealth and culture? Or should certain persons be privileged by birth and circumstances, while others are doomed to poverty, ignorance and misery? These questions lie at the root of socialism. If an equal chance belongs to all, then the present constitution of society is wrong and must be overturned; for nothing is clearer than the fact that all have not an equal opportunity to attain wealth, culture and the means of happiness. Not for equality, but for lordship and servitude society is organized. Titles, rank, legal and political advantages may be abolished, while all the realistic privileges of a favoured class remain, as possessions, means of education, avenues to position and influence. It is ominous that with the progress of culture the gulf between the favoured and the poorer classes is deepened and broadened.

Materialistic and realistic equality is the problem of socialism. This equality is presented as a demand of reason, of humanity. Socialists deny that the existing social inequalities are due to the nature of things. They regard them as artificial, traditional, the product of force and not of reason; and they hold that the social organization can be so changed as to put equal possibilities within the reach of all. Money values, capital, labour, wages, are social factors which can be changed by the society which created them. Whatever temporary expedients may be proposed for the relief of the poorer classes with respect to land, wages, labour, co-operation and the like, the logic of socialism means a social revolution which gives all an equal chance in the race of life. Socialism which now stops short of this ultimate aim is being educated rapidly toward this radical position, which is the centre to which every socialistic theory at last gravitates. We are simply considering a fact here, not the question of right and wrong.

The above makes it evident that the social problem involves the whole structure of society and affects everything that pertains to man in his associated capacity. Unless apprehended in this depth and breadth socialism is misunderstood, and the earnestness of the situation and the inevitable tendency of the movement are not appreciated. Socialism is a symptom of the age in itself; involving all the factors of society, and concentrating in itself the results of long historic and rational processes. So profound is the subject that long study is required merely to appreciate its depth; and in magnitude it is inexhaustible. Science, philosophy, literature, art, education, religion, politics, industries, commerce, life, all human interests are concerned.

When we pass from theory to the actual, practical socialism of the day, we find in it much that is visionary and wild. We deal with a ferment in the masses, not with a scientific system. So great is the variety in socialistic hypotheses that at first the study of the subject is confusing and bewildering. In its most general sense, the existing socialism is an effort of the labouring classes to rise to the advantages and privileges of the better situated classes. This effort is common to the whole movement; but the means for the attainment of the aim differ, and this gives rise to the different kinds of socialism. Some seek to accomplish their end by legislative means, others through revolution; some emphasize higher wages and less labour, others demand the nationalization of land and the transfer of all capital to the State. Socialism, even where it is already a monster, is still in its infancy, and it is hazardous to prophesy what it will become in its maturity.

The demopiac spirit manifested in some of the socialistic agitations has blinded many to the noble elements in the movement. There is a Christian as well as an atheistic socialism. The labourers have been subject to a marvellous awakening; they have become conscious of their inherent humanity and extreme degradation; and a mighty and resistless impulse leads them to seek to better their condition. Socialism is a movement in Christian nations, and is most general in the most advanced. Not the stupid and most degraded labourers are the leaders, but the enlightened and the more favourably situated. Christianity has emphasized the brotherhood of man; labourers have heard the announcement, and demand that what is preached shall also be prac-

tised. A socialist has said: "If we are made in God's image then we ought to be able to live in a way worthy of the image of God." The worth of man, the dignity of the personality, the equality of all before God, are lessons which socialists have learned from Christianity. Atheistic socialists pronounce Christ the first socialist; they declare that the humane elements in His teachings are the Gospel of socialism; and they hold that the prevalence of His spirit of love would meet all the socialistic demands.

But besides the noble aspirations which every Christian welcomes, socialism has also learned much from the materialism of the day, and many socialists are grossly carnal, ignoring the ideals of the spirit, denying God and immortality, and tramping on morality as well as religion. In many places socialism is anarchical as well as atheistic. But the careful student will discriminate between the essence of socialism, what belongs to its very nature, and the accidental attachments, what belongs to times and circumstances, and changes with these. Practical socialism is tentative, feeling its way, changing its dogmas as it progresses, and ever striving to learn and attain what is practicable. Its tentative character inspires the hope that with proper effort the noble elements may be promoted, while what is false and injurious may be overthrown.

Socialists alive to the situation are embittered by the prevalent views of other classes who ignore all the high aspirations in the movement. They feel insulted at the insinuation that more money is all they want. They are eager for culture, and many labourers are making great efforts to educate themselves, and to appropriate the best results of learning, particularly in science and political economy. They want all the advantages which the boasted culture of the nineteenth century gives, and cannot understand why they should be excluded from its blessings. They complain that their humanity is ignored, that they are treated as beasts of burden, as machines and tools, as mere things, not fit for good society; and this has aroused an intense class hatred. Not in external circumstances so much as in the arousing and developing of their consciousness to a conviction of the rights of their personality do we find the explanation of the uprising of the labouring classes. There are extremes and excesses, as in all great reactions and uprisings of the people; but the demopiac powers have not destroyed the truly human longings and aspirations.

A movement so radically affecting all the social factors requires the co-operation of all to direct it aright. Those who affirm that the Church can meet all the demands of socialism are no less mistaken than those who think that religion has nothing to do in the matter. Religion can do very much in this crisis which is hastening toward a new epoch in human history. While religion co-operates with other factors in solving the socialistic problem, there are some demands which it only can meet. What may be expected from the Church with respect to socialism can here be given only in a very condensed form.

1. The age urgently demands that the Church study and master the social principles of the New Testament. That Book contains a rich Christian sociology, which is now largely ignored by the pulpit and the pew. The New Testament respects the rights of property; but its greatest emphasis is on the duty of property. The possession is not absolute; the Lord is the owner, and Christians are His stewards. This excludes all selfish hoarding or use. All property is held under God, to be used in Christ's spirit, with His love and works as the model. Christ reversed the heathen view, so that in God's kingdom not he that is served most, but he that serves most is the greatest. Property, intellect, position, influence, mean responsibility and duty as much as privilege. "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" It is a Christian requirement that the Christian law of property and of all attainments and possessions should prevail in the Christian Church, instead of the prevalent legal and worldly views.

2. Literally and uncompromisingly the Church must be the embodiment of the social principles and practices of the New Testament. It must fully preach and fearlessly practise them. For Christians this demand is as imperative and absolute as it is self-evident. Christ drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple; if now they have turned around and have driven Him out, then the temple is not Christ's. Judgment must begin at God's house. It is a species of insanity to preach at people who do not hear the sermon, and to denounce evils not reached by the denunciation, while the persons and evils within reach are ignored. The worth of the soul must be treated as supreme; the personality must be exalted, as is done by Christ; that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, must be recognized as including earthly possessions; in the Church, as before God and in the Gospel, men must be treated according to character, not according to perverted and selfish worldly standards; and the socialistic epistle of James must be read and preached and practised. The Church of Christ is of course equally just to the rich and the poor; and for that reason it never becomes a palace in which the rich man fares sumptuously and is preached into Abraham's bosom, while Lazarus is made the companion of dogs and consigned to torment. Equal justice to all, in Christ's sense, means love and sympathy and help for all who suffer, whether they be rich or poor.

3. The age is realistic and demands of the Church a Christian realism. Empty professions, and that elaborate