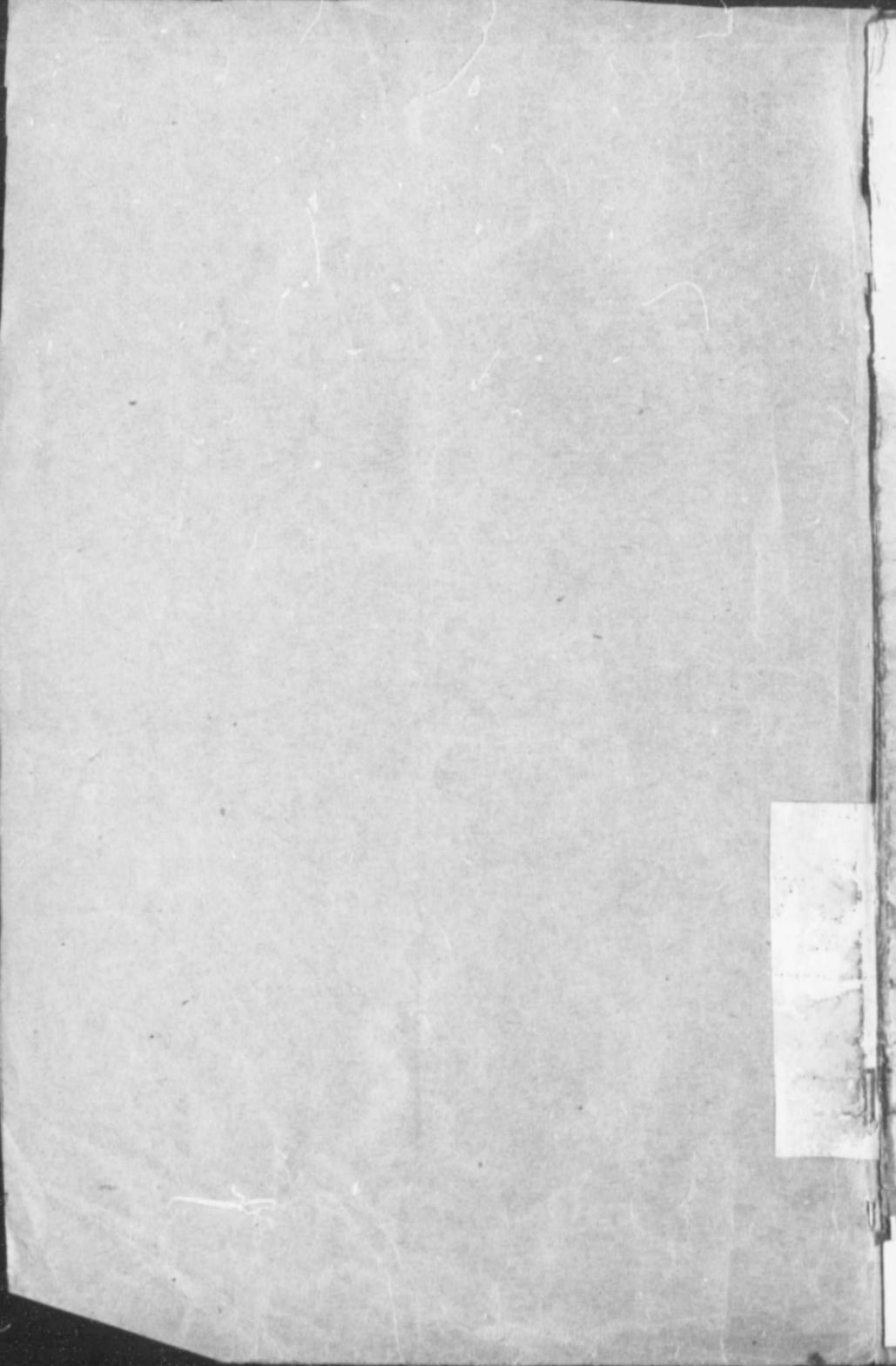


Our National Sin

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Something For Nothing



Amos on True and False Religion

Come to the house of God (Beth-el) and transgress; to the sanctuary (Gilgal) and multiply transgression; take the Sacrament every morning and give your envelope collection twice a week, and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened (a Eucharist) and proclaim your subscription lists and publish them; for this you love to do, O ye children of Israel. And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities and want of bread in all your townsites, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. . . . Therefore *thus* will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do *this* unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. Amos 4: 4-12.

