

THE CHURCH

—AND—

SOCIAL RELATIONS

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What gravitation is to the universe, that religion is to humanity. As gravitation binds the universe in a cosmos, so moral law will some day bind humanity in the harmony of brotherhood.

Religion is the supremest of sciences, the loftiest of human considerations, the bond of universal harmony, the source of the highest inspiration, the crowning of goodness, the enthronement of love, and the harbinger of universal peace.

The correct method, therefore, of developing the religious spirit and of securing the triumph of its influences must ever be a question of the highest importance.

There is a twofold application of religious truth: First, it appeals to the individual to consecrate himself to the highest ideals; second, it lays down the principles for the government of the organization of society. What the brick is to the building, what the soldier is to the army, what the wheel is to the machine, that the individual is to society.

In our evangelistic efforts this dual application of religion is almost, if not wholly, ignored. All the efforts of evangelistic organizations are almost wholly concentrated on the individual. Again and again is proclaimed the doctrine, that, if every individual were right, then the whole of society would necessarily be right. The assumption is that the goodness of the parts in-

sure the goodness of the whole. If, however, we ask a few questions respecting this assumption, we see at once its fallacious character.

What would we think of an architect who would assure us that the soundness of a building depended altogether on the soundness of the parts, and that the arrangement of these parts is a matter of no importance? What would we think of the general who would assert that the success of the army depended wholly on the valor of the individual soldiers, and that organization, strategy or adaptation, was of no possible importance? What would we think of the mechanic who would teach that the success of a machine depended wholly on the perfection of the parts and in no way on their adaptation, relationship or adjustment?

Can we think of teaching more irrational? A building is a great deal more than a pile of bricks; an army is a great deal more than a mass of soldiers; a machine is a great deal more than a mere aggregation of parts; and in the same way society is a great deal more than a mere assemblage of individuals.

As bad adjustment will ruin any building no matter how good the materials; as lack of organization will insure the defeat of any army no matter how good the soldiers; as bad arrangement will wreck any machine, no matter how perfect the parts; even so

will bad relationship vitiate humanity, no matter how pure and how correct the religion we try to proclaim. Injustice cannot bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

We are here in charge of the architecture of society, compared with which that of all the temples or palaces in the world, sinks into utter insignificance; we are engaged in a campaign, whose aim is the triumph of the kingdom of God; we have to determine the adjustment of a mechanism as grand and wondrous in its adaptations as anything in the heavens above or the earth beneath. And how are we grappling with this, one of the highest of all problems? We are attempting to solve it according to an assumption, which, if applied to architecture, to generalship, to machinery, or to any business organization, would be the sheerest madness.

In our evangelistic efforts, the servant is exhorted to be faithful to his master and the master to be considerate to his servant, but no enquiry is made why there is such a relationship as a servant and a master, and why they are not fellow-helpers, brethren beloved. The master is regarded as satisfying the claims of honesty, when he pays the wages of the sweat shop; but he is not exhorted to investigate why it is, that, in this world of teeming abundance, such a monstrosity of iniquity as a sweat shop can have an existence.

Could there be anything more sublime than the teachings of Christianity? Further than sweep of sun or star, wider than the expanse of the heavens, loftier than the reach of human ken, there must exist a supreme dominating intelligence. In the transcendent glories of the universe there comes the overwhelming conviction "Thou art, O God, thou art." The mission of Christ was to teach us to call this being "Our Father." In the testimony of the rocks, in the wondrous mechanism of the heavens, in the sublimities and the harmonies of the universe, in the marvelous adaptations of the physical forces, in the ineffable potencies of thought and vitality, we catch glimpses of His power and we see with what ample abundance He has fitted this earth to be the habitation of man. Therefore, in humble reverence do we bow before Him, and repeat the Credo, "I believe in God the father, maker of heaven and earth." Through what ages did men grope before they reached the sublime grandeur of this summary of truth, and how many times do we repeat that declaration before we begin to possess anything like an adequate conception of its full import.

Having once accepted this creed, we are bound by the inexorable laws of thought to accept other truths necessarily sequent thereto. As a part im-

plies a whole, as an upper implies an under, so a father implies a child, children imply a family and a family implies a brotherhood. The moment, therefore, we acknowledge the doctrine of the fatherhood, by that act we acknowledge the doctrine of the brotherhood. In addition to this we also acknowledge the doctrine of God the Creator, the provider of the earth with all its potentialities. We are brought, therefore, face to face with this important inquiry: For whom did God the Creator furnish these bounties? To declare that he furnished them for the special benefit of a class and not for the equal enjoyment of all, would at once negate the doctrine of fatherhood and brotherhood. Every instinct of the soul rises up in protest against such teaching. Equal brotherhood and equal heirship to the gifts of the Creator are indissolubly united; they stand or fall together. For one part of humanity to claim the right to charge the rest of humanity for the occupation of the face of the earth or for access to its bounties, is the negation of the doctrine of brotherhood and the asseveration of the doctrine of master and slave.

