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THE

BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO SOCIAL REFORM.

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EVER since her establishment the Church of Christ has been an object of attack either in the realm of the credibility of her doctrines or in that of the character of her practices. A generation ago the battle raged furiously in the former region; to-day the latter is the basis of a wide-spread criticism. The present article is concerned with only one phase of the discussion,—the alleged failure of the Church to do her duty in matters of practical concern in the life of society, and the alleged consequent alienation of the masses from her. The article does not, therefore, enter the field of discussion with those who, in a spirit of hostility to the Church as an institution, declare that in her long career she has done more harm to the world in the physical and moral life of men than she has done good in the spiritual life; but the paper confines itself to a consideration of the position of those friends of the Church who think that she is not making the most of present opportunities, and that she fails in her duty in participating so slightly in direct measures of social reform. There is a feeling abroad, that if Christianity be

what it claims to be it should justify its pretensions by bringing about the social regeneration for which the world is working. It is alleged that, in consequence of its failure to do so, it is losing its "hold" on the masses of the people, and that the alienation of the masses from the Church is at once the sign and the expression of the decay of the Christian religion.

The claim that the Church is losing her hold on the people at large is not new. Many years ago John Stuart Mill wrote that it was at least doubtful whether any church except the Roman Catholic retained great authoritative influence over its communicants or among the people at large. More recently the great German Economist, Roscher, has declared that the alienation of the masses from the Church is one of the five main causes of the social discontent and of the strength and progress of socialistic schemes. "When," he says, "every one regards wealth as a sacred trust or office coming from God, and poverty as a divine dispensation intended to educate and develop those afflicted thereby, and considers all men as brothers, and this earthly life only as a preparation for eternity, even extreme differences of property lose their irritating and demoralizing power. On the other hand, the atheist and materialist becomes only too readily a mammonist, and the poor mammonist falls only too easily into that despair which would gladly kindle a universal conflagration, in order either to plunder or to lose his own life."

The thought to which these eminent writers thus give expression is very decidedly reaffirmed in the popular opinion of to-day. One of the "burning questions" of the times is "how to evangelize the cities," "how to reach the masses" with religious influences.

There is abundant proof that the outcry has a considerable basis of truth. Almost any clergyman will admit that one of the problems of his ministry is how to get hold of the working-people, especially the men. Evidence of the reality

of the difficulty is seen in the attitude continually taken by labor unions towards the churches and religion. They declare that experience teaches them that they need not look in that direction for help or sympathy.

The complaint against the Church with reference to present social movements is really a double one. It is asserted, first, that the Church as a body, or as an organization, takes but little direct interest, and still less direct action, in the great questions of the methods of elevating the masses, the abolition of poverty, the reformation of the criminal, the suppression of injustice on the part of wealth towards poverty, the protection of the industrially weak, as the factory girl, the shop girl, and children and women employed in our mills. The Church does little, it is asserted, towards the suppression of the spirit of greed which prompts great corporations sometimes to sacrifice the health and life of employees for gain; she does not interfere in disputes between laborers and employers to establish justice in their relations, and she is usually arrayed against the working-men in any struggle for their rights or the betterment of their conditions of life.

The second charge, or group of charges, against the Church is, that with all her influence she fails to produce in actual life more justice, more purity, more self-sacrifice; that she fails to influence conduct, to make the lives of her professors any nobler than those of other people. The preaching of the pulpit, the confession of the creed, the professions of faith, of love, of self-sacrifice, that are made at the altar, find no realization, it is declared, in everyday life. The church-member is no less unscrupulous in business than the non-church-member. The professing Christian legislator, or manufacturer, or railway director, does not let his religion influence the laws he makes, the bargains he drives, or the relations that exist between him and his employees.

The explanation usually offered of the alleged neglect

of practical social problems by the Church is, that she has concerned herself so much with theology that she has neglected religion. It is said, that, "whenever an agreement has been reached between the Church and the World, the terms have been a division of territory, as it were, and that on this wise: The world has transferred the domain of dogma and the future life to the Church, but has kept for itself the present life." In other words, it is maintained by some that the Church has fixed her attention on a future life, and has been inclined to regard all things in this life, not only as not accessory to a future better state, but as absolutely antagonistic to it; that she has been logically led, therefore, to lay but little stress on social struggles, and on the improvement of life in this world, so far as material comfort and ease of living are concerned, and that in this she has done wrong, because no great spirituality can be developed in hearts that are tainted with social evil or that are suffering from social wrong. The result of this course of action, it is maintained, has been to make religion theoretical rather than practical, to emphasize dogma and faith rather than "works" and practical life; in short, to try to practise the first, while neglecting the second, of the two great commandments on which "hang all the law and the prophets."

It is evident that the accusations brought against the Church are serious, and that, if they are well founded, they point to a condition which she should try to change. It is important, therefore, to determine how far they are true.

The complaints against the Church may be grouped into two classes according to the thoughts underlying them. The first class consists of those the underlying thought of which is that the principles of Christianity have not the power which is claimed for them. Those who believe this, logically deny that the Christian religion is the proper force to which to look for social regeneration. It is not necessary to discuss this view of the subject here. Probably very few of

those who really hold it would maintain it in its bald form. Most would admit that the teachings of Christ, if fully and consistently put in practice, would improve the world. Indeed, the position of this class of critics is sufficiently refuted by their own action in appealing to men, for the improvement of society, on the basis of the brotherly love and self-sacrifice which are the corner-stones of the Christian system.

