

**Social Service Series**

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**THE  
CHURCH AND THE  
LABOR MOVEMENT**

**Stelzle**

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Is the Concern of All**

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# THE CHURCH AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT

By

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# THE CHURCH AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT

## I. The labor movement of the times.

One day a group of men questioned the mission and the message of Jesus. They asked for a sign—a miracle—whereby these might be verified; but instead of performing another miracle, Jesus spoke these very significant words, "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

The other day, in Chicago, a prominent trades unionist and his wife dedicated their eighteen-months-old child to the cause of labor. The service was held in a Methodist church, under the auspices of the Typographical Union, and a Presbyterian minister officiated. Representatives of other denominations also took part in the service. There were present large numbers of trades unionists, not only from the city of Chicago, but from various parts of the country. So significant was this event that a number of political and social economy professors made it their business to witness this unusual proceeding. It was one of the signs of the times.

The day will arrive when working men will dedi-

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cate their little children to the cause of labor, just as Samuel was dedicated to the tabernacle service, and when Christian men will enter the labor movement in the same spirit and with the same devotion as others are now engaging in the work of the Christian ministry.

There was held recently in the city of Stuttgart, Germany, an international Congress of Socialists. There were present eight hundred and eighty-six delegates, coming from twenty-five different countries. These delegates represented about twenty-five million Socialists throughout the world, more people than were represented at the Philadelphia meeting of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. On the first Sunday afternoon of the Stuttgart Convention, there came into the public plaza, long processions of working men from the surrounding towns, and they numbered about one hundred thousand, and from half a dozen red-draped platforms, they were addressed by Socialists of world-wide reputation, such as Bebel, Jaure, and Ferri. Sometimes the listeners could not understand the language that was being spoken by the speakers, but so intense was the spirit of the orators, that they nevertheless listened with the most rapt attention. Those who were present said it seemed like another day of Pentecost. The policemen sent out by the municipality to quell a possible riot, were engaged simply in ministering to those who had fainted by the wayside on account of the in-

tense heat of the day. This, also, is one of the signs of the times.

If one were to go to the great East Side of New York, he would find a group of Socialist speakers on many a crowded corner, addressing from the end of a bob-tail cart, the most serious-minded people in the world—men and women who are listening not simply because of an intellectual interest in the questions that are being discussed, but because to them this message means their salvation—physical, social, intellectual, and moral. And this is practically the only gospel which these people are hearing, because, in recent years, large numbers of Protestant churches have moved out of the lower East Side of New York, while half a million people have moved in, the church thus frankly confessing that its message is not adaptable to this great multitude; hence it must follow the class to which it can most easily appeal. Meanwhile, these working people are wondering where lies the friendship of the church for them.

Everybody knows about the remarkable success of the Socialists in Milwaukee. Recently I asked the leader of the party in that city to what he attributed their power and influence. He told me that they put nine-tenths of their campaign funds into literature; but more significant was the statement that there are three hundred Socialists who have pledged themselves to get up every Sunday morning at five o'clock, summer and winter, for the purpose of

putting socialistic literature, printed in various languages, into the Sunday morning papers found upon the front doorsteps of the people living in the districts for which they became responsible. How many Christian men could one secure in the largest cities in America who would pledge themselves to render a similar service because they were convinced that the message of Christianity is a far more vital message than that contained in socialism?

Awhile ago, in one of our colleges, I addressed a company of three hundred students, who, afterward, plied me with the most pertinent questions that I have ever been asked. They were intensely interested in the social problems of the day. One of the brightest of them, a young Jewess, told me afterward that she had come to this college to secure a four-years' training, and as soon as she should have completed it, she was going back to her sweat-shop people in Chicago, from whom she had come, to tell them that in socialism alone was their salvation.