Zechariah on Speculative Methods

Thus saith Jehovah my God, "Feed the flock of slaughter" (our newspapers still call them "the lambs") whose buyers slay them and hold themselves not guilty, and they that sell them say "Blessed be Jehovah, for I am rich," and their own shepherds pity them not. Zech. 11: 4-5.

The strong men of finance, who should be the guides and protectors of those less able or well informed than themselves, become their slaughterers.

Micah on Corrupt Leaders of the Commonwealth

The godly man perisheth out of the earth and there is none upright among men; they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. Both hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently; the prince asketh and the judge is ready for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth the mischief of his soul; thus they weave it together. The best of them is crooked as a brier, the straightest is as it were taken from a thorn hedge. *The day of thy watchman, even thy visitation is come*; now shall be their perplexity. . . . But as for me in the Lord I will keep watch; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Micah 7: 2-4, 7-8.

Amos and the Wheat Pit

Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy and cause the poor of the land to fall, saying, When will the month come that we may sell corn? and the sabbath be over that we may sell wheat? making the ephah small and the shekel great (i.e., making buying price low and selling price great) and dealing falsely with balances (and reports) of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes and sell the refuse of the wheat. Jehovah hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon and I will darken the earth in the clear day. Amos 8.

OUR NATIONAL SIN

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

Will Pentecost Come Again?

For many years we have been bemoaning the lack of Pentecostal influence in the Church. Frequently when earnest men have met for frank and intimate discussion, the subject of the lack of evangelistic spirit, the futility of old methods, the lack of power over men, and the decline in the number of young converts, has been a matter of regretful remark. Have converts been withheld because we have not been fit to take care of them, because we have found no really vital message to fit them for their tasks as citizens of our time, and no vivid vision from God flashing penitential pain through our own souls?

Surely Pentecost will come again. These strenuous days of trial and sorrow are preparing a new day for the world. Is the Church to lead or shall some despised prophet or movement from an obscure Nazareth arise to save the people? She holds her fate in her own hands. Only through some great decision which shall try her through and through, can she find her Pentecost.

The Commercial Test the Test of the Church

Ours is a commercial age. The complex pattern of our life interests are held together by a warp of commercial relations. Commercial values are fundamental. The spirit of a nation's commercial life is a true index of the character of its people. The power of the Church to-day, can be measured by her power to sanctify commercial life and to bring it into line with the ethics of her Master. Is it too much to say that judged by this test she stands impotent and speechless? She is inspired with no real faith in herself or her leader when she faces this task. Her missionary enthusiasm has developed its own organization and its battle-line of witnesses extends to every shore; her fervor for temperance reform has accomplished great results, but she has as yet found no programme or message for the reform of the business world. The majority of her members do not see why she should find one. She has scarcely a word of rebuke for the commercial sinners; she fattens on their booty, and she herself partakes of their iniquities. How many churches have speculated in real estate? How little denunciation do we hear of the cruelties of cut-throat competition as alien to the spirit of Christ; how little bewailing the kind of character the competitive life develops. "Is there balm in Gilead?" "It is twilight," says a Japanese proverb, "at the foot of the candlestick."

The Voice of the Church

At four General Conferences the writer has written the report on Ecological questions which was adopted by the Committee and the Conference. So prolonged and earnest has been the discussion in Committee that the report could only be submitted at the latest hours of the session, when adequate discussion was precluded. Though these reports have been widely circulated and sold in thousands of copies even outside the Dominion, there is little sign that they represent the real convictions of the Church on these vital questions. They have not determined the preaching, nor been the burden of our evangelistic appeals. That some discussion may be evoked and the convictions of the Church find adequate expression or be changed, this statement is submitted. It touches the core of the whole problem of social reform.

The Argument

Our argument may be briefly stated: 1. The supreme work of the Church should be to realize social justice through the regeneration of its members and their influence on society, till in social ideals, in commercial practices and stable laws the spirit of Jesus comes to rule in the affairs of men.

II. All wealth is produced by the community, and the wealth of any people at any one time, is a definite and calculable quantity.

III. In a state of social justice every man will receive a fair reward for his contribution to the common weal.

IV. If in a community, any man or class is able to capture wealth in excess of his contribution to the public good, someone must get less than his social service in justice calls for.

This self-evident proposition cuts very deep.

The Great Question

Is the Church strong enough, vital enough to produce a membership *who shall refuse to accept or hold any wealth they have not earned* because they see that the capture of such wealth must rob many others of what is rightfully theirs?

