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The relation of the church to modern industry

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BY

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"THE RELATION of the CHURCH
to MODERN INDUSTRY."

DEPARTMENT of SOCIOLOGY

UNDER Prof. Jno. Barker.

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"The Relation of the Church to Modern Industry."

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Relation of the Church to Modern Industry.

J. E. Peterkin.

One of the chief problems that furnish unrest to the minds of men today is that many-sided problem of modern industry. It enters into every phase of activity and touches every interest of humanity. It is not only the man who labors with his hands in order to meet the necessities of life who is affected by the ever swelling tide of the industrial difficulty, but the statesman, the philanthropist, the economist, and others whose activity is mostly confined to the mind. No age has witnessed more strenuous times in meeting the demands of life than the present. No greater number of people can be found anywhere seeking not only for a due wage but for work. Our cities are crowded with those who move up and down seeking work and finding none. What must be done to bring about an amelioration of conditions? And what institutions must be summoned to the relief of the suffering? Why are men permitted to suffer dire want in a land of springs and fountains? These and similar questions are being asked and a satisfactory reply is demanded for each of them.

Before we go further into the discussion it is befitting to say what we mean by industry. Industry as employed here means human exertion used for the creation of value. Modern industry, then, is the manner in which this industry acts upon the modern world, and especially in America. With this in mind we must look into the situation of this human exertion or labor and into some of the things demanded of labor and some of those offered for its remuneration.

The exaction of long hours with the promise of very little pay is one of the primary things that confront the laborer. This policy has been advocated in almost every field of industry. Men, because of necessity, are forced to work for seventy hours in a week for less than a minimum wage. As a result they are not able to give themselves any time for culture or recreation; not even enough time to enjoy rest for in many cases the hours are more. It is without question that every community should be made up of good citizens, and in order to obtain these, the people must have enough time for self development and where this is lacking the conditions are both apparent and

appalling. We speak in these days of the Western aggression, but to what extent must we believe in such an aggressive spirit when we find so many men and women the victims of circumstances. If we desire a test for the present situation it would be well to think about the common, everyday necessities of life and how we are able to meet them. The high cost of living and the manner in which we are able to handle this problem cannot escape our deepest concern, for the poor wage earner is greatly affected by such a state of things. The daily rise of prices of articles is a tremendous concern. It closes up the worker to very narrow limits, even as an oyster is in its shell. We sometimes speak of a rise in wage, but that has no additional purchasing power when prices are going up daily and the laborer is compelled to endure the incessant strain. Increase the wage from two to ten dollars per day and let the increase of market product be five-fold, and the laborer is none the better off.

In the days of the feudal lord the laborer was at quite as much an advantage in many respects as he is today. Then, he labored and expected food, shel-

ter and the other necessitates of life, which his lord was mindful of supplying and he was content; but with the rise of civilization and the privilege obtained by freedom man looks for happiness and prosperity and development in every possible way. A failure to realize this means retardation in his moral as well as in his spiritual being. There was, however, a growing discontentment among laborers as the centuries came and went. Men were not satisfied with the wages they received and the conditions under which they labored.

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, owing to this disturbed condition, wages were fixed by the government through justices of the peace; and any attempt to depart from their standard was considered not only disobedience, but a crime and was often punished by death. Scotland and many other parts of Europe shared in this treatment of laborers and even down to 1825 we find traces of the same exactions abroad. In America this principle was followed, and great was the cry of dissatisfaction which was heard on all sides. In 1806 certain tradesmen in Philadelphia rebelled because of low pay, and tried to unite for

higher wages; but these were thrown into prison and branded as anarchists. Twenty years later the same fate was meted out to other tradesmen in New York because they attempted to unite for the purpose of commanding higher wages. But God was in harmony with the people who suffered. Their voice was His voice, and it was about 1885 when the hand of oppression was raised and the laborers in this country had the power to form themselves into a union. From that time to this the freedom given to laborers has found expression not only in trade unions but also in Socialism.