The Socialists are conducting more open-air meetings than are being conducted by all of the Protestant churches combined, including the Salvation Army and the Volunteers of America. When, during a summer evangelistic campaign in New York, conducted under the auspices of practically the combined Protestant forces of the city, the superintendent reported with great satisfaction the number of open-air meetings that were to be con-



ducted during a certain week, it was discovered that for every open-air meeting to be conducted under the auspices of the united churches of New York, the Socialists were to conduct sixteen.

Can it be said that the average churchman of to-day has a true conception of the real situation? Is it not true that he will dismiss the whole subject of the labor movement by the statement that if we could abolish the labor unions the entire problem would be settled? As though the labor unions were responsible for the social unrest among the masses! The labor union, important as it is in many respects, is merely a symptom. Even though every labor union in the country were to be abolished, the labor problem would still be present. The labor movement consists of forces organized and unorganized. It includes the twenty-five million Socialists of the world, to whom reference has already been made; it embraces the nine million trades unionists from every land; it includes the movement among the Russian peasantry, twenty thousand of whom, in a recent year, suffered martyrs' deaths because of their belief in the ideal which somebody had given them. It includes the movements among the working people in England, in France, in Belgium, in Austria, in Italy, in Turkey, and in Australia, to say nothing about the social unrest in our own country. In view of all this, it does not require a very wise man to say that this is the era of the common man. Slowly but surely the masses of

the people are coming to their own, and no human power can stop their onward march.

The labor movement is more than an economic movement. It has become to vast numbers of men a religion, many of whom are sacrificing and suffering as much as any modern advocate of the Christian religion, although perhaps not always in the same way, nor for the same reasons. It seems absurd, therefore, to attempt to get rid of the whole question by a specious argument against the trades union.

But the trades union is an important factor in the industrial problem, and it has come to stay. Furthermore, the organized working men have reason for the belief that they speak officially for the great mass of working men. According to the report of the American Federation of Labor, issued June 24, 1909, there are affiliated with it one hundred and sixteen national and international unions; four departments, consisting of the building trades, the metal trades, the railroad employees, and the union label department. There are thirty-eight State branches, six hundred city central labor bodies, five hundred and ninety-six local trade and federal labor unions—that is, locals which are not affiliated with any other national organization; and approximately twenty-seven thousand local unions. This does not include the great railroad brotherhoods of the country, which are not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, the Industrial

Workers of the World, and still other smaller organizations, making a total of perhaps three million five hundred thousand. It is frequently asserted that even this number represents but a small percentage of the workers in the United States. But let us analyze the situation: According to the census of 1900, there were at that time twenty-nine million persons engaged in gainful occupations, but of these ten million were farmers, about six million were engaged in social and domestic service, and one million two hundred and fifty thousand were in the professions. Included also in the twenty-nine million are nearly five million engaged in trade and transportation, among whom are bankers, brokers, merchants, officials of banks and corporations, bookkeepers, overseers, hucksters, and pedlers, livery-stable men, undertakers, stenographers, and other miscellaneous workers who are unorganizable. After this number has been deducted, it will be found that there are about seven million remaining. Probably one-half of these live in the country, or in small towns where it is not possible to organize a labor union, so that the three million five hundred thousand who are in the trades unions of the United States are the truest representatives of the working people. Certainly no one else is more representative.

The fact that a working man is not a member of a trades union, does not necessarily imply that he is opposed to the union. It is generally understood

among them that these organizations are fighting the battles of their class, and that they are receiving the benefits of the trades union's struggle, even though they are not making the sacrifices which membership would necessarily bring with it. It is for this reason too, that the average trades unionist is bitter against the man who will not unite with his organization. He thinks it is unfair that he, as a trades unionist, should bear all the burdens, while the non-unionist receives as many benefits as he does, without assuming any of the responsibilities.

