

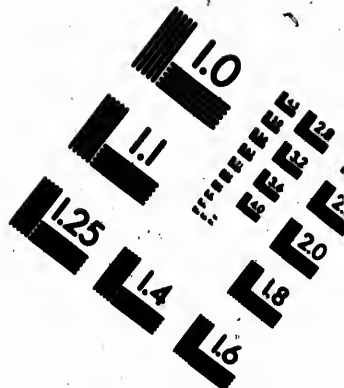
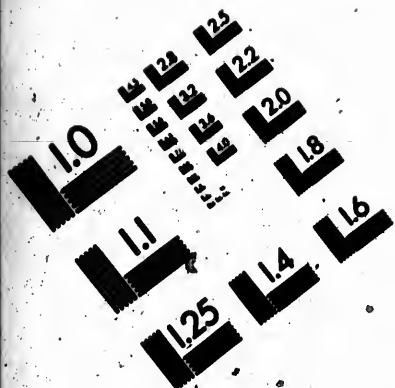


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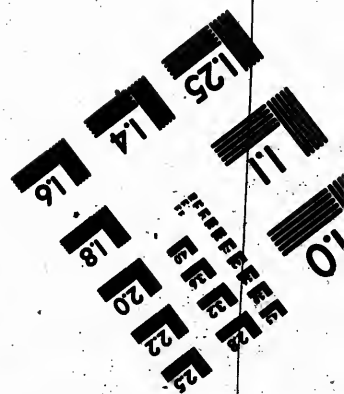
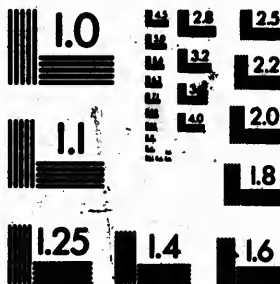
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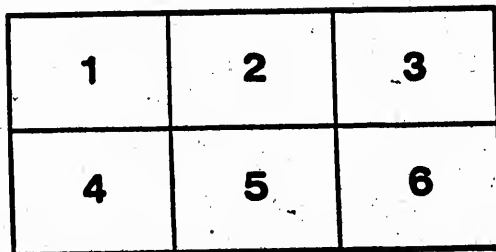
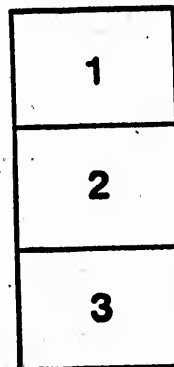
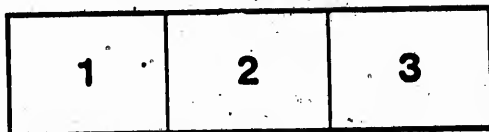
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CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL REFORMS.

BY

REV. W. GALBRAITH, M.A., LL.B., PH.D.,

TORONTO.

(Published by Special Request.)

Price, 3 cents each; 30 cents per dozen; or, \$2.50 per hundred.

TORONTO:

METHODIST BOOK AND PUBLISHING HOUSE.

1894.

Christianity and Social Reforms.

CHRISTIANITY is decidedly revolutionary in its mission. It finds everything in disorder, and aims at restoring harmony. It turns the world upside down. Right is inherent in the nature of God. The universe is constructed on the principles of righteousness. When right reigns, peace and prosperity flourish. When sin entered, it dislocated the universe, and turned everything into confusion. Christianity comes to restore all things.

Jesus Christ was a great Reformer. He announced that all human religions were false, feeble and insufficient to meet man's needs. He taught that Judaism was degenerate. In the Sermon on the Mount, He showed the weakness and the worthlessness of traditionalism, and undertook to restore religion to its original Divine conception. He proclaimed war against all existing evils in the Church and the world. He assailed the dignitaries of the Jewish Church, and came in open conflict with their teaching and conduct. He assailed all wrongs in individual, social and national life. It was in this way that He came to send a sword on the earth. He determined to put down, crush out and destroy evils in all their multifarious forms. Christianity struck at the foundation of slavery. It taught principles which, when carried into practical life, rendered the existence of this cruel traffic an absolute impossibility. It struck at the foundation of polygamy. This unnatural practice had grown up under the fostering care of all false systems of religion. Christianity shows that it is unnatural and contrary to God's original design. Though tolerated amid the weakness and darkness of former ages, it never received the Divine sanction. Christianity assailed the prevalent and pernicious practice of divorce, and restricted the sundering of the marriage tie to a

