

sees and recognizes His Will, entreats and receives the ability to fulfil it, and, submissive to the higher promptings of the Spirit, finds therein the sanction of its conduct, the means to accomplish its task, the reason for its deeds. Prayer, then, having become communion with God, brings to perfection the obedience and the trust of Faith, and burgeons out into joy, strength, peace, valour, power, and love.<sup>1</sup>

It can only very seldom have happened that the young men in a theological classroom have heard from his own lips the story of their professor's conversion. At all events, such a story was never told with more delicacy, dignity, and effect than on the occasion when Frommel made his confession. One of his courses on the History of Dogma had led some of the students at Geneva to regard Christianity as a mere product of evolution. To correct this misapprehension he judged it necessary to offer a 'frank explanation.' 'To the question, How do you succeed in maintaining the affirmations of your religious consciousness over against the frequently contrary affirmations of Science? . . . the reply is easy. My religious consciousness, in its sources and its contents, is *independent* of my scientific consciousness. And I add that, in my own case, it was a long way *anterior*. I was a

<sup>1</sup> Page 317.

Christian before I was a theologian. I did not become a Christian because I was a theologian: I became a theologian because I was a Christian.'<sup>2</sup> Then he describes the crisis in his spiritual history, and the result. To the present writer it seems that the account deserves to be put alongside Augustine's *Confessions* and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*. There is only space to quote the closing words: 'That day now lies a long way behind me in the past: but it shines there as the day of a new birth. And, in fact, all things thenceforward became new to me. Doubtless, alas! there have since been many failures, many defects on my part, many interruptions of my consecration, many breaches of Christian fidelity, many faults, and those very culpable. They have not effaced the fact that I belonged to Christ. It was but a first starting-point which needed to be followed by many others. But it was a starting-point. For that which Christ then became for me, He has been ever since. The assurance of forgiveness, the certainty of salvation, the inward witness of His grace, He has faithfully bestowed day after day. They are the strength of my life and the sole reason of my ministry.'<sup>3</sup> *Pectus facit theologum.*

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*Winchcombe.*

<sup>2</sup> Page 9.

<sup>3</sup> Page 27.

## Social Theories and the Teaching of Jesus.

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### I.

THE prolonged discussion as to the effect of the teaching of Jesus on the social and economic conditions of our time, has of late made some progress and achieved some conclusions. These are partly negative and partly positive. It is agreed that Jesus Christ does not commit His followers to any scheme of social economy, nor is it possible to deduce by a logical process even the outlines of a political or economic order even from His teaching. His mind moves in the sphere of ideals and motives and spiritual forces. These can operate under any system which allows them freedom of expansion and expression. The legitimate claim for them is

that laws and governments shall allow them freedom to develop; and although they may probably develop in similar directions in every case, there will always be the differences and idiosyncrasies which belong to life.

On the other hand, it is also recognized that we have no right to separate the gospel from its social consequences. To do that is to reduce it to a mere ritual or a mere doctrine. It introduces spiritual factors into life, and the association of these with their social effects is as natural as the association of light and heat. For instance, the gospel remakes personality. From the earliest

days the witness of the disciple has been that 'He has made us after another type.'<sup>1</sup> But personality is in its nature social, and, without society personality is an impossibility to thought. The obligation of social unity is not left to our choosing, but is the necessity of our very being. We do not exist except as members of a family, of a nation, of a race. It is a natural demand, then, of the Christian personality that it should have an environment suited for its own expansion and development. It is inevitably at war with those conditions in society which restrict and hamper that development.

It is also increasingly recognized that by its history and nature modern Christianity is committed to a great adventure, the task of leavening the community in which it finds itself as a whole. There are four possible relations between the Church of Christ and the world, in each of which the Church has found itself at different ages of its history, when it has been resolutely obedient to its Lord. Under the Roman Empire its function was one of protest, and it became the Church of the Martyrs. The new type had to make room for itself in the Roman social order, and it did so by refusing to conform to those habits of life and worship which it felt to be incompatible with its own calling in Christ. Having no room for the spiritual man, Roman society gave him to the lions. The second possible relation is one where the Church retires out of the social order into deserts and wastes, in order to build there the new community after another type. This was the motive impulse which made Monasticism possible. Brotherhoods, cenobite communities, and monasteries arose because men felt the impossibility of living after the mind and spirit of Christ in a society which lived for the fierce pleasures of war and the degrading satisfactions of lust. The third possible relation is one where the Christian community endeavours to conquer the world by the use of its own weapons, and to subdue it to Christian purposes. This was the great experiment of chivalry. The ideals of chivalry arose because men felt that to witness to the Christian ideal in seclusion was a very partial performance of Christian duty. Its inspiration lay in an honest endeavour to convert the resources of arms and physical strength, and the instincts of knighthood which went with them, to the uses of the Kingdom

<sup>1</sup> Hermas.

of God. Chivalry was what Mr. Garrod<sup>2</sup> has recently complained, that Christianity is not a religion suitable for the adoption of young gentlemen. It failed because it was a class religion, and ceased to be effective as soon as the knight had to deal with those who did not recognize his own ideals: it descended to the common corruption which eventually destroys all merely class ideals. The Reformation committed modern Christianity to the great task of leavening the whole community with Christian ideals. Luther's aim was to bring men out of the dominion of the Church and to set them under the rule of God. What he wanted was not the reformation of a body of priests, but the hallowing of life with all its interests. 'Let men,' he said, 'be brought face to face with God, with His reasonable and merciful laws; let them be taught that He is our Father, that all His punishments are for our reformation, all His restraints for our final good. You have then established an authority which cannot be shaken, and you may leave men to take part in all lawful callings. You may then pray 'that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven.'

For many years the Reformed Churches, pre-occupied in making good their position in separation from Rome, lacked the Christian idea-form for the task to which they were committed. That idea-form has been found, and during the last twenty years has been increasingly recognized in the expression which occurs 112 times in the Gospels, '*the kingdom of God.*' 'All roads of nature, providence, and grace converge at last on this mother city of the soul. It combines the freedom of an ideal family with the order and variety of a kingdom.' Its relationships express and realize the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. There is room in it for men of law and men of science, for commerce and art, for manufacture and learning, for every kind of living which can be made a contributing fountain of good to the life of the whole.

It is with the ideal of the Kingdom of God in mind that the Christian comes to the study of modern Socialism. Thinking of an order of life achieved first in the Spirit, but with the power of actualizing itself in human relationships, the modern disciple is bound to come to the narrower social scheme with an attitude partly critical, suspicious of its materialism and distrustful of its methods, appreciative of its aims, and friendly towards many of its ethical standards.

<sup>2</sup> *The Religion of all Good Men*, by H. W. Garrod.