### *II. The value of the labor union.*

The moral and ethical value of the labor union is rarely appreciated by its opponents; nor is it generally understood even by those who are in favor of the trades union. The International Typographical Union, for instance, supports a home in Colorado, valued at one million dollars, which is used not only by members who are afflicted with tuberculosis, but by any member who, for any reason, has become incapacitated. The Cigarmarkers' Union, with its membership of forty-five thousand, disbursed, during twenty-eight years, over eight million dollars in sick and other benefits. The charity organization societies of the country declare that they rarely, if ever, receive requests for aid from trades unionists. Perhaps the International Association of Machinists is a typical union in the matter of benefits. Members who stop work

on account of a grievance approved by the General Executive Board, and who have been three months in continuous good standing, receive six dollars per week, if they are unmarried, and eight dollars per week, if they are married men or single men with others dependent upon them for support, the apprentice receiving half-rate. A member having attained the age of sixty-five years, who has been ten consecutive years in good standing, is entitled to five hundred dollars. A member who has attained the age of sixty-eight, with twenty years' good standing, will receive the sum of one thousand dollars. The death benefits of this organization are as follows: After six months' continuous good standing, fifty dollars; one year, seventy-five dollars; two years, one hundred dollars; three years, one hundred and fifty dollars; four years, two hundred dollars.

Besides these benefits given by the international organization, the local unions arrange for sick benefits according to their own desire. The trades union, therefore, in addition to being a militant organization, has also its benefits during times of peace. The trades union hall is the social center for the working men belonging to a particular craft. Here they meet their business agent or "walking delegate," when they are out of employment. It is part of his business to find work for them, the employers usually communicating with this official when they are in need of men. Here, also, they

come together for their social functions to which they bring the members of their families, and, in many instances, educational lectures are arranged for the benefit of the members of the union.

The trades union stands for social reform. It is a force for more temperate living among working men. For at least three consecutive years President Gompers has called attention, in his annual report, to the necessity of labor unions cutting loose from the saloon in the selection of their meeting-places. At the Pittsburgh Convention, Mr. Gompers said:

“There is a constantly growing desire among our membership to hold their meetings in halls on the premises of which there is no sale of intoxicants. In the interests of sobriety and morality, I again urge that this Convention strongly recommend to our affiliated organizations throughout the country that they inaugurate a movement which shall permit the use of our public-school rooms for the evening meetings of our labor organizations.”

In England, the organized working men have inaugurated a movement, which has for its object the personal practice of total abstinence and the securing of meeting-places for trades unions which shall be free from the influence of the saloon. Recently I wrote to over three hundred of the leading labor men of America, asking for opinions as to the advisability of forming a similar organization in this country. With scarcely an exception, the replies received were in favor of such a proposition.

The "Coast Seamen's Journal," the official organ of the Seamen's Union, recently said editorially:

"The 'Model License League' is an organization for the purpose of reforming the saloon and making it tolerable, if not respectable. Undoubtedly this object is a good and necessary one. Carried to its logical conclusion—the abolition of the saloon—that object will commend itself to every good citizen. The 'Journal' does not believe in prohibition, or any other procedure which invades 'personal liberty.' But the 'Journal' does believe unreservedly in the virtues of total abstinence as the only sure cure for the 'liquor habit,' with all its attendant evils. We welcome whatever reforms the 'Model License League' may be able to bring about, not so much as reforms in themselves, as steps toward the final extinction from the face of the earth of a curse upon the bodies and souls of men. As to the incidental effects of the abolition of the liquor trade, the loss of revenue and employment, etc., we have but to say: A people strong enough to free itself from the slavery of drink may safely be trusted to raise revenue and find employment in ways more profitable than by catering to the agencies of debauchery and crime. In any event, the 'liquor interests' may as well take note of the probability that a few years hence the man who drinks to excess will be as rare as the 'dope fiend' of the present day. In this one respect, at least, the world is moving steadily forward. And don't you forget it!"