This question submitted to a banker, evoked the answer: "She is powerless." A business man said: "The commercial ideals of church members are no different from those of others. The system is wrong, but we cannot hope to change it." Another—a church member: "We are all entangled in an evil system. I am working for a change and will welcome it, but at present I must follow the laws of the game, as my competitors do."

In such an evil and perplexing case, what is the duty of the Church? What is the duty of the individual? What is my duty? Deliverance can come only through the growth of the social conscience which loves one's neighbor as oneself, and is therefore just.

No social system based on injustice should be allowed to continue among free men. Either it or the freedom must go. We pray "Thy Kingdom Come." That kingdom can never come to a society based fundamentally on injustice.

The Ethics of Co-operation

Nor is this the only great question on which the social conscience must be educated. In many parts of our country, notably in the Canadian western prairies, men are endeavoring to escape from the evils of competition and unrelated effort, by co-operative movements. These new great organizations are developing faster than the co-operative conscience, which is the only thing which can make them safe. The saving salt of such organizations is to be found in the ethics of Jesus. Has not the Church a great work to do to help these organizations to beget the spirit which will enable "every man to look not only on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." All men should learn to bear one another's burdens, as a Christian duty, if the higher form of community life, commercial and industrial organization is to become possible, and the law of Christ is to be fulfilled. Men who would not prove traitors to their country, which is the mass of people from whom they get, and with whom they share, their life, will for half a cent a bushel prove traitor to their co-operative company, which is a group of men upon whose fidelity they depend, and who depend on every associate's loyalty. The supreme virtue in a feudal society is obedience to superiors. The supreme virtue in a democracy is loyalty to one's equals for the sake of common ends. Where men accept the benefits they are in duty bound also to accept the consequent obligations. Without a recognition of this society cannot hold together. The Church has much to do to awaken the social conscience until co-operation may take ever larger and more beneficent forms, until all business and community government is pervaded by the spirit of brotherhood and the Christian democracy is established. The spirit of such a democracy says not only "I am as good as you are," but also, and with greater emphasis, "You are as good as I am," and allows this attitude of mind to determine conduct. Only by the growth of this spirit can a Christian commonwealth come into existence. What but the living influence of Jesus can beget it?

The Problem of Community Values

Let us look more closely at the most prominent features of our problem.

All values are created by the community. No hermit can accumulate wealth. Only when men trade and barter can values exist. Neither land, nor machine, nor fabric has value until human life gathers around it, and then sometimes fabulous values are possible.

The community, too, is the silent partner in every business and the first condition of its growth. The community has some claim upon and

some responsibility toward every business it allows to exist, and every business has undisputed duties toward the community.

When men trade they exchange the products of each other's lives. The farmer gives his grain which represents so much of his time and skill for the fabric which is the product of the manufacturer's life—or for the service which is the product of the teacher's life. Each parts with that which is worth less to him for that which is worth more. Both are better off. Each man's life becomes more valuable, for it is saved for the better production of his special product and the enjoyment in greater variety of the products of other lives.

The important point to notice is that the real subject of exchange is *life* which is the thing represented by the material products. So much of one man's life is given for so much of another man's life.

Money, which is an artificial device for the convenient representation of all values, is sacred as the life it represents. Money wasted is life wasted. Money devoted to human betterment is life saved. To handle money is to handle life. To invest money is to invest life. To capture money is to capture life, and many are the prisoners caught by the strategy of our generals of finance.

The Destruction of Democratic Freedom

In our modern life, through accumulated wealth one man becomes an autocrat with almost absolute power over the economic welfare of thousands of his fellows. Careful computation shows that one per cent. of the families of the United States possess more wealth than all the other families of the country. Less than three dozen men of the nine million people of Canada control the financial destinies of the nine millions. They may continue to be benevolent despots, but the dangerous fact is that despotic power, with no election of their fellows, is within their grasp. Well has it been said that wealth in a community is like manure on a farm. In a pile it is useless and festers and wastes its most valuable elements; spread over the fields it produces its full effect, and if spread when fresh it is four times as effective as if allowed to accumulate. It is the irony of our democratic communities in their present form of commercial organization that autocratic government of the community is re-established on the basis of the community-permitted ownership of community values. Often through inheritance this vast power passes into the hands of those who inherit no sense of social responsibility on account of the unearned values which have fallen into their hands.

