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Möller has proved, and until he is answered—the attempt, we may be sure, will never be made—the believer in Holy Writ may "thank God and take courage." It must become ultimately impossible to maintain modern theories by the cuckoo cry, "All scholars are agreed." They must ultimately rest on the basis of strict demonstration, and full answers to all objectors. When time has been given for a full investigation all round of the opinions on Hebrew history so unaccountably and hastily embraced among ourselves by men of character, ability, and learning, their full absurdity and inconsistency will at last be perceived, and men will wonder how they could possibly have achieved even a temporary triumph.

J. J. LIAS.

ART. IV.—THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIAL PROBLEM.

IS there a "social problem" or a "social question"? Or are these terms employed because they conveniently, if somewhat vaguely, cover a multitude of "problems" and "questions" supposed to be more or less closely connected with each other?

Are the various difficulties to which the words refer independent? Or are they simply different factors in one and the same problem? I might adduce the convenient analogy of a man "thoroughly out of health." Such a one often exhibits the traces of more than one disease in his system. The case is said to be "a complicated one," and the doctor declares that there are "many unfavourable symptoms."

Let us consider a few of the factors in what is termed the social problem. We cannot take up a daily paper, a weekly journal, or a monthly review, but we find, at least, something bearing upon one or more of the following questions or problems: That of the relations of capital and labour; that of the unemployed; of the housing of the poor; of temperance and the licensing system; of the administration of the Poor Law, and the uses and abuses of "charity"; of education and school attendance; of social purity and rescue work; of the increase of betting and gambling; etc. That there are very evil conditions and very grave difficulties, of whose existence and growth these various problems are the result, no one doubts. With regard to this further assertion—viz., that all these are not merely connected factors in, but actually different symptoms of, one great underlying problem—I think most social workers of experience are now agreed. If this is so,

then surely the first step towards the solution of these problems must be an effort to gain all the knowledge possible of the underlying conditions which are the primal causes of these various evils.

I. The Conditions.

As all the problems I have mentioned refer more or less closely, if not exclusively, to the "industrial" classes, I wish, in dealing with the social question, to confine my attention to them. The term "industrial classes" is sufficiently wide. I need not stay to define it. I may just remark that I am not dealing simply with the so-called "very poor," or with the "submerged," or the dwellers in the slums, but with the industrial classes "in their many grades" as a whole.

What are the "conditions"—I use the plural advisedly—of the industrial classes to-day? Those who wish to discover these otherwise than by the method of personal investigation will find abundant literature on the subject. Books, pamphlets, and papers are available, which contain not only theories and ideas, but the most carefully collected and arranged statistics—often the results of years of personal investigation.

From such tables and statistics we may learn much, and every earnest social worker is glad of the opportunity of perusing them. From them we may learn about the financial conditions under which the industrial classes live, the trades or occupations they follow, the condition of their homes, how they spend their money and their leisure time; we can discover to some extent the amount of intemperance, and the number of "charges" at the local police-courts. By comparison of different series of statistics we can form some conception of the "average" conditions.

But we have other means of information. Within recent years a considerable number of books containing "impressions" and "conclusions"—drawn from a long experience of work among the industrial classes—have been published. I should like to draw particular attention to one such book for several reasons: (1) The writer seems to have had unusual opportunities for forming his judgments; (2) he writes with peculiar plainness and force, yet withal with much sympathy; (3) his judgments on the whole coincide, not only with my own (drawn from long experience among the same classes), but with those of a number of men—belonging to the industrial classes and working among those classes—to whom I have submitted them.

In "The Gospel and Social Questions" the Rev. A. Shepherd, who is now minister of one of the largest congregations in

Glasgow, tells us how in early life he worked for years in a Lancashire cotton-mill. "My experience," he says, "was gained, and grimly gained, as a 'common factory worker' in one of the large industrial towns coterminous with the city of Manchester." Mr. Shepherd's view is briefly this: That the key to the conditions of the industrial classes to-day *lies not in any evil economic conditions to which these classes are subject, but in the character* (speaking generally) *of these classes.* And the saddest part of his testimony consists in the conviction that this character is actually *deteriorating.*

The following judgments may seem stern, but from my own experience of five-and-twenty years' work among the wage-earners of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the Midlands, I believe that the witness here given is true:

1. "There is nothing I find it harder to keep and cultivate than the charity which hopeth all things, when I see, as I am obliged to see, on every side how ready, and even eager, our democracy are to accept any social and economic conditions so that they have drink and sport and animal indulgence in more or less abundance" (p. 17).