*III. The union as an Americanizing influence.*

John Mitchell once told me that during the anthracite coal strike, he was welcomed at the railroad station by thousands of striking miners. As he was being escorted from the station to his hotel, there were lined up on both sides of the street crowds of sympathizers, nearly all of them consisting of foreigners. He noted, as he was being driven in his carriage, that behind practically every policeman there stood a foreigner with a deadly weapon in his hand, prepared to resist any effort on the part of the police to take John Mitchell captive. For they supposed, of course, that the government, as represented by the police, was opposed to him on account of his leadership in their struggles. For was not this the fate of most of their leaders in the old country?

Carroll D. Wright once said, in a report to Congress, that the trades union is doing more to Americanize the immigrant than is being done by any other agency, not excepting the church. In practically every other relationship in life, the immigrants are organized on strictly clan lines. This is true in the church, in building and loan associations, and in educational and benefit societies. The trades union refuses to permit nationality lines to be recognized. When this plan was insisted upon in the stockyards district in Chicago, the clan leaders—those who drew emoluments or secured social



prestige as leaders of the various strictly clan societies—were in one case permitted to organize a Lithuanian union. The experiment, however, resulted in complete failure. No subsequent experiments have been permitted.

Reporting upon a special investigation ordered in the stockyards district, Mr. Wright said:

“The investigation disclosed the influence of the union in teaching the immigrant the nature of the American form of government. The records of this office, independent of this investigation, show that during an investigation of building and loan associations, a few years ago, information from the Bohemians, Polish, and other clannish associations of that character could be obtained only through the services of an interpreter. It was found that as soon as a Bohemian or a Pole heard the word ‘government,’ or ‘government agent,’ he closed his mouth, and it was impossible to secure any information.

“This has been true in other investigations, notably in collecting family budgets; but with an intelligent interpreter, using their own language, the nature of the work was explained, and no further difficulty was experienced. The union is breaking down this trait of character in the foreigners of the nationalities mentioned. This it is doing, not as a matter of philanthropy, but from a selfish necessity. The immigrant must be taught that he must stand straight up on his own feet; that the ward politician

is dependent on him—on his vote, etc.—and not he on the ward politician. In this way he first learns that he is a part of the government, and while this is done by indirection, in a large sense, there is no other force that is doing it at all. The Pole, the Bohemian, the Lithuanian, the Slovak, and to a much less degree the Galician, have inherited the feeling that somehow government is a thing inimical to their natural development—a power forcing itself upon them from afar; an intrusive power for repression, taxation, punishment only; a thing which they must stand in awe of, obey, pay tribute to, and wish that it had not come among their people, even if they did not secretly hate it—a thing, in short, which ought not to be. Being weaker than it, they must be silent in its presence, and if forced to speak, lie, as for them to tell the truth would mean imprisonment or death. . .”

It is doubtful if any organization other than a trades union could accomplish these things, for only the bread and butter necessity would be potent enough as an influence to bring these people out of the fixed forms and crystallizations of life into which they have been compressed. Certain it is that no other organization is attempting to do this work, at least not by amalgamation, which is the only way assimilation can be secured among the various foreign elements. The drawing of these people away from their petty clique leaders and getting them to **think** for themselves upon one line of topics,

namely, the industrial conditions and the importance of trade organization, result in a mental uplift. The only way they can pull a Slovak away from his leader is to pull him up until he is gotten above his leader along the lines of thought they are working on. The very essence of the trade argument on the immigrant is—unconsciously again—an uplifting and an Americanizing influence. The unionist begins to talk better wages, better working conditions, better opportunities, better homes, better clothes. Now, one cannot eternally argue “better” in the ears of any man, no matter how restricted the particular “better” harped on, without producing something of a psychological atmosphere of “better” in all his thought and life activities. If better food, better wages, or even better beer, is the only kind of “better” one might get a Slovak or a Lithuanian to think about, then the only way to improve him is to inject the thought of “better” into the only crevice to be found in his stupidity.

