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I.

THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR OF 1870-71.

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THE battle of Waterloo had annihilated the gigantic forces of the great Napoleon; his throne, constructed upon the fortifications of the Reign of Terror and cemented with blood, had suddenly collapsed for the second time and forever, and the once omnipotent war lord had to pass the end of his days in utter silence upon the solitary rock of St. Helena. After twenty-five years of bloodshed and the prevalence of atrocious horrors, Europe once more settled down to enjoy the comforts of peace, re-establishing the pre-Napoleonic boundaries of the various continental countries as far as possible. The Holy Roman Empire of the German nation had gone to pieces under the forceful blows of Bonaparte's hammering, and its place was taken by the miserable state compound of the German confederacy, headed by two great powers, Austria and Prussia, with the former constantly on the watch for an opportunity to humiliate its rival, who had so nobly fought for the liberation of Germany. In this scarcely laudable effort Austria was seconded by the many other smaller states and statelets whose representatives had gathered around the

IV.

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN ITS RELATION TO SOCIAL REFORM.*

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Socialism is an international movement which seeks to overthrow existing social and economic institutions, and proposes a coöperative form of production as a substitute for the existing competitive system. Socialism must not be confounded with Anarchy, which demands the total abolition of the state, the family and religion.

The "Social Question" is the absorbing topic of the day among all thinking people in Europe, especially in Germany. At the last election the Social-Democratic party polled over two millions of votes for their representatives in the German Reichstag. To arrest their growth and crush the movement, special laws have been enforced with all severity, but without perceptible success. Even the army is being saturated with their teachings. It has been supposed that their doctrines could never obtain in our own land of freedom and plenty, but we have discovered that German Socialism has been largely imported, has taken root and is having a vigorous growth even among American workmen. President Seelye, of Amherst College, says: "There are probably 100,000 men in the United States to-day whose animosity against all existing social institutions is hardly less than boundless." But the present strength of Socialistic organizations in the United States concerns us less than their *prospective* numbers. Men of thought, therefore, view the future with extreme apprehension, and a German writer said lately: "We are approaching a revolution in comparison with which the French Revolution of 1789, and the Paris Communistic uprising of 1871 were only child's play. The crisis will pass over, just as the

* An essay to which the Bloomfield Alumni Prize was awarded.

Peasants' War of 1525 passed over, but it will be far more disastrous for both combatants."

In view of all this it is singularly strange that even Christian thinkers fail to consider the most valuable hints which the Old Testament offers for the solution of the social problem. Most men forget, if they have ever known, that the law of Moses is an almost inexhaustible treasury of social and economic wisdom. Dr. J. Strong is correct when he asserts in his excellent book, *The Message of Jesus to Men of Wealth*: "Jesus is the Saviour of society no less than of the individual souls; to disregard his teachings is poor statesmanship and bad political economy, as well as bad morals and irreligion." Many questions which threaten to shake up and tear our social fabric would not have reached their present formidable aspect if society had been a little less controlled by Roman jurisprudence and a little more by the principles of the Mosaic law. It would certainly be impracticable to transplant the law of Moses in its entirety into the constitutions of our modern Christian states, but its leading principles, its spirit, its methods and its aims, are worthy of the profoundest consideration by Christian statesmen and citizens.

The design of this paper is, therefore, to specify the principles of Socialism as it exists among the German people and elsewhere, and to bring out into clear statement the way in which the Old Testament provided a solution for the four main questions into which the so-called "Social Question" may conveniently be subdivided. In doing this, fairness requires that we state the Socialistic principles as they have been laid down in the officially adopted platform of the party, and not according to the opinions of individual leaders, much less according to the statements of their adversaries. The movement being international, the statement of principles in the "Programme" of the German Socialists will be found to be essentially the same among their adherents everywhere. Many embittered and enraged Socialists may be induced to open their hearts again to the benign influences of religion when it is shown to them that their Heavenly Father is not at all indifferent even to their material welfare, and that

3,000 years ago, among his ancient people, He provided already a solution for the evils under which they suffered.