As fast as we can, we are producing a moneyed aristocracy, built upon the exploitation of the people, instead of one built upon public service. Few great fortunes are the measure of the owner's service to the community. Power often comes to the most unworthy. Let every man be rewarded, not for his power to grab, but for his solid contributions to the public weal, in physical, intellectual or spiritual activities. Can we wonder that wealth unearned is often spent without any sense of public responsibility?

The graduated income tax and graduated inheritance tax are begin-

ning to eat away these evil conditions. The full justification for the enforcement of these taxes is found in the inherent right of the community in the values it creates. It has a right in time of peace to devote them to the realization of any purpose of social justice, as in war it may commandeer them, for the public safety. The fact of the passage of such laws as these bears witness to a very encouraging growth of social conscience. Only by its vigorous working can we hope to attain industrial freedom, as we have obtained political.

The Crime of Exploitation

Whence arise these glaring inequalities, which all students regard as evils? "The great estates ruined Rome." We live in the age of the exploiter. We belong to a race of exploiters who, in every part of the world are laying ruthless and wasteful hands on the world's resources. This exploitation of the unrenovable capital of the peoples of the world constitutes "the White Peril," a serious menace, not only in our own land, but all over the world. How many of our millionaires can say they have earned their million? Said one to a group of others: "How did you make your millions? I stole mine." He had used only ordinary commercial opportunities. He had, however, an enlightened social conscience. While it is self-evident that if any are to receive out of the commonwealth more than they have contributed, others with equal right must receive less, and these therefore *are robbed* of their due; we have allowed the system to exist without rebuke. Where did the pulpit condemn in any trenchant tones the wildness of real estate speculation, the spider web of annexes around our cities, spread to catch the unwary, the dishonest map or the other successful arts of the boomster? Where did any Quarterly Board even discuss the matter, or the laymen of any church protest in the name of commercial righteousness? The Church has had no real voice of protest. We have acquiesced in an order of social injustice, wholly artificial, as if it were a necessity. The complement of the speculator's mansion, is the down-town slum, and the thousand other homes with lessened comforts and necessities. In an age in which the forces of production have become so mighty that there is no longer any necessity that real poverty should exist in any of our civilized communities, we have not set ourselves seriously to the question of distribution. The millionaire is not the only criminal. The gambler's spirit has touched us all. We have seen no harm in it and have all been eager to win wealth without earning it. In real estate speculation from Winnipeg to Vancouver, in western townsites and farm lands, in town lots in Ottawa, Montreal, or St. John, Halifax and Sydney, in watered stock and company promotion, in wheat speculation, in manipulation of mineral rights, timber limits and oil speculations, in the fox farming of eastern Canada, of which the manager of one of our great banks asserted in his annual report that in a general very favorable set of conditions in the Maritime Provinces it was "the one dark spot in the horizon" and had already done much to break down habits of thrift which had distinguished the farmers of Prince Edward Island. In all these the gambler's spirit has been shown, and often his most indefensible tactics have been used.

"Graft" in our political life has become the order of the day. If it is right to get something for nothing why should not men "scoop" wealth in public contracts, as in real estate? The crime against the community is no greater. A fever of speculation has spread among all our people. It has been most demoralizing. *Something for nothing* has been a universal aim. With a spice of risk we have gambled with these values, and now the judgment of God has come. "The times of this ignorance God winked at but now commandeth he all men everywhere to repent." Honest confession will open the way to better things. "If the wicked restore the pledge, etc."—Ezek.

Mr. H. Dixon, of Winnipeg, is authority for the statement that two-thirds of all the arable land in the vast area of the western prairies is in the hands of speculative individuals and corporations. That means that an influential group of men are planning to take hundreds of millions out of the wealth produced by the western producers, manufacturers, and distributors, and give practically nothing in return. The evil has become of national scope. In such circumstances national righteousness is a chimera. Will some stern Amos arise and rebuke us for our sin? Our very churches and colleges have been built on the proceeds of injustice. How can we escape? "I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery for burnt offering."

No Repentance Visible

And worst of all there is no repentance except where men have lost in the game. In our banks millions await investment in enterprises which yield profit at far higher rates than the normal profits of industry. Let prosperity return and the old tactics of the booster will be in evidence, the same grabbing after unearned wealth, the same fever of speculation with no rebuke from the Church which ostracizes the young man who spends an evening in a gambling den and wins a couple of hundred dollars for which no social equivalent is given, and elect to high office in the Church him who shuffled his commercial cards so well that he has won his hundreds of thousands of dollars which he does not pretend to have earned. "Your ways are not equal, O house of Israel." So common, so utterly demoralizing has this been that now many do not see how there can be any business without these unjust rewards. Though robbers in fact, they are not in intention, for they do not see those who suffer from the deflection of the values to their pocket, as the poker gambler does. Truly we are smitten of a dread disease. Who shall speak us clean?