Each of these aggregations has its peculiar points of attraction as well as points of repulsion. On the one hand the unionist is trying to get the most he can out of labor, on the other the Socialist stands demanding an equal distribution of nature's gifts. Over against these is the capitalist with a desire to get the most he can out of labor, and with a strong arm pushing away those who claim an equal distribution of the things of nature. These conditions will, until adjusted, continue to ferment dissatisfaction in the minds of men. These are the conditions which

confront the world today, these are the abnormalities which constitute the present crisis.

In all progressive lands where modern industry is carried on we find men united to carry on labor in the most successful manner. This method is a spontaneous growth demanded by the conditions of industry, and will serve as a protection to the working man as long as capital maintains its present attitude toward the laborer. If five hundred men were to be employed by organized capital, each of these could not with equal efficiency demand his rights from the capitalistic power. But where labor is organized a representative is able to put the claims of all at once before the capitalistic party and exact the highest possible wage, and most suitable conditions for his men.

Modern industry is helped greatly by the power of labor unions as can be seen in the difference between the times of Roman domination and even the times of the guild on the one hand and the present state of improvement on the other. The democratic spirit of the Socialist has brought about many pertinent questions and made suggestions which are worthy of note.

That spirit calls attention to the conditions of the less fortunate classes and enables us to look on all questions from a cosmopolitan point of view, and not from that of individual gain. Also it points out the difference between private industrial spheres and those spheres of industry managed by the government. Without taking time to point out shortcomings in connection with the labor unions or with the Socialist movement it is seen that there are good principles manifested by each of them, and each has been aggressive in the upbuilding of society and the establishment of democracy.

The success achieved by the various forces for the betterment of society and for the putting of the working people on a surer and a more independent basis has been found inadequate to the present situation. The contention between labor and capital is stronger than ever and apparently rising to greater heights as the months go by. That the laborer does not get his rightful share of production is plain and easily seen. He produces the goods by which all are benefited, and he is the one on whom society depends for a living and the rich for their wealth. By him trees

of the forest are converted into houses and furniture, seed changed into the bread of the rich man's table, the wool of the sheep into garments ready for wear, coal of a distant mine brought to the home of each individual in our many cities, and by him a thousand wants are met and needs supplied. He is the custodian of the keys that unlock doors opening up to all the happiness, comfort and wealth of this world.

But he is not only the producer of these many things, they are all produced for him, and this is the point which the capitalist fails to recognize. The capitalistic party disregards this important fact and invents means by which the laborer might become a manufacturing machine to produce a twenty-fold supply of goods in the same time that the laboring man takes to do it. This, undoubtedly, reduces the value of the laborer in the eyes of the unscrupulous employer and thus man, the laborer, becomes a poor specimen of humanity in the eyes of his employer. To what does this lead? Disregard, and in most cases discharge from service, since less men are required to operate these machines introduced into the field of modern industry.

It further leads to poverty. Poverty, which is

the lack of goods for man's highest wants, and poverty which is man's lack of wants for the highest goods.

In this state he is ready to cry out "O, wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the power of this pending doom." A doom which is due to the extravagance of the rich as well as their greed. Extravagance on the one hand, and poverty on the other,

This means social unrest. This very cause of social unrest directs the hand of the capitalist against the laborer: And was prominent in the days of Martin Luther. A solution of the present problem is needed, compatible to that of the Reformer's time. When the people turned to self-defence which is their right through political democracy they find the forces of the mighty too great for their puny arms, and in trying to grasp the sword of justice their lot has always been to take hold of the blade of destruction.

In distress they seek aid from the ballot: But an appeal to the ballot generally ends in failure on the part of the laborer to receive justice because of intrigues and bribery. Right counting of votes may not mean success for the laborer even when conditions of counting are most favorable. The corruption of

politics makes this field of investigation abortive of success and the needy laborer is left worse than before. National conferences have met to discuss the problem and although they have offered many suggestions the problem is not solved.