Between the raw material as furnished by the Creator and that material as transformed or transported by labor, there is an essential difference. By that act of transformation the laborer establishes an inalienable right of property in the value he adds thereto. Let a man demand that commodity from the producer without offering some fair equivalent for his labor, and, by an unerring instinct, by a divinely planted instinct, this producer feels that the demand is unjust. The universal consensus is, that the toiler who has produced a commodity, is entitled to a reward. He has not created material, but he has created value and by that service has established an indefeasible right of property therein. When, therefore, two men produce different commodities and then exchange them, the moral instincts recognize at once the justice of the transaction, just as unerringly as the intellectual faculties recognize the truth that the equals of any one thing are themselves equal. The justice of service for service is unerringly and unanimously conceded; but that men should be allowed to charge for that which the Creator furnished, that some men should be allowed to charge the others for the privilege of living and moving and having their being on the face of the earth, that is a doctrine the injustice of which has been demonstrated by the universal experience of the ages. That the millions, who, by their industry, produce the abundance of food, clothing and other products, should enjoy that abundance, is a doctrine that should be

unhesitatingly accepted. That the man who puts in one bushel, and by his fostering care reaps twenty bushels, should own these twenty bushels, would seem to need no demonstration. But when a man acquires possession of a piece of land and makes nothing abundant, when he raises no crop of any kind from that land, by what principle of justice should he be allowed to claim a share of the crops that other hands have raised? Let population, however, gather on that land till the area for each occupant becomes very small, then, according to our present arrangements, the land owner is allowed to claim the abundance that the industry of other men has begotten. By this arrangement, therefore, the men who produce abundance, secure only scarcity, while the men who raise nothing, often secure the abundance, simply because land has become scarce, and the greater this scarcity of land, the greater is the abundance we allow the landowner to claim. In this arrangement is there not a terrible travesty of justice?

It needs but the most casual attention to notice, that between the value caused by the energy of the individual and the value caused to the land by the community, there is an essential difference. By every productive act the laborer is trying to multiply the abundance of commodities, and in this way he multiplies the value. At the same time let the population of any town increase from nothing to hundreds of thousands, and to the land of that location there will come an enormous value. The first value indicates that the industry of individuals has increased the abundance of the commodities, the second value indicates that population has increased the scarcity of land. To treat these two values alike is as irrational as to confound an asset and a liability or a multiplication and a division.

And yet in our regulations respecting the rights of property and in the imposition of taxation, this essential distinction between these two values is utterly ignored. The evil results of this failure are to be witnessed in the development of all our cities, the larger the city the greater the evidence of the injustice. With every addition to the population the landowner can claim from industry a greater tribute. At the same time, with every addition to the population, the state claims from industry a larger contribution of taxation. Thus industry must meet year after year a two-fold increasing tribute, one to the owner of the land, the other to support the taxation. Thus do we elevate non-production to a palace and crush industry down to the humble surroundings of the crowded tenement or to the pestiferous slum. Thus do we cleave society in twain, making at one

extreme the Millionaires' Row and at the other the Beggars' Alley. Thus one bears all the burden and reaps few of the advantages of civilization, while the other gets all the advantages, without any of the burdens.

By ignoring the difference between the gifts of the Creator and the products of industry, by ignoring the equal right of every one to the former and the exclusive right of the individual to the latter, by ignoring the difference between the value caused to commodities by the energy of the individual and the value caused to the land by the conjoint presence of the community, we trample on the claims of honesty and we ignore the rights of property. We destroy the possibility of brotherhood; we establish mastery and servitude; we make injustice inevitable and by so much do we make a complete Christianity impossible. In this way we dethrone Christianity and exalt the God of Mammon.

In our churches we try to lift the attention of our hearers to the higher duties of life, to elevate their thoughts from the material to the spiritual. We renew our vows, we acknowledge our belief in the fatherhood and the brotherhood; but when we have once stepped outside the sanctuary, could the contrast between our acknowledgments and our practices be more terrible? We proclaim God the Creator, then we treat the earth as a manufactured article; we acknowledge the brotherhood, and then we nullify that acknowledgment by lifting one to the palace and driving another to the slum; we exhort to honesty, and then we punish the honest methods of acquiring wealth by increasing taxes on industry and thus we encourage and reward speculation.

What a contrast between the religion taught and the religion practised! On the one hand we proclaim a goodness of heavenly beauty, and then on the other we beget a social gehenna. We repeat the hosanna, "Peace on earth, good will to men," and then we range the classes in hostile array to the masses. Is it any wonder that so many are losing faith in the churches? Sowing the seeds of injustice and then praying God to send us a harvest of righteousness; is not that a spectacle to make angels weep?

Let us, however, once succeed in bringing the adjustments of society into harmony with the eternal equities; let us learn how to recognize everyone born into the world as the child of God, as a member of a brotherhood with certain inalienable rights, by which he is entitled equally with all others to the gifts of the common Father; let us thus secure to him the opportunity to procure a livelihood with the assurance that what he sows, that shall he also reap; let us make his environment such

that the path of goodness will be easy and the surroundings tend to develop all that is best in him and not the worst, as the present circumstances in many ways do; let men be placed in such relationships that each will try to confer his greatest benefit on all the rest. Then, with the opportunities that will thus come for the development of the higher intelligence, with the removal of the terrible pressure of temptation that we now place in the pathway of honesty and virtue, with human law in harmony with the divine law, with the principles of righteousness enthroned in the institutions of the people, may we not look with confidence for the coming of that time by prophets and bards foretold, when the reign of evil shall forever cease and man shall attain to triumphs of goodness, compared with which, the attainments of to-day are but as the glimmering dawn to the brightness of the noon-tide glory.

Do you ask, good reader, how can this be accomplished! Is not the lesson most obvious? Industry turns the desert into a garden and forthwith we increase the taxes thereon. Speculation turns the

garden into a desert, and we keep the taxes low. The owner of the favorite site in the metropolitan centre toils not neither does he spin, and yet daily, from the rental of a single acre, he may get the whole yearly crop of a farm; on the side of the mountain the settler toils every day in the year and struggles beneath a mortgage held by the perfumed seigneur. Where should we place the tax, on the value of the products of the struggling settler or on the value created by the community? Can there be any but one answer? Should we not render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's? Should we not take community values for community purposes? Is not the demand of justice most obvious: Never tax the products of industry, always tax the value of the land, so as to remove all temptation to use it for extortion.

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