The charge brought by the other class of critics is more logical, and, withal, more serious. Their view finds expression in the statement, already referred to, that the Church has too much emphasized faith instead of works; has preached doctrine instead of righteous living; has made dogma, and not actions, the test of a Christian life; has concerned herself too little with the affairs of this world. And so their cry is "back to Christ." They insist that during her career the Church of Christ, that is, the great body of Christians, has mistaken either the chief need of men or else the best means of supplying that need; that the spiritual policy of her founders and supporters has been wrong, and that a change should now be made whereby the Church shall pay more attention to the material accessories of a "good life" here, than to the spiritual conditions of a good life hereafter. How far this arraignment is true, and whether, if it is true, a change of policy in the direction indicated would bring about the desired result, are really the questions at issue between the adherents and the critics of the Church. Both parties agree as to the desirability of improvement in the physical conditions of life; they disagree, first, as to whether it is the province of the Church as such to concern herself directly with such matters; and, second, as to whether, if this is a part of her duty, her past and present policy and methods have tended to its performance. Before we take up these questions it will be well to notice the real meaning and importance of the statement mentioned before, that the Church

has lost and is losing her hold on the masses of the people.

The whole force of the statement depends on the meaning of the word "hold." Formerly the hold which the Church had was, like that of law now, externally authoritative, and reached all within her territorial jurisdiction. That is, she could compel respect and obedience even from those who were not at heart in sympathy with her. Her "hold" on the masses of the people then was coextensive with the force at her command. Sometimes it was direct physical force that she used, and sometimes the power was based on superstition and ignorance. In other words, her power, or "hold," was extended and secured by two classes of means: external authority and subjective influence, the power to enforce and the ability to persuade. The latter was granted, of course, by the loyal, loving members of the Church; the former was yielded by all whom her legal authority could be made to reach; she secured, as the law does now, the ready concurrence of the law-respecting citizen and the unwilling obedience of the citizen who, if he dared, would be a law-breaker. The number of those subject to the Church authority was, therefore, practically the whole community. To-day the second kind of authority has been almost wholly swept away. It was destroyed by the spread of education and of freedom, and by the industrial revolution. The first shattered superstition; the second, authority; and the third showed the possibility of a better life on earth. Broadly speaking, therefore, the only "hold" which the Church has now, is that which she can command by the sweetness and purity of her principles. Her "hold" depends no longer on external power, but on internal influence. Her authority must be acknowledged in the heart or it need not be owned at all. This fact would largely diminish the relative number of those who acknowledge the authority of the Church. And even of those who retain a nominal adherence to her, there is a large number on whom she

cannot properly be said to have a "hold." They attend church because it is respectable to do so. Now no one will contend for a moment that the hold which the Church has by the influence of her principles on the heart is not far preferable to any hold based on external authority; and the only fair way to determine whether the Church has lost her hold on the people is by a comparison of the number of earnest, devoted, intelligent members at one time with the number at another. But such a comparison is impossible. Although, then, the number of those who acknowledge the authority of the Church has diminished, he would be a rash man who would maintain that her real influence is less than it was. Moreover, very many who deny her authority as a spiritual organization acknowledge the moral principles of Christianity in their lives. Hence, whatever "hold" the Church may have lost by the loss of her formal authority, is more than offset by the increase of the influence of her principles. What she has lost in quantity she has gained in quality. The loss is not a real loss. We have gained liberty of thought and action, a broader and juster view of life, a higher conception of God, and a better physical and social life, with greater possibilities of progress; for all that is sweetest and purest and noblest in civilized life to-day is very largely the result of the action of this same Christian Church, which, with all her mistakes, has through the centuries been a purifying and regenerating force in the world's life.

In view of this indisputable fact, it is difficult to believe that the Church has been wrong in her main policy of emphasizing the life to come, or in her method of seeking to improve life on earth indirectly and, as it were, secondarily, by the development of moral character and spiritual aspirations in the individual.

At the time of the appearance of Christianity and the founding of the Christian Church, the restraining tenets of even the old pagan religions had pretty much lost their force.

The life of the individual was swallowed up in that of the State, in the countries then called civilized, and his importance was consequently minimized. The necessary result was degradation of individual character, and of the moral qualities which go to make the life of the individual pure and noble. The prevalent philosophy, as Lecky says, "did much to encourage virtue, but little or nothing to restrain vice!" The only really bright light in the pagan world was the emphasis of the importance of the individual, which was made in the philosophy of the Stoics.

The philosophical significance, and political and social, as well as moral, importance of the Christian movement was to emphasize the individual, to elevate his character, to ennoble his life. Hence, Christianity, unlike paganism, made moral teaching its main object. In the words of Lecky, "By the pulpit, by its ceremonies, by all the agencies of power it possessed, it labored systematically and perseveringly for the regeneration of mankind. Under its influence, doctrines concerning the nature of God, the immortality of the soul, and the duties of man, which the noblest intellects of antiquity could barely grasp, have become the truisms of the village school, the proverbs of the cottage and of the alley."

In order to accomplish its purpose of elevating the character of the individual, the Church, or Christianity through the Church, had to influence the will. That is, it had to supply motives to the individuals whom it sought to improve. These motives were the hope of salvation and the fear of damnation, the hope of attaining a future life of eternal happiness and the fear of a future life of perpetual torment. The necessity of continually preaching that doctrine gave it a prominence which under other possible conditions it might not have had. In other words, the need for influencing individual conduct made it necessary to emphasize the doctrine of a future life, and the emphasis of the future life was then, at any rate, the best, the only, way to ennoble this present

life. True, the doctrine became a dogma, a test of orthodoxy; the reason for emphasizing it became obscure and was forgotten, and its grand service in the cause of humanity, even on the purely social side, is therefore often overlooked.