2. "The huge breakdown to-day . . . is the failure of the masses to rise to their opportunities—a failure for which, not Churches, not economics, but they themselves, are responsible. Surely we have a right to look for some evidence of character, some assertion of will, some display of self-respect! They are men, and not children."

3. "When I think of what the industrial classes might be by the help of God and themselves as compared with what they are, I know what St. Paul meant when he said of his brethren and kinsmen: 'I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.' . . . Thoughtlessness and indifference far surpass economic wrongs in the production of bad social conditions. . . . I believe that the working classes are fatally neglecting opportunities they never had before, and may not soon have again. The drug of a little temporary prosperity has been administered to them, and while they sleep the tares of reaction are being sown to an extent they little realize" (pp. 45, 46).

So far of the actual conditions of the present. Now with respect to the charge (suggested by the last words of the last quotation), viz., that these conditions are not only bad, but are actually growing worse. Here, again, Mr. Shepherd speaks very sorrowfully:

1. "Few things impress me more than the change which has come over the working classes during the last quarter of a century in their estimate of the chances and possibilities of their lives. With some notable exceptions, they appear to

have ceased to believe in these possibilities, or they are content to let them go by default" (p. 27).

2. "Individual responsibility has passed away, leaving behind it nothing which can inspire men to do and dare for the conditions which make life better worth living" (p. 29).

3. "The very serious consideration which the Churches, as trustees of the moral and religious life of the nation, have now to confront is the undeniable fact that a spirit of weariness with the present and of hopelessness about the future has taken hold of the masses as probably never before in the history of Christianity" (p. 87).

The following question may here very naturally be asked, Are there any signs which justify us for looking for a turn in this tide of evil, in hoping for better things in the future?

To answer this question, we naturally consider the attitude and spirit of the rising generation—I mean the young men of the industrial classes. What may we hope from them? Unfortunately, I fear, very little indeed. And here I may say Mr. Shepherd's view again coincides almost exactly with my own. His opinion is evidently that, in a picture generally dark, we have here the darkest part of all. If any worker of experience among the poor is inclined to doubt this, let him ask himself the question: "How many young men do I know who take a really *intelligent* interest in any of the great political, social, or religious questions of the day?" Or even, "How many do I know who are making any strenuous effort for their own betterment, or for that of the class to which they belong?"

Before quoting Mr. Shepherd's opinions, I would venture to assert that those of us who can look back, say, thirty years, must remember a time when mechanics' institutes and mutual improvement societies were much more popular than they are to-day. And it is not as if any other institutions had come into existence to supply their place. Few institutions within reach of an enormous artisan population have done more to offer at least the rudiments of a liberal education than the evening classes at Owens College, Manchester; but the numbers attending those classes to-day are little more than a third of what they were five-and-twenty years ago. "But what of technical classes and continuation schools," I shall be asked; "are not these numerously attended?" "Yes," I would reply; "but the majority of the pupils in these schools do not actually belong to the artisan classes; and of those who do attend the schools, more attend them for the sake of the pecuniary advantages which a knowledge of certain subjects, such as shorthand and book-keeping, gives, than from any desire to improve or enlarge their minds.

I would now quote some of Mr. Shepherd's opinions upon the young men of the industrial classes to-day:

"I am made angry, and I do well to be angry, with our young men, who should be the hope, and are become all but the despair, of our democratic aspirations and ideals. . . . It used to be held that the ideas which were striving in democracy—the ideas which constitute its highest justification—are the ideas which lie at the heart of religion: that God is no respecter of persons; that every man should have the opportunity to make the best of himself; that men should be honoured for what they are rather than for what they have; that we are our brother's keeper. What hold have these ideas upon our modern, and especially upon the young, democracy? If you reckon off a comparatively few exceptions, in what do you find the young artisan interest himself, beyond pursuits that have often the same relation to his moral health and economic advantage that fever germs have to his physical health? . . . Our hope should be in the younger men. But what shall we say of a democracy that has ceased to read? What shall we hope from young men who are as ignorant as babies about the political and social questions that so vitally affect the welfare of their order? . . . What shall we hope from young men with whom the drink club takes the place of the lecture-room, the bookmaker the place of the teacher, and the sporting newspaper the place of a useful book?"