The different agencies that men have appealed to are not sufficient to cope with the problem of labor. This problem being an ethical one as well as an economic, let us appeal to the church and find out its relation to modern industry and what solution it may have in store. By the church is meant the whole body of Christian believers who are engaged in Christian work and worship. That this body has much to do with the laboring class there can be no question. It is the consensus of opinion that the Christian church must be constitutionally, and should be practically, concerned about the condition of the laborer. The different questions that are asked in connection with the labor industry have to do with ethical issues and these demand the attention of the church. The creed of Adam Smith and other such creeds which believe that through human selfishness supply and demand will regulate themselves and the wealth of the community

most increase in time, must be challenged and denounced by the church if men are to have a fair treatment extended to them, and the circumstance of the poor looked into and helped. The church must show its love and regard for personality as well as regard for the solidarity of humanity. All mankind must be considered as equal before the law of God, and should be before the law of the land. The church is in a special manner related to the laborer in the point of justice which it should demand from the spoiler. Its existence can be justified only in proportion as it develops mankind in all helpful ways, and establishes in the hearts of men that the race is one through Christian fellowship.

The work of the Church in regard to labor is far-reaching and comprehensive in its grasp, and in order that this might be done effectively there must be a program advocated by this body. It must be spiritual as well as sympathetic.

In the past the church has achieved great things for the betterment of humanity, and the amelioration of conditions, putting men, women and children on a higher plain than that in which it found them. The

church has given birth to a unique family life, changing the nature of the savage to that of a father, and the dread of womanhood to the friendly, loving wife and mother. It has brought about transformation not only in family life but in society. Not only at home has the church been a benefit but also abroad. The progress of the missionary movement looks to the church as its source and its support. The mission of Jesus "Go ye into all the world" has been obeyed in a great measure by the Christian Church, and this enterprise has become worldwide and known as a singular triumph of the Christian spirit. Although much has been done in these different ways yet there is so much left to be done that to the casual observer the reverse of progress might be easily inferred. What the church has done for the needs of mankind may be easily answered by the facts of history. Clubs and conferences as well as societies of different sorts have given expression of protection of the weak against the strong. Institutions have adopted as courses in their curriculum the system of propagating the relation of the church to man. But that which the church has not yet accomplished is

the solution of the problem at its door.

In 1906 there was a compact made of many of the churches to see into their affairs regarding the best interests of the poor, and one of the five articles drawn up was given as designating their social duty, which reads in the following manner: "We believe that according to Christ's law men of the Christian faith exist for the service of man, not only in holding forth the Word of Life, but in the support of works and institutions of pity and charity, in the maintenance of human freedom, in the deliverance of all those that are oppressed, in the enforcement of civic justice and in the rebuke of all unrighteousness." This article shows to a great degree what is expected of the church. If Christianity must show itself by service we must say that the church has not altogether awakened from its slumber. There is a cry today all over this broad land. The Macedonian call is still sounding in our ears. In New York city alone there are about 375,000 voices heard and these are making appeal to the Christian church. What must the answer be? Anything given in the negative may forever ratchet the distrust of men who now hold to a slender thread of be-

lief and it may mean doom to others who now have no belief in the church.

The spiritual tone of the people must be attended to, but not to the expense of their social and economic standing. And it is a poor policy to try to save the soul without any regard to the body and physical needs. It was to this organization, the church, that Jesus gave his last command. Christ came to bring His kingdom among men. He started the principle, and established the method but left the work to His followers. The kingdom cannot be brought in until righteousness and contentment are found in the hearts of men. The present condition shows that men are not satisfied, and there are just causes for dissatisfaction. There are vast numbers of working men who are not only uneasy but helpless on account of ignorance and physical as well as mental limitations. Individuals who have long hours and inadequate sanitary conditions, men for whom the past has nothing worthy in store, and for whom there is no promise, except the thought of poverty. These are now seeking help from the church and finding practically none.

