

This is a most excellent representative of a rapidly growing literature. It mirrors a recrudescence—with broader outlook and deeper knowledge, to be sure—of the spirit and purpose which animated the Christian Socialism that flourished in England toward the middle of the nineteenth century. Like its forerunner the newer movement holds that Christianity has a social mission, that the Christian Church, if it would properly incarnate the spirit of its founder, must concern itself deeply with the social problems of the day, ponder them with unbiased mind and with energy and zeal labor for the betterment of industrial, political and social conditions.

The first third of the book is devoted to the task of proving that the essential purpose of Christianity, anticipated in the Old Testament, proclaimed by Jesus and exemplified by the practice of Apostolic Christianity, is to "transform human society into the Kingdom of God by regenerating all human relations and reconstituting them in accordance with the will of God."

For the authority of the Old Testament the author appeals to the prophets who are the real makers of the unique religious life of Israel and whose teachings must be accepted as an integral part of the thought life of Christianity. But in this appeal to the Old Testament prophets as authoritative teachers it must not be forgotten that their authority for the modern world is not

to be found in specific laws and institutions of the Old Testament taken as models, but in the spirit that burned in the hearts of the prophets. They held as fundamental that God demands righteousness and only righteousness. But the righteousness which they had in mind was not merely the righteousness of the individual but national and social righteousness as well. The latter was indeed the chief thing in the teachings of the prophets until the national life of Israel was crushed out by foreign invaders. It was only then that they began to address themselves to the individual life and to lose the larger horizon of public life.

The fundamental purpose of Jesus was the establishment of the kingdom of God. This involved both the transformation of the individual and a regeneration of social life. And yet Jesus was not a social reformer; for he concerned himself with social considerations only as these touched on the moral and religious life.

Primitive Christianity preserved for a time the social ideals of Jesus. It was thoroughly conscious of a far-reaching social mission. It looked for a new social order whether the old should disappear by a divine catastrophe or only by a gradual absorption in the higher life of the Christian community.

This consciousness of a social mission the Church gradually lost. More and more it emphasized the individual hope at the expense of the social hope until the latter appears to have faded completely from the thought and practice of medieval Christianity.

In a clear and trenchant analysis the author discovers the causes of this departure from the social ideals of primitive Christianity. The most important of these causes are the following: The hostility of the Roman state which precluded a successful attack on social wrongs; the belief in the second coming of the Lord which was expected to usher in a new era, and the supposed nearness of which militated against any effort for a slow amelioration of social conditions; the influence of the conception, partly Jewish and partly heathen, of a world interpenetrated by demon powers, the effect of which was to paralyze all hope of changing the evil life of society by the very magnitude of the task involved; the lack of a scientific comprehension of social relations so necessary to a lasting reconstruction of the social order; a dogmatic bias acquired chiefly from Greek intellectualism; the use of a new ceremonialism which was largely the product of heathen influences and which stifled the ethical aspirations of primitive Christianity; and ecclesiasticism which made the church the sole channel of salvation; the influence of Graeco-Roman ideas, which, in contrast with the Hebrew conception of a devotion to the present life, glorified the future life and provided a congenial soil for the

growth of ascetic and monastic practices; and finally the union of Church and State, and the total absence of political rights among the people, which speedily crushed the democratic spirit in the primitive church.

Despite the dark picture, presented by this formidable array of forces which so long paralyzed the social potency of Christianity, the future is bright with hope. The source of this hope consists in the fact that the forces which hitherto neutralized the social efficiency of Christianity have either weakened or disappeared altogether in modern life.

The concluding chapters state the more important social problems now facing the race, and show at the same time what Christianity can and ought to do toward their solution.

The author occupies advanced ground, ground on which many of his readers will not venture to stand. But the book is a clear, earnest, thoughtful contribution to the literature of practical Christianity and should have a wide circle of readers.

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