*IV. The labor union a moral and social crusader.*

Carlyle once said: “That a man should be capable of knowledge and remain ignorant—that to me is tragedy.” To the nation at large it may soon become clearer that the destruction of its children, through ignorance and neglect cannot—even from a national standpoint—be regarded as other than a tragedy. How many children there are who are working in the mills and factories of our country

will not be known until a thorough canvass of the situation has been made. But there are enough of them to stir up any one who is concerned about the welfare of the nation.

England is suffering to-day because of this neglect. It suffered in the Boer war because it could not get the right kind of men to serve in its army on account of the physical degeneration of large numbers of its working people. One hears very much about the unemployment problem in England, but there are vast numbers of the unemployed who could not perform any kind of service, even though it were offered them, on account of physical inability, due to mal-nutrition and lack of proper environment during childhood's years.

It is a sad fact that, in spite of our industrial prosperity, child labor is rapidly increasing in the United States. The trades union has set its face against the unnecessary employment of little children in the mills and factories. The National Child Labor Committee meets with no heartier response anywhere than it does among the organized working men.

The trades union is demanding that women shall receive a square deal. It insists that they shall receive the same pay as men are receiving, for the same work, and the trades union is practically the only organization or institution which insists upon this standard. When the school-teachers of New York desired to appear before a Committee of the

Board of Education with reference to an advance in their salaries, they had a committee of men accompany them. They did not secure this committee from the Chamber of Commerce, nor yet from the preachers' associations. They went directly to the Central Federated Union of New York, because they knew that here they would find a champion.

Because the working man sees so much that is good in organized labor, and because it is so vitally concerned about his moral as well as his social and physical condition, we may easily understand that he imagines he has in his labor union a fairly good substitute for the church. Here he finds developed to a remarkable degree, the three great principles for which Christianity stands, viz., the value of human life, the care of the human body, and the development of the human soul. Frequently there comes to me the suggestion that the labor unions be converted into religious organizations, administered by officers taken from their own ranks. This indicates how some, at least, long for that which the labor union, as at present organized, does not provide. And herein lies the hope of the church.

But there are vast numbers of working people who are helpless on account of ignorance and physical and mental limitations, and because of the great power of the employing class; those who live in the tenements and work in unsanitary factories, who have long hours of labor and lack a living wage, to whom the future holds but little hope, and who are

suffering from the crushing blows of poverty. These need the help of the church, and of all others who are desirous that justice shall be done. But into the faces of these are flaunted the extravagances of the rich, and as a natural consequence, they have become bitter against the wealthy. They cannot understand why their children should suffer for the barest necessities of life, while the children of the more highly favored squander their substance in riotous living.

It will not suffice to depend upon charity. The American working man does not want charity. He wants justice and work. The attitude of the masses of the people in this respect has changed very decidedly in recent years. They have become more independent. The spirit of democracy has taken hold of them. The soup-kitchen is a thing of the past, at least so far as the self-respecting working man is concerned. He desires to eat his meals at home, with his family, but he wants a home in which his family may be comfortable. In order to secure what he considers his rights, he is forming huge organizations, through which he is expressing himself.

Employers may insist that they will not deal with the representatives of these organizations, but they must realize that the day for individual bargaining has gone by, and that collective bargaining must be the method by which employer and employee will come to an agreement. The representative of a cor-

poration who declines to deal with the business agent of the trades union, forgets that he, himself, is the "business agent" of a large number of stockholders, for whom he professes to speak. And every argument which he uses against the walking delegate of the labor union in this respect, may be used against himself.