The fact is sufficiently acknowledged that all men seek help from the people of God. Here love and sympathy are sought. The great question of the church should be, "How can I best befriend and assist my neighbor?" The business of the church is to establish a friendly spirit among men. This will enable the employer to have a due appreciation of the employee, and the servant a due regard for his master. Men, in order to maintain right relations to each other, must be in right relations with God. There is an interrelation between the religious and the social movements of our time, which cannot be divorced from each other, and every religious movement must be interpreted in the light of the social, and every religious outburst result in a social awakening. Savonarola in Florence, Luther in Germany, Wesley in England, Huss in Bohemia, all these men through their zeal brought social conditions as the result of the religious zeal they kindled in the hearts of men. The church, then, must take up the work of helping to a greater measure the social conditions of the people. If the church would follow the principles of John Wesley who devoted all his time to the betterment of the

conditions of men, spiritual as well as temporal, and who departed this life with the burden of the French prisoners upon his heart, it would do much in lessening the difficulties of the laborer and assist the helpless poor.

In order to bring about a better condition in the social world the church will have to see about reconciling man with man, and establish a common brotherhood. The early church had to form a unity between Jews and Gentiles, and had to acknowledge a common brotherhood. The task of today may be greater, but it is the task of the church and she must face it if much good must be expected. The teeming millions of immigrants that are coming to our shores and which the church is not reaching to any appreciable extent is a demonstration that the spirit of fraternity is not dominant in the mind of the Christian church. This influx is mostly composed of laborers and forms the support of our modern industry. Their attitude toward the church is not the most friendly which is simply a reaction from the position of the church extended to them. To help these men the church must move toward them. Jesus went about doing good, and

took delight in going to the needy. The church, His representative, should not do less.

Another thing the church must do is to assist in the task of bringing about purity in politics. Bad politics has caused untold suffering among the poorer classes, and that awful sin of using men as tools for the gratification of selfish ends is seen among the people from time to time, and it is scarcely possible to find a more deadly weapon against the weak than this. Where cupidity of the rich is exercised against the poor not only individuals but communities suffer. It must be admitted that when the privilege of service is turned into the opportunity of private gain that is as low as one can expect the social scale to fall. Where this is lost to the public, free government is a mockery. Without justice social redemption is impossible, and it is the duty of the church to see about the best form of government and the administration of justice.

Now that we have seen some of the things which the church must do to bring about a better state of affairs for the laborer it is natural to suppose that the church must co-operate with other institutions or

agencies. The social as well as the religious benefits of the community must be developed by co-operation. "A co-operating group", says Rauschenbusch, "in which all have a common end, each man contributing his share and depending on his fellows for their part, brings men into the most efficient, the most happy, and the most secure relation to one another". This is a manifestation of love among individuals, and what is said about members of one group may with justice be said about organizations. The church uniting with other organizations can bring about benefits not only religious, but equally social, not only moral, but also economical. The church must co-operate with charities and public agencies, and endorse them so long as they fit in with the program of Christianity.

The labor movement should be encouraged by the church and find there men who are willing to join in with their best principles and encourage them to higher points of ethical truth and economic prosperity. Large modern industry has been, and is carried on chiefly by co-operation and has brought about many points of progress and strength. If in the world

of industry co-operation is found useful, the same degree, at least, of usefulness should be found in the relation of the church to other institutions. A self-centred life can bring no other result than death and the church which will not make the whole world its parish and try to reach all men by the co-operative plan has failed to accomplish its highest mission and means formalism.

The Gospel that Jesus addressed to the people of His day was a Gospel of love and joy. It must be remembered that Jesus upbraided the Pharisees many times for their having presented the religion they professed as they did, even though they pretended so much to obey the law. They exercised no love, they showed not the God-like spirit in loving their neighbors as they loved themselves. Jesus taught that love growing into abundant service was the basis of salvation, and demanded that the adherents of the heavenly message should be men, not Jews, and His religion general, not individual. If the church is to follow this example it must begin so that the restless world might find comfort and hope in these evil days.

The industrial class is not content with the present state of affairs and something must be done speedily if the church is to have any influence over the laboring dissatisfied community. Owing to this dissatisfaction many and severe appeals to violence have been recently made. In 1908 there were in this country alone fully twenty explosions in which large factories and other business enterprises were destroyed. Between 1910 and 1911 there were more than 36 explosions besides frequent assaults and threats meted out to different opponents. That the working men are uneasy about their present conditions can be seen in the manner in which they march in gangs both in public demanding rights to a livelihood and in churches demanding food and shelter. The recent cases experienced in Boston and in New York corroborate this statement. When the expanse of modern industry is considered there is found food enough in this country to supply the extreme desire of every human being in the land; and it is high time that each individual be given a guarantee of a living share of the industrial products of the land.