single cause. Under the old dispensation, God had declared that He hated "putting away." Jesus affirmed that divorce was antagonistic to God's original purpose, and could never have been permitted except upon the ground of ignorance and obduracy. Christianity proclaimed open war upon the inhuman system of caste, which had obtained from time immemorial amongst all peoples and religions. It proclaimed that within its pale there should be no distinction between Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female. All the subjects of Christ's kingdom are members of one great, holy, spiritual family. God is their Father, and they are all brothers and sisters in the Lord. The bond of unity and affinity is found in Christ-like goodness. When the whole human race becomes united by Divine love to God and each other, we may truthfully speak of the universal fatherhood of God, and the universal brotherhood of man. Then, and not before, these high-sounding terms, now often used in empty mockery, will have a real signification.

Christianity condemns and reprobates all selfishness and worldliness. According to its teaching, man is a steward of the manifold gifts of Heaven. Money is a talent, for the right employment of which he is held responsible. An unfaithful or perverted use of it evinces a spirit so utterly antagonistic to the whole genius of true religion that it precludes the possibility of receiving the treasures of Divine grace. "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke xvi. 11.)

In our day there is a strong tendency upon the part of many religious teachers to restrict the work of the Church solely to the spiritual well-being of the race. That, no doubt, is her primary and most important mission, but she also has to do with everything that affects man's rights, comforts and happiness in all temporal matters. Nothing that is essential to the good of man is a subject of indifference to God.

The book of Proverbs is the business man's directory.

John the Baptist poured the thunder of his rebuke upon all the prevailing vices in social and business life.

Christ always relieved bodily suffering before administering spiritual counsel.

No preacher was more intensely spiritual in his teaching than Paul, and, therefore, none was more forward than he to "remember the poor." (Gal. ii. 10.)

The Bible contains the rules of Christian etiquette and courtesy. It gives instruction in regard to all the reciprocal duties in the domestic circle, the Church and the State. It emphasizes the obligations of employers and workmen, the duties of kings, courtiers and subjects. It instructs us upon sanitary and commercial laws, and the settlement of disputes and redressing of all wrongs. The great need of society everywhere is the universal application of its principles.

Christianity has been in the world nearly nineteen centuries. Why, then, has it not accomplished its purpose and completely revolutionized human society?

Two classes in considering this question have assumed false positions: First, the extreme pessimistic sceptics, who affirm that it has done nothing; and secondly, the superficial optimistic students of Christianity who say that it has done everything that it was intended to accomplish. Both these views are wrong. Nothing is to be gained by depreciating or denying the good effects of the Christian religion. It has done much. It has completely changed and elevated the condition of woman. In every land where its influences are not felt, she has been treated as an inferior creature, a chattel for the market, or a beast of burden. It has created the Christian home, with all its sacred influences and associations. It has given a new and exalted standard of right and wrong. It has given birth to a new and grand conception of true manhood. It places before us the example of Jesus, and exhorts us to attain to the full measure of His stature. It has

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planted all merciful and benevolent institutions throughout Christendom. It has reversed the sad condition of the poor, and brought ten thousand blessings to their home. Before the advent of the Divine Author, all kinds of indignities, oppressions, and wrongs were heaped upon the poor; but Jesus Christ began His ministry by offering to them the blessings of the Gospel for body and soul, and throwing around them the shield of its protection. It has given strength, prosperity and permanency to all nations that have adopted its principles. It has mitigated all forms of evil. It has rescued countless millions from the bondage of sin, and translated them to the glories of Heaven.

But on the other hand, it has fallen far short of its Divine purposes and marvellous capabilities. What is the reason of this comparative failure? We answer: First, in the days of Constantine it was baptized with the spirit of heathenism, and these foreign and enfeebling elements, transfused through the entire Christian system, grew upon it like a parasite for more than a thousand years, and are still a formidable obstacle to its progress and achievements. Heathen doctrines, usages and habits still linger to a greater or less degree in all branches of the Christian Church.

We answer, secondly, that Christianity at this hour is largely baptized with the spirit of the world. Worldly maxims, methods and motives have invaded the heritage of Jesus. These are eating out its life, and obstructing all its efforts.

Great and grievous wrongs are still rank and rampant in the Church and in the world. The Church, by her individual members, and in her collective capacity, is doing a great and glorious work for God and humanity, but, unhappily, mediæval religion protrudes itself into the last quarter of this nineteenth century.