*V. The stake of the church in the labor movement.*

The working man is going to win. For long years he fought for religious democracy, and he conquered. Then, for hundreds of years he fought for political democracy, and he was victorious. To-day he is fighting for industrial democracy, and no one is strong enough to stand in his way. Just what the form of that democracy will be, no sane man will dare prophesy; but it is coming in some form. The danger is that the church will so long hold itself aloof from the movements being inaugurated by the common people, that the day will arrive when the justification for their existence will be so self-evident, that there will no longer be any need for leadership on the part of the church. When the hour strikes that shall proclaim the victory of the common people, it will not suffice for the church to pat them upon the back and congratulate them because of the splendid struggle in which they have engaged and for the glorious victory which they achieved. The working men will then turn around upon the church and tell it that

inasmuch as it never so much as lifted its finger while they were suffering during the time of unjust prejudice and oppression, the church may now continue to go its way while they will go theirs. And this is rapidly becoming the temper of the vast body of working people. They are becoming impatient with what they call the pious platitudes of the church. They have no sympathy with the "comfortable words" being spoken by the minister. It may be true that they have no right to expect the church to do some of the things which they are asking it to advocate. But the church itself has said that it is in favor of these propositions, and the working man is simply asking the church to prove its sincerity.

As a matter of fact, however, many of the recognized leaders of the church do not know the situation confronting the masses of the people. They think they know, and there are some ministers who are fairly familiar with the conditions; but the men in the churches, as a whole, seem to be utterly ignorant of the fight that is being made by the working classes. For if they actually knew, and if they believed in the mission of Jesus and of the church which he founded, there could not possibly be the indifference and sometimes the opposition that is so frequently manifested even by otherwise well-informed ministers and laymen.

What, for instance, do many of the professors in our theological seminaries know about the working



man? And yet these are the men to whom the church is looking for the preparation of its ministry. The course of study in the average theological seminary has remained substantially the same from time immemorial, and the chances for its being changed are exceedingly small. At a recent conference composed of men who are interested in aggressive Christian work, the president of one of the most important theological seminaries in the United States made the statement that his seminary had now been doing business for nearly one hundred years and that it did not propose to make any changes in its curriculum or in its methods of work. He was quite satisfied, he said, with things as they are. And this was spoken in all seriousness.

Such a declaration concerning an engineering school, a lawyers' school, a physicians' college, or any other school which prepares for the professions, would at once raise an inquiry and a searching-out which would not rest until the school had cleared itself of so serious a charge. But not so with the average theological seminary—an institution which, of all institutions, is supposed to deal with the most vital problems of this world and the next.

It is when the seminary graduate comes into contact with the masses of the people that he is most severely tested. The classes hold most tenaciously to tradition and custom. Not so with the working man. He cares nothing for traditions. He is so vitally interested in to-day, that yesterday plays

but a small part in his life, and to-morrow is not yet here. A long time ago it was said that the voice of the people is the voice of God. To the so-called better classes this voice has been simply a roar of discontent. If they could but listen, they would hear, like the prophet of old, the "still, small voice" speaking out of the earthquake. He who would know what God is saying should keep close to the masses.

It is in the task of dealing with the people with whom are their problems, that the theological seminaries give the most inadequate preparation. The seminary students, as a rule, live too far away from the people to come into contact with the most pressing problems of the world. They do some preaching in the smaller churches or in rescue missions; but they are not taught to study human life and its needs at first hand. Many of the graduates serve an apprenticeship in the country churches, but nearly all look forward to a city pastorate. And when they are called to the city, in course of time, they conduct their churches upon an elaborated country church programme. They received no special training fitting them for the special work they are called to do in either country or city church. As a consequence the churches in country towns are not solving the problems they have to meet or leavening the life of their communities. And the churches in the cities are generally failing to read the signs of the times and to master the situation

in which they are placed. All of which means that the churches are barely holding their own where they are not losing ground in the great centers of population which are soon to dominate the nation; and this is due largely to the fact that many theological seminaries are without any prophetic vision, and are thus without the ability to inspire the prophetic instinct which is demanded of our ministers in these days of the church's greatest opportunity.

The profound religious spirit which is so evident in the labor movement bids fair either to capture the church or to become the heart of a great religious movement which will rival the church. It will surely do this unless the church itself so enlarges its vision and revises its methods as to include this movement. If this movement of the working people takes on a distinctively religious aspect—and it is quite possible for it to do so—the church will, with difficulty, keep up with the procession.