It is true, then, that the Church has emphasized doctrine, especially the doctrine of a future life, and that she has laid stress on the individual rather than on society as such. But it is also true that her emphasis of doctrine was for the purpose of elevating individual character, and that her assertion of the importance of the individual as against society was but a method of improving society. Her action was an unconscious recognition of the great truth that it is useless to try to construct a faultless social structure out of elements that are themselves faulty.

This teaching of dogma, this emphasis of the importance and grandeur of individual character in life, produced social reforms of a more far-reaching character and a deeper significance for mankind than could have been brought about, under the conditions which existed then, by the emphasis of social duty and the doctrine of the brotherhood of man. The philosophy which contained the ethics of paganism held up to men the desirability of performance of duty and of a virtuous life, for their own sake, but the motive did not stir to action. The peculiar advantage of Christianity was that it added a new motive, which did arouse men.

Until the value of his own life was impressed on the individual, until he learned to appreciate virtue, faith, self-sacrifice, from practising them, he could not be expected to regard it as his duty to try to secure these things for others. The whole history of moral development is an emphasis of the fact that at first a new truth is acted on and a new duty performed not for their own sake but from some external motive. It is only after men have learned the grandeur of a new truth or a new duty in this way that they can be appealed to on the basis of the higher motive.

The effects of this policy of the Church on society were, as already said, very great. One result was a purification of morals, which did much to regenerate society and put the social life on a higher plane. Chastity was restored to its position as a virtue, which in practical life it had almost lost. The elevating effect on family life, to speak of nothing else, was one effect the importance of which for social and economic progress cannot be overestimated.

The same policy emphasized the sanctity of human life, and this emphasis tended to mitigate the evils of slavery, and would ultimately, if it had not been perverted, have abolished the system altogether; it largely crushed abortion and infanticide, spread the feeling of human brotherhood, conferred dignity on labor, elevated woman, and gave an impulse to practical charity. As to this last matter, in which to-day the Church is charged with dereliction of duty, it was Christianity which first assigned charity to a place in the scale of moral duties. The motive was, indeed, "the love of Christ rather than the love of man," and often the methods adopted were productive of as much evil as good. But the Church cannot be blamed for not being "scientific" in her charity methods when it is only within a few years that philanthropists have come to any agreement on even the rudimentary principles of what is called scientific charity. "No achievements of the Christian Church are more truly great than those which it has affected in the sphere of charity. For the first time in the history of mankind, it has inspired many thousands of men and women at the sacrifice of all worldly interests, and often under circumstances of extreme discomfort or danger, to devote their entire lives to the single object of assuaging the sufferings of humanity. It has covered the globe with countless institutions of mercy, absolutely unknown to the whole pagan world. It has indissolubly united in the minds of men, the idea of supreme goodness with that of active and constant benevolence." [1]

[1] Lecky's History of European Morals, Vol. ii. p. 85.

The benevolent activity thus so eloquently described continues to-day, and great as is the charitable work done aside from the Church organizations, it is at least questionable whether that of the Church is not greater still. It is true that her servants have often perverted her teachings and have done mankind terrible wrong, not only by neglect to relieve suffering and to suppress injustice, but also by the direct promotion of evils. But this fact does not diminish the good she has done, nor is it a condemnation of the philosophy of the general policy and method which she has pursued.

Here then is, in brief, the work of the Church in social reform: she interfered in the labor question, as the labor question then existed, by making easier the life of the serf and the slave, and insisting on the observance of justice and brotherhood between master and man; she rendered life more secure by the enforcement of justice generally; and she has, certainly until very recently, every one will admit, been the chief agent in charitable and criminal reform. It is true that these were *indirect* results of her general policy, that they were not her chief aim, but incidental effects of the aim she had in view, and of the policy that she followed. But that very fact is evidence that her aim and methods were chosen wisely for the circumstances of the world's life; and it would be a rash thing to say that the policy which produced results so momentous for the progress of man was mistaken or ill-directed.

Hence it is but fair to conclude that the aim of the Church in the past, namely, the uplifting of individual character, was the true one for the existing situation; that the method, the use of án external motive, was the correct one for attaining her purpose; and that the results of her policy have been justified even by the social reforms which have indirectly sprung from it.

Moreover, there appears no good reason why the method whereby such great results have been accomplished

should be abandoned. Social reforms cannot be brought about by men with a low moral sense, or with a character that lacks the moral fibre necessary to self-denial and struggle against evil for the sake of others. Indeed, a faultless social life, as Herbert Spencer points out, is impossible, if the elements composing it are themselves faulty; and therefore social improvement can come about only through the development and uplifting of the character of the individual. This is in accordance with the observed fact that the best and most permanent progress in one direction is always the result of change and advance in some other. Direct, or immediate, social improvement is unphilosophical and impossible, because man can promote progress only by the removal of obstacles in the way of natural forces.