This industrial product concerns women and child

dren as well as men. When we think of the hours of labor and the kinds of work to which women are exposed, and the dreadful curse which child-labor in its consequences both close and remote is enhancing, we are furious and call to every available agent, especially to the church to bestir itself to action and make a crusade against this evil which disfigures our youth and make them in many cases unfit for the further duties of life. There are about two million children who are doing at this time industrial work. The public must be made to know the evils that menace the land, They must be inspired with the thought that the industrial, social, and religious conditions can be made much more tolerable through union of labor and capital both working together for the common good, and having for their slogan the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Then shall the best in the industrious man, woman, and child be perpetuated, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and His Christ. Then, all the churches which are known as Christian should move unitedly against wrong and toward establishing right.

We have tried to consider the united organizations.

as one, but when we stop to consider that there are dissensions among denominations and questions about officials in the church, and metaphysical creeds, and seniority of establishment, alien baptism, and the many other things which scatter discord among members of this one body, the church, we conclude that there is a reversion of the emphasis relative to the duties of the church as Jesus left it, and intended that it should be. With the Master, the emphasis was on the Kingdom of God. He put emphasis on love, justice and mercy. The child in its innocence was his typical example of one found approved of His Father. His care for the needy child was marked, and His protection of the weak against the strong was characteristic. With the church today this broad interest in humanity is lacking and in many cases trivialities are put in the place of vital and weighty matters.

The social task of the intended Christian religion must be carried on by the church. If this be done a tone would be given to our religion which tone is now wanting. It would prove that the church is a real organization doing a real work. It would

show men that Christianity is practical and interested in everything that interests men, and looks for the best enjoyment and happiness for men. As Batten has truly said, "The best apologetic for Christianity today is a clear statement of its essential nature."

There are many who are in quest of the Kingdom of God on earth, but who have not a true knowledge of what that Kingdom is. They realize not that a search after the Kingdom must be one after goodness, freedom, justice, and brotherly love, and in every realm of social life. "The measure of one's goodness is the degree of one's social serviceableness." And the only life which can be called Christian is that which is spent in the interest and struggle of humanity. There was a time when seclusion and asceticism marked the culminating point of Christian perfection, when separation from the world meant the means of approach to God and heaven. That time has gone forever when turning away from the affairs of the world means a turning to God. The time has come and now is when the life of the Christian is proved by its abundant service rendered to society and to the individual.

That the present state of affairs is far from the light given to the Christian mind at its initial point is clear to the most casual beholder. It is clear that many agencies have been at work trying to better conditions and to give to the laboring class a better status in this world, The economic life of the toiler as well as his social and ethical must be made better if he is to enjoy any measure of contentment. Both his condition and that of those dependent upon him must be considered. The resources of the country have been shown to be enough to make modern industry, if conducted aright, a benefit to all. It is also found true that the church is the only one organization which can meet the various conditions that work for the best interests of man. And since the best interests are not yet met and we hear the cry from many quarters appealing for help, we must conclude that the Christian church is not yet alive to the its best and highest mission. The church, then, must accept the Lord's ideal of the Kingdom and follow a program large and extensive enough so as to embrace the whole world. It must establish Christ as a reality not only in monasteries and experience meetings, but

in the concern and trade of men of every class, and in every place. It is right and proper for the church to pray that the Kingdom of God should come and righteousness prevail among men; it is also its duty to see that the means of making these circumstances possible be practical. The work of the church is then so related to the industrial conditions of our time that it cannot ^{rest} until every wrong is made right, and righteousness enthroned in the hearts and lives of those who are now uneasy; until every human being finds joy and peace in living, in freedom of thought, and action; until the Kingdoms of this world be made acceptable to God.