These are some of the facts which the theological seminaries must frankly face. They must do more than this—they must prepare their students to solve the problems which they suggest. This is an all-important part of their business; and in so far as they fail to do it, they fall short of their privilege and their duty.

#### *VI. The church's leadership of the social faith.*

The times demand prophets—men who can see with clear vision. The church may give the world

such men. Whether or not the theological seminary is to train them, depends altogether upon the seminaries. A few—perhaps half a dozen among all the denominations—have seen the need and are courageously attempting to meet the situation. But usually the extra studies are permitted on account of the pressure which has been brought to bear upon the seminary because of a small group of men who have insisted that they be introduced. Thus it happens that the men who deal with the great human problems which have to do with twentieth-century living, are overshadowed by the professors who teach Greek and Hebrew, the languages of the dead.

The working men have become impatient with the maudlin sympathy that is expressed in the speeches and the resolutions heard at ministerial conferences. They have no sympathy with the prayer that asks God to save the little children who are compelled to work in the mills and in the factories, so that their young lives may not be crushed out, and forgets to insist that the legislature and the employer shall enforce the laws which shall make this possible. They are coming to look upon the churches as social centers for the Sunday recreation of the well fed and the well dressed. They are looking eagerly for men in the churches who will become to them what their own leaders have been; but they are disappointed when they discover that the church has so little influence in the civic and moral life of the nation, because no one is paying any attention to

the edicts of the church with regard to these great problems. They feel, furthermore, that the churches offer them little opportunity for representation in their ecclesiastical organizations. They find the church controlled by traditions, and by institutionalism. They remember that Jesus Christ selected neither priest nor elder, but men who were very much like the ordinary working man outside of the churches to-day. Their opposition and their indifference is not to the Christianity of Jesus, but to the visible church which pretends to have a monopoly of this Christianity. Christ they honor, but for the church which professes to speak for him, they have the greatest contempt. The people have an unfortunate facility for asking questions, and the church becomes impatient because it cannot successfully answer them. It blames the questioner and not itself, because of its own ignorance. It does not offer the ideals which his soul is seeking, and it insists that nobody else shall offer them without being regarded as an intruder, and an invader of its own peculiar rights. The church is afraid of a movement or an expression simply because it is new, and because it has not been run through its own mold. It fails to recognize the vast amount of good that is found among the common people, which comes to them only because the spirit of Jesus Christ has filtered down into their lives and experiences. This spirit among the masses stands to-day as a challenge to the church, and promises to give

them greater power on earth, some day, than the church itself possesses.

Meanwhile, the church is preaching the same form of Christianity and making ancient applications of it, forgetting that the arguments which were once so powerful in meeting the adversary, are no longer effective, because that adversary no longer exists. A new order of things has been created which demands a new message. It is the application of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the social conditions of the day which is to-day demanded. Working people are not atheistic. They have very little patience with the infidel orator. The people who formerly went out to listen to a noted free-thinking lecturer in this country, were not composed of the artisan class. The average working man is naturally religious, even though that religion may not always be expressed in the accepted orthodox manner. He is responsive to the religious appeal, as the attention to ministers in shop meetings plainly indicates, or as the prominence given to the religious articles in the labor press amply proves. They admire the minister who does not apologize for his religion and for his profession, and who tells them fearlessly what they should know about their sin and their possible salvation, and they have the greatest contempt for the Christian who apologizes for the church and for his Bible.

They have little sympathy with the church because of its superficial knowledge of the problems of the

people. They are very glad to know that the church preaches the gospel to the poor, but they sometimes wish that it might be preached more effectively to the rich. They should not be blamed for their desire to build up their homes rather than to help support the church, because it is quite as important for a nation to have good homes as it is to have good churches. The church is simply a means to an end. The church should become to all a society of human beings living the very best human social life possible to be found on earth. In the words of Maurice and Kingsley, "We must protest against unchristian Socialists and unsocial Christians."

