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The Church AND Social Questions



A STATEMENT

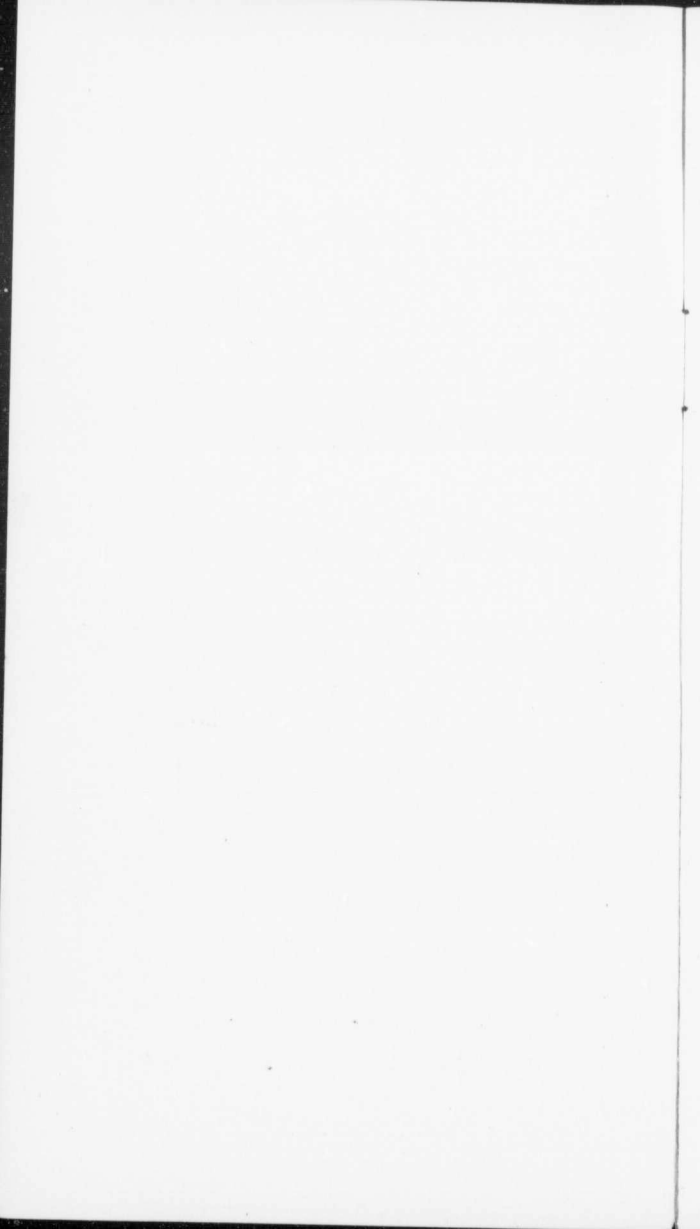
Adopted by the General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church
in Canada. 1911



Social Service and Evangelism

626 Confederation Life Building

TORONTO - - - CANADA



The Church and Social Questions

*The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in
Canada, at its meeting in Ottawa, June, 1911,
voted unanimously its approval in general
terms of the following statement,
as an expression of its judg-
ment upon the ques-
tions named.*

“WE AFFIRM that Christianity has largely created the present demands for social and economic justice, and for a larger realization of human rights and duties. But for the presence of Christian ideals in the world there would be no such vivid consciousness of the existence of these problems. It is because of the leavening work of the gospel of Jesus Christ that men discern the moral issues involved in economic relations. Our social problems, then, exist by reason of the operation of the fundamental principles of Christianity, and the

Christian Church is therefore under an unmistakable obligation to contribute to their solution. The hope of the world now, as in the preceding nineteen centuries, is that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church may discern the truth, and the truth may have free course.

“WE BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the final authority over all human life, in its social as well as its individual aspects. We believe that righteousness can be realized in the complex conditions of modern life only through the application to all human affairs of the principles of the Kingdom of God, as taught by Jesus Christ.

“WE BELIEVE that it is the duty of the Church to show how these Christian principles apply to human affairs, and to fit her teaching definitely and frankly to the social conditions of the present day.

“WE hold that the Presbyterian Church in Canada ought to *declare*:

1 “For the acknowledgment of the obligations of wealth.

“The Church declares that the getting of wealth should be in obedience to Christian ideals, and that all wealth must be held or administered as a trust from

God for the good of humanity. The Church emphasizes the danger, ever imminent to the individual and the society as well, of setting material welfare above righteous life. The Church protests against undue desire for wealth, untempered pursuit of gain, and the immoderate exaltation of riches."

2. "For the application of Christian principles to the operations of industrial associations, whether of labor or capital.