Some secular journals have spoken in the face of the widespread injustice. Has the Church no voice? We are founding our cities in iniquity. We are reproducing in this new land the social and financial inequalities which so make for injustice in the older lands. A new day seems to be dawning upon the world. Through pain and loss and travail, it is coming. These are the birth throes of a new world order. The better day cannot come all at once, but it must be founded in the justice of brotherhood. Let the prophetic souls speak and deliver the message of our times—"Change your way of thinking for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

What Can We Do?

We can as a first work begin to train our young people to give value for all values taken, to do the work for which they draw the wage. We can din their ears with the old morality that wealth unearned is wealth unholy. We can teach them to despise the sons of wealthy parents who live like paupers, receiving everything through inheritance from the community and paying back nothing. We can show them that none of us living in a rich Christian civilization have done as much for the world as the world has done for us. We can inspire them not with the feeling of many who live amid the opportunities of the community seeking how much they may grab, but with the nobler motive demanded by the spirit of justice—"How much can I do to square the account, which, after the best service I can give, leaves me a debtor?" We can thus raise up a membership who will refuse to accept wealth they do not earn. "This," said a Government official, "the Church cannot do—we have lost faith in the Church—but if she could she would save the world." He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

The Church can do something to inspire such a membership, as citizens to remove the opportunities now open in so great number and variety to make money without earning it. The Robin Hoods of finance and their merry men in the high places of civilization despoil the people and are almost unrebuked.

It is objected by some that this will kill all enterprise, and the strong men will move elsewhere. Well, some countries have taken much trouble to rid themselves of certain enterprising citizens who were accustomed to lay hands on what they had not earned! Men of productive enterprise will flourish and can receive the full reward of their efforts only when vast sums, as now, are not deflected into the hands of speculators. Could the Methodist (or the United Church) contribute to our nation the spiritual energy sufficient to bring this about, she would prove the most valuable economic factor in our land. She would free it from the burdens and shackles of speculation and besides would save the soul of Canada. Are we willing that our easy circumstances, our trip to Europe, our automobile and our social position shall be purchased through processes which must deprive many of the full fruits of their productive enterprise and many more of the absolute necessities of life. Every dollar won and not earned takes the bread from some table. Every one engaged in industry from the director to the humblest worker pays toll to the speculator.

"Behold it is not of the Lord of Communities, that the common people should labor in the very fire, and the masses should weary themselves for very vanity."—Hab. 2: 13.

The Robbery of Industry

If, as must be admitted, every speculative gain is a drain upon productive industry, then the great extension of speculation we have seen must mean needless poverty in many homes. Not only does it lessen the rewards of production but it withdraws men to speculative activities, who should be spending their energies in productive callings, but the

easy money of speculation establishes standards of living, which give many an additional pinch to the comparative financial rating of those who depend upon the slower and more moderate returns of industry. This breeds many evils in the body politic.

Never did Canada so need to push thrift and production to the utmost limit as at the present time. Before the war our borrowing for company promotion, municipal, provincial and federal affairs had reached a sum so vast that our interest charges amounted to a fabulous sum.

The condition was one which Imperial financiers viewed with concern, so great was the disparity between our obligations and our productive power. To this sum we are now adding the \$500,000,000 of our war debt—an amount beyond our wildest dreams of the possible before the war. To these add the vast speculative network covering vast areas of timber and farm lands, coal and oil areas and other valuable franchises, which should be held for the people, to whom they belong, and which have fallen into the hands of parties who, without service to the people, have acquired them in various ways and now through their ownership have power to tax the Canadian people forever. All these things add to the "overhead charges" of industry. It has therefore become a problem of national import, whether industry can continue to stagger along under the triple burden. It is a question for the Church and for statesmanship. How can we prevent the multiplied social injustices resulting from such conditions? Severe economic conditions after the war may force us to free productive enterprise from at least one of these handicaps.

In the war the nations concerned have developed new and far-reaching powers of co-operation. The mobilization of military, financial and industrial forces for the saving of the nations has opened new possibilities for the days of peace. International competitions will assume more portentous forms. For us the great problem will be whether we can reach our highest national efficiency through the forced labor of industrial militarism or through the enlightened co-operation of freemen. The one exalts the boss, the other the man. "Ye know that the leaders of the heathen exercise dominion over them and their great ones exercise authority upon them, but it shall not be so among you, but he that is greatest among you shall be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve, for even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a service for the masses."—Matt. 20: 25; Mark 10: 42; Luke 22: 25.