If, then, such are the "conditions" of the industrial classes, as a whole, at the present time, we must surely ask, What power or what influence is available to improve these conditions? And if, as I firmly believe, the evils from which these classes are suffering are *moral* rather than economical—that is, are connected with character rather than with environment or circumstances—we naturally turn for help to the greatest of all powers for the improvement of character—viz., to religion, or, rather, to Christianity. What help, then, may be expected from organized Christian effort, as we see it active in the midst of the industrial classes to-day?

I would not yet ask this common question, viz., "What help may we expect from 'the Churches' in the solution of our present difficulties, or in the improvement of the conditions of the industrial classes?" because there are other questions which must first be asked and answered. I much dislike the term "the Churches," but the expression is convenient, and is now so common in the current literature of the day that I will use it as there generally employed—*i.e.*, to indicate the various religious bodies or organizations. Also, where

in this connection I speak of "the industrial classes," I refer to men and women rather than to children.

Now, the hope and the possibility of influencing men and women depend very largely on their readiness to be influenced —in other words, upon their attitude towards those who are trying to influence them.

Upon the present attitude of the industrial classes generally towards religion there can be little room for dispute. If we describe that attitude as one of *indifference* we shall most correctly explain it. Except here and there, among very limited sections, we find little hostility to religion.

The questions (1) as to how far this indifference is the fault of "the Churches," and (2) as to what steps they might take to overcome it, I would defer. At present I prefer to deal with things as they are, and accept the fact that the proportion of working men in the towns who regularly attend any place of worship is lamentably small, and that even the proportion of working women is far from what it should be.

And how does the Church of England compare with other Churches? "Not at all favourably," seems to be the only answer possible. Besides appealing to personal experience, I would call attention to the following available evidence: The recent investigations into the attendance at places of worship in the various London boroughs seem to reveal that the attendance of men (especially in the industrial districts) at Anglican services is far less in proportion to the attendance of women than among either Roman Catholics or Nonconformists. Another most unsatisfactory feature in these returns is the very small number of adults—and, again, especially of men—who attend Church of England "missions," which, we may presume, are intended primarily to reach the poor. From these returns one would certainly conclude that this mission work is a very weak factor in the organization of the English Church at the present time.

But the returns of the religious census in London are not the only recent figures available. In "Poverty: a Study of Town Life," Mr. Rowntree gives the results of a similar religious census in York, surely a place where we might expect the Church of England to be exceptionally strong. In York, for the sake of greater correctness, the census was taken on two consecutive Sundays. It was there found that, of the total attendances at all places of worship on both Sundays, 14 per cent. were made at Roman Catholic services; 43 per cent. at Church of England services; 38 per cent. at Nonconformist services; 5 per cent. at Salvation Army and mission services.

Mr. Rowntree also divided the men from the women, with the following percentage results:

	Men.	*Women.*
Roman Catholic - - -	41	59
Church of England - - -	35	65
Nonconformist - - - -	49	51
Salvation Army and missions - -	46	54

As far as the attendance of *men* is concerned, these figures must be pronounced as most unsatisfactory for the English Church.[1]

The following questions seem to be forced upon us:

1. Wherefore this indifference of the masses of the people to Christian influences?

2. Wherefore the failure of "the Churches," and of the Church of England in particular, to gain an influence over the masses, and especially over the working men?

The fault cannot lie in Christianity itself. In other words, it is not due to any essential weakness or want of adaptibility in Christianity, which during eighteen hundred years, where intelligently expounded and where honestly tried, has proved itself to be infinitely the greatest of all beneficent social powers.

"Where intelligently expounded." These words suggest the importance of a clear conception of what we may term the social principles of Christianity. These are the social principles of Christ, gathered from His teaching as recorded in the Gospels. A brief examination of these shall form the second division of my subject.