It is true that the Church, through her representatives, has not always consistently adhered to the doctrine of the relatively great importance of the individual in the sense in which the phrase was used in her earlier days. There was a long period when individuality was crushed, so far as any expression of difference from the constituted authorities was concerned. There was practically but one creed and one state, and the spirit of the day was a passion for unity. Yet even then it was on the individual that the Church wrought directly. Moreover she had in herself a recuperative power. Nominalism came and reasserted the rights of the individual, the importance of individuality. To-day there is a reaction towards the suppression of individuality, towards uniformity of thought and life. There is good in it, but the Church will make a great mistake if she gives away to it entirely. There is danger in the movement, "danger," as President Andrews says, "to our moral and religious life from this relative degradation of the individual. It is the danger, that greatest danger that can lie in wait for a human soul, of regarding man more than God. It is the danger of enslavement to man." The degradation of the importance of the individual would

mean a return to the social condition of the world when Christianity appeared, or to that of the "dark" part of the Middle Ages.

The individual must, then, continue to be the centre of the Church's activity; the development of good character, the promotion of the growth of moral fibre, the preparation, in short, for a higher and better life, must, in the future as in the past, be her chief aim, the object of her most earnest solicitude. Any other policy would not only prevent at least one large part of the purpose of her Founder, but it would fail to produce equally desirable results in the improvement of society, because it would be running counter to the method of biological and sociological growth.

However, although it is true that the development of the moral and the spiritual character of the individual must still be the aim of the Church, and although she has accomplished so much in social reform in the past, it is fair to ask whether the *motive* on which she has hitherto relied can by itself serve her purpose any longer; whether it may not be replaced or supplemented with some other incentive, and finally whether under modern industrial and social conditions, direct and organized participation in social questions, as such, is not desirable, perhaps necessary, for the furtherance of her purpose of saving individuals for a better life.

There is no doubt whatever that the motive on which the Church has thus far relied for inciting men to a moral and benevolent life has largely lost its power with the masses. "Human ambition has changed. It is now bent on getting something out of this life on earth." Consequently there are now very many on whom the appeals of the Church have little hold. A new motive is needed to arouse them to action for their fellow-men. *This is a fact the Church must recognize, and whose character she must mould, if she would regain, or retain, her hold on men's hearts.* The intensity of the desire for physical comforts endangers the higher aspira-

tions of the soul, and, unless she would see these higher aspirations quenched or dwarfed, she must herself guide the desire for physical comforts towards the salvation and development of these aspirations.

But the loss of power of the old motive of activity for moral improvement, and consequently for the good of society, is due not only to change in the conditions of life, and therefore in the direction of human purpose, but also in part to the fault of the Church herself, or at least of her representatives.

For even among church-members themselves the preaching of the doctrine of future punishment as a reason for a good life here has largely lost its force. The explanation of this is found in the tendency of all organizations to become mechanical and formal. This is the meaning of the charge that the Church's life has become doctrinal, and not vital; that when the unlettered, the oppressed, the wronged, have turned to her for sympathy and help, they have found her formal and cold,—instead of bread they have received a stone. This is not a new complaint. It is no new thing for church-members and officials to "fast for strife and debate," to "devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers," to keep the letter of the law while violating its spirit, to say to the destitute "be ye warmed and filled" and yet "give them not those things which are needful to the body," to choke the vitality of Christian principles under a mass of formalism and dogma. Hence, besides supplying a new motive for benevolent action to all, the Church needs also to hold her members to a stricter sense of their duty. Yet this, too, is perhaps to be accomplished by the incitement of a new motive.

Contentment with the merely doctrinal side of religion is a source of danger to the Church. For it means the acceptance by her of a merely intellectual culture, or faith, or belief, on the part of her members, instead of a vital faith of

life and works. This would mean the decay of spirituality, and the supremacy of the spirit of materialism, which is partly the cause, and would prove to be the goal, of a purely intellectual religion, if such a religion is possible. It would mean a return, indeed, to the moral condition of the world at the beginning of the Christian era, for the improvement of which modern philosophy would be as powerless as pagan philosophy was then.

In order to carry out her plan of salvation of the individual, must not the Church to-day lay a greater emphasis on duty and brotherly love than she has ever done before? Is not this the motive which must largely take the place of the incentive of fear? The long moral training which the world has received has made men more ready than ever before to respond to this motive. Should not the Church now teach that salvation for each is to be found in the fulfilment of duty to others and in a life full of beneficence to one's fellow-men? The emphasis of these motives would be but the emphasis of that law of love which Christ taught is only second in the list of commandments. It would not imply the neglect of the first of these commandments; rather would obedience to the second be the best fulfilment of the first. It is true, of course, that the Church has always insisted on the law of love as a fundamental condition of a Christian life; but she has not always insisted on it enough. She has often condoned its violation on condition of belief in a creed. It may be that God would be better served if the two things were reversed, and certainly even those who insist on the greater importance of the creed will admit that He would be better served if both conditions were fulfilled. And might we not hope, might we not reasonably expect, that the Church in thus adhering to her historic mission, though partly changing the method of attaining her purpose, would do for the world to-day in the line of social reform as grand a work as that which brightened the lives of millions

in the generations of her early history? The reasonableness of such an expectation is a justification of Church participation in modern social reform,—nay, makes such participation a duty.

Not only is it a justification of Church activity in social reform, that, while thereby promoting her purpose of developing the moral and spiritual nature of the individual, she indirectly confers on the world the benefits of social improvement; but it is also true that, under modern industrial and social conditions, such activity is *necessary* to promote the moral and spiritual salvation of individuals. There are two reasons for this, the first of which is found in the manner of the growth of society, the second in the character of modern business life.