I. PROPERTY.

First in importance among the burning social questions stands the property question, *i. e.*, the war against private and the advocacy of common property. The peculiar conception of property, of wealth and their acquisition is not accidental, but fundamental to the whole Socialistic system, its very centre. In giving up the battle against private property, Socialism would give up itself. Many people have the mistaken idea that the Socialists demand an "equal division" of all property. Just the opposite of it, Communism, *i. e.*, the undivided common possession of the soil, the instruments of labor, raw material and capital, is his end and aim. One of their organs, *The People's State*, writes (1871, No. 80), "Communism is Socialism carried to its logical end." Consequently the first demand in its official "Programme" is as follows: "Emancipation of labor requires the transformation of all private property into common or public property, and an equitable division of the product of labor." And Proudhon, in his classical sentence, goes so far as to assert, "Property is theft." Thus we see that Socialism opposes the very principle of private ownership, and not simply the evils connected with it.

Each conception, the current one of individual and the Socialistic one of common property, contains one-half of the truth. The Old Testament unites the two and makes them a harmonious whole. Its leading principle touching the question of property, is found in the words, "Thus saith the Lord, the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." (Lev. 25: 23.) This declaration plainly shows that for the Israelite absolute possession, as we understand it, did not exist. Jehovah is the Lord of all the earth, and Canaan, too, is His. The people are "strangers and sojourners with Him," as it were, but tenants and usufructuaries of the same. Only with these restrictions, Palestine was called the property of Israel. And as such it was subdi-

vided into tribal and family property (Numb. 26: 53; 33: 54.) But not only was this division made on a basis of perfect equality; there were besides three highly important provisions against a possible accumulation of landed property on the part of a few individuals. The leading principle of the following three provisions was that no one had the power to *sell* his possessions absolutely and for all time.

1. The king has a direct and binding commandment against accumulating riches (Deut. 17: 17).

2. The "right of ransom" gave to the seller an opportunity to buy back his property at any time at selling price; indeed, it was his privilege to deduct whatever benefit had accrued to the buyer in the meantime. Even the relatives could lay claim to this privilege (Levit. 25: 24).

3. At all events, the Year of Jubilee returned to the original owner all his real estate, and the selling price was determined in accordance with the provision (Levit. 25: 14).

The great benefits of such laws are found in the fact, that, though a man might be compelled by adversity to sell his property, yet he was thereby not left in hopeless poverty, while on the side of the rich an undue accumulation of real estate and capital was prevented.

By the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," which was enforced by many minor provisions of the law, this equitably divided property was protected from injury. See Ex. 24: 4; Deut. 22: 1; Gen. 43: 13; Levit. 6: 5.

This brief survey of the most vital of all social problems, the property question, brings out the sharp contrast between the spirit of the Mosaic law and the spirit of our modern conceptions of property. The latter makes man the absolute owner, while the former declares that he is but the steward of his possessions. The Mosaic law is, therefore, a bulwark against social revolution from above as well as below, and is equally removed from undue accumulation as from unnatural equalization of property. The doctrines of the Old Testament with reference to property are, therefore, not mere obsolete notions, but they contain many prac-

tical hints, and show us in what spirit God would have his people of to-day approach the solution of the social problem. For the belief in the sovereign ownership of God throws a divine sanction around the individual stewardship of man. It makes the reward of industry and fruits of toil, the house of honesty and the inheritance of virtue, the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, sacred and inviolable. It says to the wild mob as well as to the greedy despot, to the cheating trader as well as to the bold brigand, to the crafty devisers of financial traps as well as to the furtive pickpocket, "Thou shalt not steal." Peace and order comes into society when men recognize for themselves and their fellows that all they have fairly inherited and fairly earned is their possession because God, the owner of all things, has put it into their hands, simply as a trust.

II. POVERTY AND WEALTH.

According to the Socialistic gospel, Communism is to level the differences between poverty and wealth. A brief glance at these is, therefore, a natural sequence to the discussion of the property question.

It is an undeniable fact that the contrast between wealth and poverty is great and on the increase. The rich grow richer and the poor become poorer. It is, therefore, the duty of every philanthropist to help bridge over this yawning chasm. The modern state, especially in Europe, attends to this duty better than formerly, and tries by numerous laws (accident insurance, Sunday laws, cash salaries, laborers' saving funds, etc.,) to stem the tide of poverty. A large number of private enterprises (charities, relief associations, building societies) are working toward the same end. But Socialism looks with contempt upon all these exertions and proposes to do away with the difference between rich and poor by totally abolishing individual property and establishing joint ownership. In their "Programme" they declare: "The dependence of the working classes in modern society is the root of all misery and subjection in all its forms. We, therefore, demand a progressive income tax, the abolition of all indirect

taxes which press heaviest upon the poor, a normal work day and the prohibition of Sunday as well as of child labor."