II. The Social Teaching of Christ.

Fortunately, here, again, there is no lack of useful help in the way of thoughtful books. I will content myself with drawing more particular attention to one—viz., "Jesus Christ and the Social Question," by Professor Peabody, of Harvard University.[2] The sub-title of this book, "An Examination of the Teaching of Jesus in Relation to some of the Problems of Modern Life," explains both its scope and its method. Then, the titles of the various chapters are not only a further indication of the contents, but they are most suggestive as to useful lines for personal study. Some of these are: "The Comprehensiveness of the Teaching of Jesus"; "The Social Principles of

[1] In the still more recent Church census at Lincoln, the percentage of men among the Methodists was 48, against 41 in the Church of England.

[2] From the many authorities cited in Professor Peabody's footnotes, a very complete bibliography—including foreign as well as English and American works—upon the subject may be constructed (*vide* pp. 69-71).

the Teaching of Jesus"; "The Teaching of Jesus concerning the Care of the Poor"; "The Teaching of Jesus concerning the Industrial Order."

Like so many others of the best modern teachers on the subject, Professor Peabody is not only convinced that the social question is at bottom an ethical question, but he believes that the growing acceptance of this conviction is "a sign of promise." "It is its ethical quality which gives to the social question of the present day its commanding interest for generous minds. . . . Through these channels of activity [those of social service] the moral life of the time finds its natural outlet. It is a great source of happiness to be associated with people who are trying, however imperfectly, to make a better world."

To turn to the definite subject of the book. Professor Peabody regards with much hopefulness the present tendency to turn towards "the task of interpreting and perpetuating the teaching of Jesus Christ. . . . The modern spirit inquires, What would Jesus say? . . . These principles [of following Christ, and of trying "to direct one's own soul and the life of the world" along paths which He commended] are not to the modern Christian incidental to the Christian life, but are the essence of it." He also points out that the social movement has reached a point of peculiar reverence for the person of Jesus.

The first special feature in our Lord's teaching to which he calls particular attention is its *adaptability*.

"This extraordinary capacity for new adaptations, this quality of comprehensiveness, in the teaching of Jesus, which so many evidences of the past illustrate, prepares us in our turn for its fresh applicability to the question which most concerns the present age. As it has happened a thousand times before, so it is likely to happen again, that the Gospel, examined afresh with a new problem in mind, will seem again to have been written in large part to meet the demands of the new age" (p. 73).

Passing then to an examination of the teaching itself, Professor Peabody shows how eminently our Lord "lived in a world of social intimacies, problems, and companionships"; how "He was familiar with the most various social types—fishermen and Pharisees, tax-gatherers and beggars, Jews and Romans, saints and sinners. Almost every social question known to His age was in some form brought before Him . . . *e.g.*, the integrity of the family, the relations of rich and poor, the responsibilities of the prosperous." At the same time Professor Peabody is careful to point out that our Lord did not come primarily as a "social reformer." The social teaching

of Jesus rather "came about as He fulfilled His mission," than was "the end towards which His mission was directed."

Here Professor Peabody insists upon a most necessary caution in interpreting the teaching of our Lord. "To interpret the teaching of Jesus, there is needed more than willingness of heart. The study of the Gospels calls for commonsense. . . . The very essence of the interpretation of the teaching lies in the discernment, through the medium of detached utterances, of the general habit of mind of the Teacher. Jesus Himself repeatedly intimated that He required this thoughtfulness in His disciples" (p. 81).

Professor Peabody then passes on to consider the difficult questions which surround the phrase "the kingdom of God," or "the kingdom of heaven," in which he believes that "the social ideal which presents itself continuously and vividly to the mind of Jesus is summed up." In the interpretation of this phrase he again lays stress on the necessity for careful study of the social conditions of the time. For the expression was evidently used as one with which the people as well as the disciples were familiar. I must not stay to examine Professor Peabody's own treatment of the subject; but of this conclusion—upon which he lays stress—we may feel sure, "that whatever the expression describes, it implies a condition in which character rules supreme."

I can hardly conceive a more useful exercise for those who wish to be helpful in social teaching than a careful study of the whole of this chapter—upon "The Social Principles of Jesus." Even an outline of its contents would take far more space than can be afforded me. A few of the conclusions, however, may be given:

"The social teaching of Jesus is this—that the social order is not a product of mechanism, but of personality, and that personality only fulfils itself in the social order . . . the individual is the point of departure; but he finds his own self-realization only in the service of the social world. . . . Shall we say that Jesus was an individualist, or shall we say that, in any sense of the word, He was a socialist? Was His mind directed towards personal education or towards social reform? His method admits of no such antagonism between spiritual life and the social good. The one is His means, the other His end. Love has its watchword, 'for their sakes'; and character has its command, 'sanctify thyself'; and the Christian social law is fulfilled in the whole saying of Jesus, 'for their sakes I sanctify Myself'" (pp. 102-104).