3. "For a more equitable distribution of wealth.

"We hold that the distribution of the products of industry ought to be made such that it can be approved by the Christian conscience."

4. "For the abolition of poverty.

"We realize that some poverty is due to vice, indolence or imprudence; but on the other hand, we hold that much is due to preventable disease, uncompensated accidents, lack of proper education, unemployment, insufficient wages, and other conditions for which society is responsible and which society ought to seek to remove. We believe in the maintenance of a standard of living, such that every person shall have sufficient air, light, food, shelter, comforts and recreation to make the conditions of his life wholesome. We believe that whenever possible, he should be led to earn these for himself and those dependent on him, but that, when through old age, accident, sickness, or any other incapacity, the family or individual is unable to become self-supporting, society should make adequate provision for them.

5. "For the protection of childhood.

"We believe in the right of children to birth, health, happiness, and mental and moral education. We believe in the protection of children from exploitation in industry, trade and amusement, and from work that is dwarfing, degrading or morally unwholesome.

6. "For such regulation of the conditions of the industrial occupations of women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of themselves, the community and future generations.

7. "For adequate protection of working people from dangerous machinery and objectionable conditions of labor, and from occupational disease; for such ordering of the hours and conditions of labor as to make them compatible with healthy, physical, mental and moral life.

8. "For provision by which the burden imposed by injuries and deaths from industrial accidents shall not rest upon the injured person or his family.

9. "For the release of every worker from work one day in seven.

"The Church holds that in a Christian society these things should prevail: (a) One day of rest for every six days of work secured to every worker; (b) This one

day of rest to be the Lord's Day except in case of those engaged in work which from its nature must be done on the Lord's Day; (c) The pay of each worker for six days' work made sufficient for the needs of seven days of living.

10. "For the employment of the methods of conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes.

11. "For proper housing.

"We believe that all dwellings should be sanitary, that overcrowding and congestion of population should be prevented, and that tenements and apartment blocks should be so constructed as to allow a proper physical basis for Christian family life.

12. "For the application of Christian methods in the care of dependent and defective persons, by the adequate equipment and humane and scientific administration of public institutions concerned therewith.

13. "For the development of a Christian spirit in the attitude of society towards offenders, and that it must endeavor to prevent the commission of crimes by furnishing a wholesome environment, and by such educative and corrective measures as will develop moral sense and industrial efficiency in the young.

14. "For opposition to vice.

"We believe that the law of the land should vigorously combat the vices of drink, gambling, lust and the abuse of narcotics, and that it is the duty of society to discover and remove the causes of vice.

15. "For pure food and drugs.

"We believe that foods and medicines should be so inspected as to guarantee their freedom from poison.

16. "For wholesome recreation.

"We believe that the play of children and the amusements of adults are of great importance to morals, and that they should be brought under social control, so as to free them from the evil effects of unrestrained commercialism, and make them minister to the physical and moral well-being of the people.

17. "For international peace.

"We believe that war is contrary to Christian morals, and that international disputes should be settled by conciliation and arbitration. We protest against the patent injustice of submitting questions of right and wrong to trial by force, as well as against the enormous cost, destruction and cruelty entailed. We believe that the Church should support every wise effort to restrain and abolish war. We believe that the great Commandment, "Thou shalt love," is binding upon nations as well as individuals."

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were also adopted:—

(1) “That the General Assembly hereby urge the ministers of the Church to recognize and fulfil the obligations resting upon them as ministers of Jesus Christ with respect to the social applications of His Gospel; and to this end it urges them:

(a) To inform themselves carefully regarding the conditions of human life in their own neighborhoods, particularly as these are affected by the conditions of industry.

(b) “To acquaint their congregations with these facts.

(c) “To instruct their congregations in the teachings of the Gospel regarding social service.

(d) To co-operate in every effort for the attainment of the ends for which the Church has declared itself.

(2) “That the General Assembly hereby request all who have charge of schools and colleges to make ample provision for instruction regarding the Christian ideal of

society; and, further, that it direct the governing bodies and faculties of theological colleges to provide that the students in their care be taught the social principles of the Gospel, and trained in methods of applying these principles to the needs of the localities in which they shall be called to minister.

(3) "That the General Assembly hereby urge all the members of our Churches to give serious study to social problems, and to avail themselves of their opportunities for social service; to bring the sense of justice and righteousness which is fundamental in Christianity to bear upon matters of every-day life, in business, in society, or wherever their influence may extend, and to create a Christian public sentiment demanding the removal of wrong wherever found.

(4) "That copies of this statement be printed and distributed throughout the Church, and that ministers be urged to further the circulation of this statement in any way they may deem feasible."