After all, what is needed most of all on the part of the churches is to get acquainted with the working man. Too long have they been studying him at a distance; and the working man has been doing the same with regard to the church. We need to get together to look each other in the eye. One of the most successful plans in this connection is the exchange of fraternal delegates between central labor unions and ministers' associations. This plan is now in operation in something like one hundred and twenty-five cities throughout the United States, and fully one hundred and seventy-five ministers are serving as fraternal delegates. One of the most successful of these tells of his experience as follows:

"I had heard of the widening gulf between the church and the working men; I had been told that

the labor unions were hotbeds of infidelity; I had sat in a meeting of Socialists where preachers were referred to with scorn, and the name of Jesus was received with cheers. When our Ministerial Association appointed me a fraternal delegate to the Federated Trades' Council, I wondered what would happen when I presented myself for admission. Would they sneer? Would they treat me with studied indifference?

“It is revealing no important secret of the council chamber to say that when I crossed the threshold there was a round of applause; that I was escorted to a seat on the platform next to the president, and that among those who came up to shake hands at the close of the meeting was one who said with some embarrassment: ‘Say, I’ve been roasting the preachers and churches; after this I’m going to cut it out.’

“I served as fraternal delegate for a year. It involved no little sacrifice; but it paid—paid big. I became a sort of chaplain among the working men. They invited me to visit their local unions and to be present at their social gatherings and public meetings. When they asked me to speak at their annual outing in the amusement park, they inquired somewhat timidly if I objected to participating in a picnic where there would be a good deal of dancing and shooting the chutes. I said, ‘No, most decidedly not!’ It was a great day, and I was able to say some things I would not have dared to say had



I not been one of them—nor cared to say had I been in my own church. I never preached to the men. I did not try to get them to come to my church. I did not pose in print as a ‘friend of the laboring man.’ I simply went to the council as a delegate to help in any possible way. I did not even think it necessary to remind the council that I represented the churches or the Ministerial Association. They, of course, understood that. I did say something on the subject of religion on one occasion. It was at a banquet which I had arranged. They asked me to give one of the addresses. I tried to give them some idea of the service the church could render their cause in some such way as this: Laboring men are demanding justice, not charity. Every true minister is urging this every Sabbath. Laboring men are emphasizing the brotherhood of man. This is the commonest theme of the pulpit. Laboring men are struggling for what they conceive to be their rights as to property and leisure. We are eager to give them our help. And it is our mission also to remind them that they have souls as well as bodies, that there is a God, and that heaven is just beyond.

“When I sat down, the man at my right said: ‘We ought to have something like that once a month.’

“And the man at my left said: ‘I’ve been a member of the union for fifteen years, and I never heard anything like that before. It’s all right.’

"I have found labor leaders intelligent, fair-minded, and dead in earnest. The ministerial delegate who will go to them with a modest, genuine desire to help, will get more than he can give."

The situation is hopeful. Many of us have thought of the church as being altogether blameless in the matter. But evidently many of the best leaders in the church have not thought so. Through its national bodies the church is waking up to a sense of its obligation in relation to working men's problems. The conventions and assemblies of nearly every denomination in the United States, held during the past year, took official action with regard to the social duties of the church. During the past five years at least half a dozen leading denominations in the United States and Canada have either established "Departments of Church and Labor," or they have committees studying the advisability of doing so. Others have started social service committees looking toward a better understanding of the relation of the church to the labor movement. In the words of one of these departments, it is their object, "To interpret the church to working men, to interpret working men to the church, and to interpret employer and employee to each other through education, inspiration, meditation, evangelism, and twentieth-century methods of Christian work." The same spirit prevails in churches in Europe and Australia. The next five years will witness great advances in this respect.