No principle of biological science is more firmly established than that the life of the individual depends largely on his surroundings. Life is a continual readaptation to changed and changing environment. Progress, in the ethical sense, is impossible only as the environment of the individual becomes more ethical. Hence a necessary condition of the development of moral character in the individual is the moral improvement of his surroundings. Now the individual, especially among the so-called degraded or unfortunate classes, often does not know the change necessary to be made in his environment for his own moral improvement, and is always unable, by himself, to bring it about when he does know it. The change must be wrought for him by external forces, which can come only from those who have a higher ideal and also the vital energy to expend in producing it in practice. Those best able to do this are the more fortunate classes who are also believers in the moral and spiritual doctrines of the Church.

Moreover, if the history of sociological development proves anything, it is that the course of improvement is from the material through the intellectual to the moral. That is,

at least a certain amount of physical improvement, or a bettering of the material conditions of life, is necessary to moral progress. Hence, to attain the latter the Church must help the former.

The second reason, or group of reasons, why Church activity in social reform is necessary to the attainment of its purpose in saving the individual, is found in the nature of modern industrial life. Both the modern science of Political Economy and the phases of life of which it treats have developed to a large degree independently of Church influence. We read little distinctively Christian about the production and distribution of wealth in the Canon Law or in the writings of Thomas Aquinas or of á Kempis. What they do give us is mainly a summary reproduction of the results of the best Greek thought on the subject. "We find in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas the political and economic doctrines of Aristotle reproduced with a partial infusion of Christian elements." Hence it is that so many have insisted that Ethics has had comparatively so little influence on economic doctrine. This intellectual result has been reflected, as well as perpetuated and intensified, by the introduction, through the so-called industrial revolution, of competition as the main controlling principle of business relations. The establishment of this principle has brought it about that in a business in which competition is keen and unrestrained, there is danger that *the man who adheres to moral methods will be driven out of his business.* This is true, because the moral plane of a competitive business is determined by the moral character of its lowest competitor. The importance of this fact for the Church is well brought out by Professor H. C. Adams. He says: "The opinion is frequently expressed that all the evils of modern society are traceable to the natural depravity of the individual man, and, under the direction of such an explanation, they who wish well to soci-

ety expend their energies in exhorting individuals to reform their lives. This is especially the high duty of religious teachers. But have these teachers ever stopped to inquire why their persuasive eloquence has thus far met with but meagre success in the reformation of society? Do they really see that, in a society where the code of business ethics conforms to the law 'thou shalt love thyself better than thy neighbor,' none but industrial hermits can adhere to the law 'thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'? . . . Our religious teachers, whose analysis of industrial relations stops short of portraying the moral deterioration effected by unbridled competition, mean, if they mean anything, that the men whom they influence should renounce the world of business ambitions. In this fact do we find the explanation of the curious paradox, that *the more effective the persuasion of religious teachers, the more rapid will be the deterioration of business society;*[1] for, since the result of such persuasion must in large measure be the renunciation by men of delicate consciences of the great business opportunities, society will tend to take upon itself the moral tone of the more unscrupulous. There is great danger, while dwelling with such emphasis upon the problem of individual life, of forgetting its complement, the problem of social life."[2]

The effect of unbridled competition is not only to lower the plane of business morality and harden the character of business men; it also reacts on all classes of society in the production of such evils as the sweating system, the truck system, and the evils of tenement-house life, rendering the development of high moral and spiritual character in those affected more and more difficult. Hence it is necessary for the Church to remove such evil influences; social reform becomes a necessary condition of success in her work.

Altogether aside, however, from the consideration of

[1] Italics mine.

[2] Relation of the State to Industrial Action, p. 44.

accomplishing the salvation of the individuals concerned, participation in work of social reform is a duty incumbent on the Church from her own character. Such participation is obedience to the law of benevolence, and benevolence is a characteristic of a true Christian and of the Church. Social reform, in other words, is a natural function of the Church and is enjoined on her. The proof of this is found in the fact that the Word of God inculcates such duties and devotes considerable attention to them. For example, the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, which prescribes the observance of a year of jubilee, deals almost exclusively with social and economic topics. The Mosaic code is largely devoted to similar interests; land, divorce, the relations of employer and employed, trade, taxation, poverty, and crime, are all treated in it. Social purity, honesty in business, benevolence, and government, are topics touched on in Proverbs. Christ gave the Church the golden rule of social duty, taught the true nature of the relation of the individual to society in the parable of the good Samaritan, and set us an example of honesty in paying our taxes that many church-members often forget. Finally, the labor problem is touched on in the fifth chapter of the Epistle of St. James and in the sixth chapter of Ephesians.

But the questions now arise: What is the proper position for the Church to take in matters of social reform? At what specific reforms should she aim, and what methods can she follow? The questions are surrounded with all the difficulties which are usually met in reducing a theory to practice, especially in cases like this, in which the circumstances that determine action are so various that a general answer is dangerous, even if possible.