Fashionable and formal churches are found everywhere. The heathenish system of caste grows in Christian lands.

Expensive churches, with heavy debts, popular preaching, artistic music, wealth and self-indulgence, have invaded the fair heritage of God. Mission churches have become a necessity to meet the needs and the condition of the poor. If Christianity were in its normal state, there would be no mission churches.

Goodness would be recognized as the only basis of true brotherhood, and the rich and poor would meet together.

Intense, inveterate, stereotyped selfishness is crushing and blighting the world. It is seen everywhere.

You cannot enter a street car, railway coach, shop, mart or stock exchange, church or legislative hall, but selfishness manifests itself in forms which must be most offensive to a righteous God, and in striking contrast with the spirit and teachings of Jesus Christ. It forms immense monopolies and combinations on the one hand to grasp the wealth of the world. It forms protective associations and strong unions on the other hand for self-protection and to resist those grinding monopolies and combinations. It is manifested at both sides of the counter. On the one side, the would-be buyer wants goods at less than a living price, and drives the vender to deception and lying advertisements. Human beings, like wild beasts, prey on each other. The State, by defective or vicious legislation, manufactures paupers, idiots, lunatics and criminals, much more rapidly than the Church can correct its wrong-doing. Many of the rich grind the face of the poor.

What is known as the "sweating system" in industrial life is a disgrace to humanity, and should not be tolerated in any Christian land. Hard workers are often inadequately remunerated for faithful toil. Often on the other hand, the time is put in and wages demanded for work that was never performed. Paul's counsel to servants and masters (Eph. vi. 5-9) ought to be placarded in every store, factory and workshop.

Is pure Christianity, if rightly applied, competent to correct all these wrongs, and to bring society into loving, happy,

righteous harmony? I have no hesitation in affirming that it is thoroughly competent for this work. It operates along two distinct, yet not conflicting lines—Gospel and law. The Gospel teaches what men ought to be, and how they ought to live. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets."

The Gospel provides the example we should follow. In spirit and life, all men should be like Jesus Christ. They should transact business just as Christ would do if He were in their place. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked."

The Gospel presents us with the highest motives to a merciful and righteous life. It offers as an inducement for obedience to its teachings, the highest, truest and most mature manhood here, and the fullest felicity and glory hereafter.

The Gospel provides us with the necessary inspiration and power to live this life. In other systems of religion and philosophy, there is much excellent teaching, but there is no motive power. The strongest and best machinery is of no practical utility without an adequate power to put it in operation.

All the proposed plans and schemes for the reformation of society, outside the Gospel, are utterly devoid of the necessary motive power. To expect them to transform society, correct its abuses and redress its wrongs, is to expect from the human what can only be effected by the Divine.

The Gospel recognizes the degenerate and degraded condition of the human heart. All evil streams flow from this corrupt fountain. Like all true life, it works from within. Christianity comes to us with the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost. It does not propose to lop off or adjust the branches of vice. It tears it up by the roots. The Holy

Spirit makes man a new creature and inhabits him as His own temple. He destroys selfishness and fills the soul with a Christ-like benevolence. Christ commands His Church, not only to disciple the individual, but the nation.

When the majority in any nation will accept Christ as their King, and live according to the laws of His kingdom, the social evils and wrongs of that nation will largely disappear. This is the only help, and the only hope for this disordered and sin-cursed world.

The second line of operation adopted by Christianity is legislative enactments. It transfuses its spirit and life through human laws. Often the Church is expected to do what can be effected only by legislation. So long as there is wrong-doing, there must be the restraint of law. It is only indirectly that Christianity acts upon legislation. It creates right sentiments, and announces the foundation principles that should govern all political and national life. But it is for citizens as a whole to incorporate its principles in all social and national institutions. Laws and governments, industrial and commercial life, and all public institutions need regeneration by this indirect operation of Christianity.

Oh, that we could persuade all classes of society, in every place, to repent of their sins, to accept the Divine Christ by living faith, to have His spirit abiding in them as the inspiration of all their acts, to have His love enthroned in their souls, and to live according to the principles of His glorious Gospel. Then paradise would be restored; all men would have peace and plenty. The oft-repeated prayer taught by the Divine Master, would be answered in blessed experience. God's will would be done on earth as it is done in heaven. "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." (Psalm lxxvii.5-7.)