The whole chapter suggests a crying need at the present time: that those who are called to be witnesses for our Lord —whether as preachers, teachers, or workers among the poor

—should make a far more systematic, a far more careful and thorough, study both of the teaching of Jesus in itself and of the social conditions amid which He taught, than they usually do. Think what the following condition demands, "to receive the teaching of Jesus in the light of the special circumstances and suggestions which prompted it, and to deduce therefrom the general principles which this teaching represents" (p. 82).

We must remember that one characteristic feature of our Lord's teaching is its "occasionalism." Though our Lord's utterances or decisions often consist of general principles, yet these were called forth by the definite needs and conditions of definite individuals. If we wish to understand and to appreciate the wisdom of any philanthropist's judgments, we have no right to isolate those judgments from the circumstances under which they were delivered. It is this condition which makes a study of the social environment and social atmosphere in which our Lord taught of such supreme importance for a full appreciation of His teaching.

To take a parallel case from our own time. For good or for evil, the Poor Law is a factor in our social environment. The wise philanthropist knows its general effects, and in his dealing with the poor he does not ignore its existence. So we must, as far as possible, take account of the various forces at work in the social environment of our Lord. But how many of those who take upon themselves to expound His principles have paid any heed whatever to the conditions amid which those principles were enunciated?

One great lesson from our Lord's teaching, and a lesson of the widest possible application, we must never forget. He deals with *men* rather than with their circumstances. He prefers to try and influence *character* rather than to attempt to revolutionize the conditions of society. "Interior inspiration, the quickening of individuals, the force of personality, are the means He chooses to employ." How different is this from the methods most in favour to-day! As Professor Peabody says: "We are much more apt to trace the evils of society to unfavourable environment, to imperfect legislation, or to the competitions of industry. . . . No tendency in modern life is more destructive to social progress than the tendency to weaken the sense of personal responsibility for social imperfection, and to fix the blame on unpropitious circumstances. . . . The problem of charity will remain an ever-increasing problem of relief and alms, unless there is included within the problem of relief the stirring of individual capacity to do without relief, and to enlarge the range of initiative and self-respect. . . . To whatever phase of the social question we turn, we observe within the sphere of social arrangements

the interior problem of the redemption of character" (pp. 116, 117).

The stress which our Lord laid upon character, and the importance which He attached to it, is an example of His prophetic insight. For character, with the increase and greater complexity of the organization of society, as seen at the present time—like speech, with the invention of the printing-press and the telegraph—paradoxical as the statement may appear, has grown infinitely more powerful, and therefore the exercise of its power has grown infinitely more important and more responsible. The tendencies of all democracies are towards accepting dictatorships.

Yet these truths are little recognised to-day; and instead of laying stress upon the creation, the strengthening, the refinement of character, we are all too apt to expend our energies upon the creation or extension of machinery. We are sometimes tempted to think that committees, combinations, and organizations have left small place and small scope for individual treatment or individual responsibility. But, as Professor Peabody shows, "the fact is that the growth of organization, instead of displacing the principle of inspiration, only provides a larger opportunity for its effectiveness. . . . Personality finds in organization the multiplication of power; and organization, the more complex it grows, makes greater demands upon personality. . . . Modern politics, statesmanship, and administration have become more and more dependent upon competent men, who shall control and direct the mighty power which modern organization has devised. All things, said the Apostle, wait for the entrance into organization of the power of personality: 'The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God'" (pp. 125, 126).

Having now considered the "conditions" of the present time and the "principles" of our Lord's social teaching, which, as Christians, we believe must be the principles which lie at the basis of social welfare, and which 1,800 years of experience — where they have been honestly tried — have proved them to be, I would pass on to consider the position of "the Churches"—and of the Church of England in particular—as the stewards and exponents of these principles—that is, as they stand now face to face with the social problem, which, we believe, waits for the application of these principles, and whose difficulties can only be solved by this application. I would, therefore, next consider those factors in the work of the Churches which may be described as their "opportunity" and their "equipment."

(*To be continued.*)