The first reform which the Church should undertake is within herself. She should enforce to-day in matters of conduct and life the authoritative standard which she exercised in her early history, and which she has always more or less

rigidly enforced in matters of doctrine. There are many professing church-members whose lives belie their professions, and disgrace the Master they claim to serve. It is necessary that the Church should now, as in early days, cut off such members. From those whom she admits to her communion she must insist on honesty in business, on mutual justice between those who have business relations. She must press the truth that "a false balance is an abomination to the Lord" to the exclusion from membership of the tradesman who keeps weights that are just a trifle light. She must cut off those, too, who are the cause of tyranny, injustice, and often worse, that unprotected girls in stores and factories often suffer at the hands of church-going employers and overseers; she must maintain that the rights of person of the employee are as sacred as the vested property rights of the employer. These and similar reforms in individual conduct she must first insist on from her members. This course will cut down the membership, but it will leave it of a better quality. It will be a reduction of the army of Gideon to the number whom the Lord chooses to use. Such a result is an exceedingly difficult thing to accomplish, especially in the Protestant churches, in which there is no authoritative head; but it must be done, in a measure at any rate, before the churches can expect the blessing of God on their work. The responsibility for its accomplishment rests on the ministers and the conscientious members of the churches. This preliminary work done, the Church may with more hope of success enter on work of a sociological character for an elevation of the masses that will tend towards the moral and spiritual salvation of the individuals composing them.

There are some other conditions from which the Church needs to free herself in order to perform her work. Especially must she try to get rid of the spirit of materialism which so largely affects her and taints her spiritual life. The power of wealth is too much regarded; pews must still be paid for,

a poor suit or a shabby dress meets but a frigid welcome, the social importance of this or that member is such that he must have precedence of poor-looking strangers. The result is to drive away many who would gladly avail themselves of the privileges of the Church but are too poor to hire a pew, or are chilled by the air of respectability which deadens the spiritual vigor of so many churches. "A low mercantile principle has, in an insidious way, acquired a degree of control over one department of Church activity. Without the conscious acquiescence of the members of the Church, and, of late, even against their wishes and efforts, the organization has become entangled in the meshes of the commercial system which environs it."[1]

These conditions must be removed from the life and work of the Church herself before she can hope successfully to take part in the regeneration of the rest of society. As to the legitimate scope of the Church in reform, it is not by any means as wide as some seem to suppose. In discussing the subject we must constantly bear in mind that the main work of the Church is to feed the spiritual and moral nature of men. It is not quite true that, in the words of a well-known philanthropist, "the meaning of the great philanthropic movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century is that the Church is being left behind in the race for the amelioration of mankind." It cannot be true, because the spirit that has prompted "the great philanthropic movement" has emanated from the Church, and it is her teaching and influence which keep that spirit continually alive. The only view of the scope of Church activity which would justify such a criticism is the loose one, frequently held, that the founding and maintenance of benevolent institutions is wholly the duty of the Church; and that she should take a directive part in politics, participate in municipal reform, "take sides" in industrial disputes, and follow other similar

[1] J. B. Clark, Philosophy of Wealth, p. 230.

courses which, in the opinion of their adherents, would benefit society.

Now, such a view is not just. If there were no other agencies of reform, and if sociological science were developed so that a definite method of accomplishing a specific reform were always evident, then, indeed, the Church might be held responsible for securing it. But there is at least one other agency, that of the State; and for the largest number of social problems there is as yet no admitted solution. In the field of activity which properly is the sphere of the State, all that the Church can or ought to do is to breathe into it the spirit of justice and charity, so that the State may be and may act as a Christian State. By far the largest amount of the work of founding and maintaining such institutions as hospitals, asylums, and reformatory institutions generally, properly belongs to political society; that is, to the municipality or the State, and not to the Church. Her duty is in arousing public opinion to establish and maintain them. It cannot fairly be said, that, inasmuch as the purpose of the Church is the elevation of man, she should participate in all works that produce that result. The argument proves too much. If it were true, almost every department of social and political activity might be logically placed under her direction. All that can be rightfully expected of the Church is that she endeavor to breathe the spirit of benevolence into all spheres of the life of society, and that she shall take active part in the direct management of some. It is not true, for example, that "there is no reason why political movements for the upraising of our people should not start in a prayer-meeting as well as in a saloon." That it would be well if such movements did not start in a saloon, all agree; but that they should originate in a prayer-meeting, we must deny. For political movements imply the supremacy of one party over another, after a struggle. The starting of such a movement in a prayer-meeting would mean the alienation

of one or another party from the Church. All she should do is to seek to infuse her spirit into the contest.

What are the phases of, and attempts at, social reform in which the Church should take an active part, there is no rule for determining. The only way to indicate them is to mention them specifically, and no two persons would be likely to agree on the list. But there are some modern social movements so important, and so vitally connected in their influences with the mission of the Church, that there is little room for disagreement as to the duty of the Church with reference to them.

It was pointed out above that the tendency of unrestrained competition is to lower the moral plane of industry. Consequently, it is a proper and desirable work for the Church to try to secure the passage of such laws as will prevent this moral degradation, or will raise the level of business morality. Among such laws are most of those which go under the general designation of factory and sanitary laws. In this phase of the labor problem the Church may properly take action. Through her representatives, committees, ministers, members, she should seek to influence public opinion for the passage of such of this class of laws as are clearly for the protection of health, life, and character, even although they are likely to encroach on the "profit" of some who value wealth more than humanity. The great practical difficulty, of course, is how to choose the measures which deserve support, and the means with which to influence their adoption. Those are matters which must be left to the separate church bodies, and the interest and action of these bodies would depend, after all, on the complexion of their membership. Hence, the only conclusion we can come to is the very general one that all that the Church as such can really do, is to raise her voice, through her ministers and members, in behalf of justice and righteousness in industrial relations;—and this is just her old work and no new thing

at all, except in the feature that the justice and righteousness urged are specific in a specific cause.