Now let us see what directions God has given to mitigate the great contrast between the rich and the poor. In so doing we shall find that all laws for the protection of the poor are based on the principle that *every Israelite must at least have the necessities of life*. In detail we find the following laws:

1. In the "Sabbath Year" the stranger, the hired servant, the widows and orphans are to have their part of all that grows alone (Levit 25 : 3-7).

2. Besides the Levites, the stranger, the widows and orphans are to have one-tenth of the income every three years (Deut. 26 : 12).

3. During the harvest, whatever grew on the border of the field, also the leavings, also the forgotten sheaf, belonged to the poor (Levit. 19 : 9 ; Deut. 24 : 19).

4. By special command of Jehovah, it was the right of the poor to take part in the feast at the offering of the first fruits, and at the high festivals of sacrifice. Strangers, widows and orphans were included in this (Deut. 16 : 10). Our Lord Jesus repeats this command in Luke 14 : 12, and St. Paul impresses it upon the Church in 1 Cor. 10 : 13.

5. A very peculiar law, entirely unique in its way, is that forbidding the taking of all kinds of interest among Israelites. An Israelite is to regard the lending of money as a gift of love, not as a money-making transaction (Deut. 23 : 19).

6. The debtor was allowed to select himself the forfeit and carry it to his creditor, and the latter had no right to enter the debtor's house and take from him the necessary implements as security (Ex. 22 : 26).

7. Moreover, the law takes pleasure in speaking of the poor as peculiarly an object of God's care, and often calls him "thy brother or neighbor who is in poverty" (Ex. 22 : 23).

As the Year of Jubilee is sure to put an end to all poverty, because every one comes into possession of his ancestral property, therefore all these rules have the one object, to prevent the ex-

istence of a pauper class or proletariat. No abject poverty, no pauperism, no death from actual want of a piece of bread, while certain rich men are clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day! This has been the will of God 3,000 years ago; this *is* the will of God to-day. And when the spirit, not the letter, of these old poor laws will guide the modern legislator, then the day of the solution of this social question is dawning.

III. CLASS DISTINCTIONS.

Socialism says: When everything belongs to everybody, there will not only be no poverty but also no difference in rank. With plutocracy, aristocracy also will fall. A discussion of this point, therefore, follows naturally the two preceding ones. It is an axiom of Socialism that different classes among society cannot live in peace with each other. Everything that increases the intensity of the battle of the masses against the classes is, therefore, heartily welcome, especially the strikes. The *Social Democrat* (1872, 40) writes: "As long as there are different ranks and classes among men, just so long will philanthropy remain unresurrected. Socialism believes philanthropy to be possible only where there is perfect equality. As long as there are privileged classes, high or low, hatred seems to have a natural sway." Consequently the declaration of the "Programme" is: "We strive for the abolition of all social and political inequality, of all exceptional laws, and equal education for all."

What Socialism strives for, Israel possessed. Unlike all European nations, Israel knows no difference in rank. No artificial barrier destroys social equality in her precincts. The underlying thought and principle for this condition we find in Levit. 25: 55: "For unto Me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt." The hundreds of thousands are thus brought, by this declaration, into one class, whose central power thrones high above them, to be sure, but which nevertheless lives in their midst and desires to raise them to His serene height. The social foundation of the whole structure is unity, but not in the sense of uniformity. The people of

Israel formed an organism of many members. Princes stood at the head of the twelve tribes; elders rule the families; the house father is the head of the household. A senate of seventy elders holds the highest power. Questions of particular importance to the community were settled at specially called gatherings of the people. We have here the sketch of a representative form of government, which in principle is fully up to our modern constitutions. But beyond these natural divisions there were no differences in rank. The king, as well as the High Priest, could choose a wife from any family. Every Israelite paid the same tax from his twentieth year up, and (Ex. 30 : 13) expressly commands : "The rich shall not give more and the poor not less than the half shekel," and as this poll-tax expresses man's relation to Jehovah, this law means to show that socially and politically there is no difference between individuals. Wealth does not insure privileged social standing; on the contrary, Jehovah repeatedly calls Himself the friend of the poor. Even the tribe of Levi is to receive the tenth not as a privilege of rank, but to make up for the fact that they received no tribal possessions.

No classes, no hierarchy, no proletariat, no social privileges—this is the happy condition of this people! Much hollow pride on the one hand, and much slavish subjection on the other, is thus nipped in the bud. The social problem, which like a lurid sunset seems to prophecy a stormy future, was settled for Israel long ago. Fortunate people! That which modern civilization prizes as her highest attainment, which has cost and will cost streams of blood to flow, that was yours fully three thousand years past; not by humanly invented theories, but through the law of Jehovah.