Successful forms of organization have appeared and are standing the test of practical experience, in which the workers share in responsibility and control and are joined together in common service according to ability. There is room for much study and experiment and much improvement in both managers and men before we embody the democratic ideals of Christ in the forms of business. Already we have schools of commerce exalting the principles of Jesus as the highest rules of salesmanship. The present war is demonstrating that none other are suitable for world government. Has the Church any enthusiasm begotten of a thorough-going faith in the ethics of Jesus as at all practicable in com-

mercial, municipal and national affairs. "When the Comforter is come, he will convict the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment. Of sin because they believe not in me (as the practical Statesman and Saviour of the world), of righteousness, because I go to the Father (and ye will be left to see and do the right thing on your own account, without my bodily presence), of judgment, because the Prince of this World is judged (for his age-worn maxims are discredited, and are shown to be not such as can lead human society to its highest achievements, happiness and well-being). John 16: 8-11.

The gospel of brotherly co-operation and honest money will open the way to national efficiency, to higher average manhood and the wider distribution of well-being. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and the well-being of all shall be added unto you."

Preach this gospel and it will condemn the wealth and commercial practices of thousands of our members. Should we become earnest in this matter many influential members will leave the Church and seek others with a less searching message. They will go away angry and sorrowful for they have great possessions. How hardly shall those who hold speculative riches enter the kingdom of heaven—the kingdom of social justice, pity and human brotherhood! Men who preach the gospel after the manner of the prophets will find some circuits closed to them. We may well listen to the fine scorn of Amos: "He that is prudent(?) will keep silence in such a time for it is an evil time." As a Church we shall lose; Quarterly Boards will have difficulty in honoring their "scrap of paper" re the minister's salary; Trustee Boards will be embarrassed, but a new era of evangelistic fervor will begin, for the Church will have saved her own soul.

What Should Christian Property Owners Do?

First. We can agitate for better property laws, especially those dealing with natural resources such as land, water-powers, minerals, public franchises and so forth. It has been well said that a good social system causes evil men to do good things and an evil social system causes good men to do evil things. We can quickly decide which our system is.

Second. We can refuse to participate in speculative enterprises which are frankly planned to win profits out of the common wealth not justified by the service rendered. Therefore we should make careful inquiry whether there has been any watering of stock, or seeking of profits not justified by the average return of productive enterprises in the country. We are under obligation to know the history of the stocks we invest in. Every article manufactured and sold should serve the interests or needs of the community to an extent sufficient to justify the profit made out of the public. How about wheat speculations?

Money invested is life invested and therefore has its rights. Life gains no rewards from the community *unless it works*. There is hobo money as well as hobo men. Money invested in vacant land which is put to no use, not only contributes nothing, but is a net spread to capture

for private use values created by the community. The taxes paid are for value received each year. They are to create, conserve or increase the facilities and other conditions which make possible the profitable use of the land. Should the owner not make use of these conditions, it is his own affair. As a site for a garden, a farm, a factory, art gallery or church or house, it contributes to the community and some return from the community is justified.

Third. If we have profited by the unearned increment of land or minerals, etc., and have given nothing in return we can treat wealth so won as peculiarly, not our own, but to be used in trust for the community which created it. Just in what form of action this trust may be discharged, the individual conscience must decide. Whether we should seek to change our laws so that all the unearned increment, or the greater portion of it should be devoted to public uses for the permanent endowment of our communities is a problem for Christian statesmanship to decide.

Fourth. Whenever, in a commercial deal, we win something for nothing, we may, on our knees, charge ourselves with wronging our brother, and whenever in our prophetic soul we grow insensitive to "the influences of the coming age" (Heb. 6: 5), and doubt the possibility of brotherhood yet reigning in human society, we may charge ourselves with infidelity to Jesus. *

"If thou bringest thy gift to the altar (the highest religious act) and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar (let worship cease), go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift." Matt. 5: 2.

Business Men's Bible Classes would find no finer manual than the 50-cent booklet, "Poverty and Wealth," by Prof. Henry F. Ward, of North-Western University.

Bishop Gore's outstanding book, "Property, Its Rights and Duties," is also recommended for reading and study.

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