So far as the labor question is concerned, the Church could, and should, also throw her influence, by her preaching and by the formal expression of the opinion of her members, in favor of fairness and kindness in labor disputes. But she has no right at all to side with either party against the other, unless injustice or unkindness is perfectly evident. And there are few cases in which this would be true. Hence there is no field for the Church to take direct part in the labor problem, so called. That must be solved by the general principles of righteousness and love which it is her duty to preach. All that she can do here is to emphasize the principles by demanding that they be applied in the particular case in hand. The burden of fault in this line of duty has been the indifference of the Church toward the whole matter. Even clergymen have taken little interest in it, partly, no doubt, because they did not realize its importance, and partly because the pulpit is too often intimidated by the pew, and because "respectability" is usually on the side of the socially strong, who pay salaries and maintain churches.

In the great matter of charity there is a wider field for her activity. Her first duty, as already pointed out, is to educate the people, the political body, to maintain charitable institutions. But there is a vast number of needy and deserving poor who cannot be, at least are not, reached by such institutions, and many for whom it should not be necessary to rely on them. Here is a proper field for Church activity. But it is a field that she has always more or less completely occupied, so that here she cannot be charged with general dereliction of duty.

In social reform, in the narrower sense of the social and moral education of the poor and unfortunate classes, including the "slums" of great cities, the opportunities of the Church are greater still and therefore, of course, her respon-

sibility for action is greater too. What is needed here is a knowledge of better ways of living, and strong, helpful sympathy at times of failure and discouragement. The work is of the kind undertaken, and so well performed, by the so-called College, or Social, Settlements. These are homes, or settlements, established in the slums of great cities for the elevation of the degraded. The work is one which in purpose and method is in perfect touch with the teachings of the Founder of the Church, and should, therefore, be a part of her duty. The work of these settlements is one of the most interesting and valuable of the forces making for social reform. The residents, as those who live at these settlements are called, virtually make a home for the poor of their neighborhood, showing them, by actual experience of it, the value of a more orderly and higher home life than they are accustomed to. Reading and debating clubs, boys' clubs, men's clubs, women's meetings, games, gymnastics, employment bureaus, day nurseries, and other features go to make up the work of these institutions. It is the kind of charity that consists, not in gifts of dollars, but of sympathy, advice, influence, personal help,—the real application of the second of the two great commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets. Strangely enough, most of the work of this kind is done aside from the churches, independently of them, and in some cases with their active opposition. The reason why the churches have held aloof from this work is, that it is not directly religious. There are no religious services held at the homes. But to deny that the work is religious is to confuse religious forms with religious spirit, to insist that worship of God consists only in prayer and thanksgiving and song. What we need to emphasize is "the Christ *life*," the Christ spirit. This can be developed without formal services; and even though religion be never mentioned, and no services are ever held in these homes, yet the development of a higher physical and moral life would give the

Church better ground to work on for spiritual purposes, and justify her in undertaking such work herself.

There are certain special works of reform that could be better carried out in connection with such Settlements under Church control than in any other way. This is especially true of temperance and tenement-house reform. The former could be worked at by the establishment of places of recreation, amusement, and physical refreshment, in connection with the Settlements. For, as has been often enough remarked, what draws men to the saloons is often less the desire for drink than the desire for a comfortable and cheerful place to pass the time.

Tenement-house life could be improved by such Settlements because their residents would teach the people a more efficient use of the means at their disposal, and would make many so discontented with the conditions of tenement-house life in the technical sense, that they would shun it by keeping their own homes, at least, more decent and comfortable. At the same time opportunity would be given for direct action towards the abolition of the vicious sweating system.

Still other lines of work which could be followed in connection with these Settlements are those of aiding fallen women to return to a better life, and of helping ex-convicts to secure a new footing in society. A good deal has been done by the Church in the former line already, but in the latter only a little. There are many inmates of our penitentiaries who could be saved for a life of usefulness if on their release they were properly cared for and given a new start. Yet the man who goes to prison has but little chance, as things are, of ever again getting on his moral feet, so to speak. All the arrangements of society tend to push him down. But "there are men and women," as a Chicago paper recently said, "who believe a person can serve a term in the penitentiary, or two or three terms, and still be worth saving; that he may still become useful to the world and en-

titled to all the blessings his unconvicted fellows are privileged to enjoy. This faith has, comparatively, not many followers. Its most active and efficient exponents make no boast of their work; what is done by the right hand of their blessed kindness is never known to the left hand of public information."

Such a work must be in its nature private, and the secrets of those who receive its aid must be in the keeping of those whose hearts are warm with love for their fellow-men; it should therefore be committed by the churches to their pastors with means to use in confidence according to their judgment. There are some other forms of work that will suggest themselves as capable of being carried on in connection with such establishments as those mentioned.

The question now arises, What means has the Church at her disposal for the performance of this work? How shall she set about it? After all, it is not a new work for her. To some extent, in some form, she has been doing it all through her history. The present need is for an enlargement and systemization of it. The work, to be most successful, would have to be largely done by individual representatives of the Church, in whom great financial and moral trust would have to be reposed. It will not do to rely too much on organization. There is too much of it in the churches already; that is, there is too much machinery and too little real co-operation. The growth of too much church machinery is a sure sign of the decline of spirituality. Moreover, the need is for individual church-members to take an active interest in such matters. As Octavia Hill says, "No spiritual army, however pure and powerful, no system or organization, however perfect, however well administered, can remove the canker from the social life of a country the citizens of which hope to contract by donations, however liberal, for its reform. It is by our justice to our employees, by our example to our friends, by our kindness to our neighbors, by our zeal in fulfilment

of citizen duties, by our tender personal care of those who have fallen by the way, or may have strayed,—by long years, in short, of noble, many-sided life—that we can root out the evils around us." Yet organization would, of course, be necessary. The thing to be guarded against is the loss of spirituality and sympathy in its management. To prevent this the organization would have to be very loose in its regulations, and a large amount of discretion would have to be granted to those in immediate charge.