IV. LABOR AND THE LABORER.

Even in the dominion of Socialism man must work, communism and equality in rank notwithstanding. The circle of the four social questions thus closes fitly with the examination, how the work should be done according to Socialistic ideas and how according to the law of Moses.

Very explicit is here again the declaration of the "Pro-

gramme:" "Labor is the source of all wealth, and as labor for the common welfare is alone possible through society, therefore society should have the common benefit of, and at the same time be under obligations to participate in labor. We, therefore, demand the abolition of the iron wage system, the extermination of extortion in every form, the prohibition of Sunday labor, child labor and all male labor detrimental to health or morals; laws protecting the life and health of the laborer, sanitary supervision of factories and workmen's homes, regulation of prison work."

The relation of the Old Testament to labor reform is manifold. First of all it ennobles labor by the commandment to our first parents "to till the ground," that is, to work. Among the Greeks, the Romans and the old Teutons labor was considered dishonoring for the free man; slaves and women were supposed to labor. Then, in the Fourth Commandment, not only rest on the seventh day, but also work on the six other days, is directly commanded. The law sees, therefore, in every member of God's people a laborer. Strictly speaking, it does not acknowledge a social difference between employer and employee at all; capital is not to become a power over labor. All Israelites are servants of Jehovah, each one placed by him in his appointed place of labor, be it mental or manual. A life of pure enjoyment, intellectual or material, has no inherent worth or value. Idleness, though it be decked in purple and fine linen, is sin in itself.

This routine of daily duties is relieved by the second part of the commandment, to rest upon the seventh day—master, servant, children, animals—all. With this command God has established an institution which is becoming more and more appreciated even by modern science, as a necessity for man and well ordered society. And it is a matter of no little importance that the Socialists in their "Programme" demand prohibition of Sunday labor, and in the German Reichstag voted unanimously in favor of more stringent Sunday laws.

The law of Moses distinguishes between three kinds of laborers. The first of these was the *day laborer*. So that his freedom may not be interfered with, Deut. 24:14 provides that his

wages are to be paid each evening. The second class, the *servants*, are bound to the master's house, though only for a few years. In the seventh year, but certainly in the Year of Jubilee, they were free. "And then," says the law, "thou shall not let them go empty-handed" (Deut. 15 : 12-15). A just and gentle conduct toward his servant is impressed upon the master (Levit. 25 : 43). In spiritual things, Sabbath rest and feast days, these servants were to be treated like the free. His murder was punished by the death of the murderer; cruel treatment secured his freedom immediately (Ex. 21 : 20). The third class, the *serfs*, was not to be entered by the Israelite except of his own free will (Levit. 25 : 39). But a Jewish servant could become a serf, in case he did not desire to take advantage of the seventh year which set him free (Deut. 15 : 16). The children of a servant to whom his master gave one of his maid-servants as his wife also belonged to the class of serfs. This kind of service seems to throw a dark shadow upon the bright picture of the social order depicted in the Old Testament. No doubt it does not come up to the ideal. But as in America, so in Israel, there was a constant battle of the ideal against human hard-heartedness, and so God permitted, "for their hardness of heart," an institution of which he did not approve. But with special emphasis the law impressed upon the masters tender consideration, mild treatment and humanity, so that in reality serfdom was little more than a name. And even that we do not find in the Old Testament.

These Israelitish laborers were in more than one sense in a better condition, freer from care, in many respects more protected and independent than to-day thousands of laborers who sigh under the burden of our present social conditions.

The above four points form the quintessence of the "social question" in all lands. Other points might be mentioned, but they are either of minor importance, or simply practical applications of those principles, or opinions of individual leaders for

which the movement as such cannot with fairness be held responsible, as, for instance, free love, common education of the children, antagonism against all religion, etc.

The celebrated economist Leroy says: "In all things we are brought back to the same conclusions, that there is nothing truly efficacious, nothing solid and lasting for society outside of the Gospel, outside of the Christian spirit and outside of Christian fraternity." The ethical and social value of the New Testament is to-day almost universally conceded. But our present investigation has shown that also the Old Testament already contains laws, provisions and regulations which, though they are not to be slavishly imitated nor bodily transplanted into our modern soil, will, as to their spirit and principles, serve as a faithful guide for all who are working at the solution of the social problem. And social reformers should, therefore, always heed the advice given to Joshua. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Josh. 1: 8).