So far as the field is open to the Church for action in such matters as influencing public opinion in factory legislation and in politics, she has already all the means necessary to do her work. That kind of work can be carried on everywhere, in both city and country, without special organization.

The work of the Church in social reform in the narrow sense, as illustrated by the College Settlements, would necessarily be carried on in the cities, because it is there that the evils to be treated manifest themselves. This fact points to the means which the Church, through the separate church bodies, should adopt. They could establish Settlements in the cities, on the model of those already in existence, like the Hull House in Chicago, and the College Settlement in New York.

It would not be necessary or desirable for ministers to devote themselves to the study of Sociology and Political Economy in order to carry such plans into effect. In fact, it would not be desirable for the ministers to do this work directly at all. They will have enough to do in the future, as in the past, in caring for the moral and spiritual welfare of those immediately committed to their care. The direct supervision and control of the work should rather be in the hands of conscientious members of the church which establishes the Settlement; and for them a knowledge of social science would be desirable, and in some cases necessary, although, after all, the

problems presented require usually an application of common sense rather than any technical sociological knowledge.

In view of the fact that the special work under discussion would be done by city churches mainly, the financial difficulties surely should not be great.

If the history of the activity of the Church has been correctly interpreted in this paper, it is clear that much of the complaint made against the Church is without just foundation. She has sometimes erred, her members have often been false, her Master's spirit has at times been apparently lost and his teachings forgotten; but on the whole, through the generations that have gone since her career began, she has been true to her mission of the moral and spiritual salvation of the individual; and it does not appear that the final redemption of the world could be brought about by any other plan. But there are to-day at the command of the Church, for the fulfilment of her mission, means which have never existed before, new avenues of action, new motives of conduct. In neglecting to take advantage of these, she is failing in her duty to her Master, and if the bitter attacks that are being made on her arouse her to the situation, they will do a good work for the world and for God.

In conclusion, it is important again to emphasize the fact that, after all has been said that can be said of the duties and opportunities of the Church in the field of social activity, it appears that her work there is only incidental to her grand main purpose. Her mission is primarily spiritual; her chief work must still be the promotion of spirituality, and the "development of moral fibre," sweetness, purity, and charity, in character, as aids to that end. The *indirect* power of the Church for social improvement is, therefore, as limitless as the capability of human character for improvement and as the duration of the life of man on earth; the *direct* power, on the other hand, is comparatively limited. This follows, indeed, from the very nature of progress. Pov-

erty and wealth are relative terms. A condition of wealth in one generation or age is a condition of poverty in some succeeding one. For progress implies the relative degradation, or inferiority, of some, because not all society can move forward with equal rapidity. Hence suffering is inevitable, and equal contentment, enjoyment, and satisfaction in life, for all, are impossible until progress shall cease. No power, then, not even the Church, can eradicate social inferiority and consequent suffering, certainly not in a progressive society. And as Professor Franklin H. Giddings has pointed out,[1] perhaps the most valuable contribution which Christianity has made to social *science* is the emphasis of this fact, in the declarations that we shall always have the poor with us, and that some are free from, and some in bondage to, the law.

It follows that the application of the "Golden Rule" cannot solve the social problem, in the sense that *relative* social inferiority, degradation, and suffering can be made by it to disappear. All that it can accomplish is to "relieve the situation." That much, however, is imperative on those who profess to obey it, that is, on the Church. But while relative poverty cannot be eradicated, it is not vain to hope that social conditions can be so improved as to secure for all a sufficient amount of material comforts to prevent actual physical suffering. The possibility of the attainment of such a condition makes it the duty of the Church to strive for it ceaselessly, if only as a means to her main purpose.

There are two cautions, however, which the Church must observe in her action in social matters. The first is that suffering is sometimes necessary for the development of strength of character, for the sufferer's future highest welfare. In such cases the duty of the Church is not to relieve the present suffering, but to direct it for the future good,

[1] See the International Journal of Ethics for January, 1893.

until that good is secured. This is a matter that requires wisdom.

The second caution which the Church needs to observe is that she must be careful not to let her charity support or promote injustice. It is often the duty of the Christian to sacrifice his own rights for the sake of charity towards one at whose hands he suffers injustice; it never is his duty or his right to sacrifice those of another, even for charity's sake. There can be no true charity that involves injustice. Justice must be prior, then, to charity; and, indeed, if equal and exact justice were always done, there would be a great deal less occasion for charity, even in the widest sense of the word. The Church has no right to espouse the cause of one in distress, as against some one else, if, in the matter under dispute, that some one else has been wronged by him who is now suffering. This is a fact that some who call for Church activity in social matters too often forget; and they consequently fail to see that the espousal by the Church of the cause of one who is being crushed, when his cause is unjust, would mean the stultification of her character, the belying of her duty, and the ruin of her influence. Such considerations as these very materially narrow the possible sphere of Church action in social reform.