A brief summary of the New Testament basis of Christian Socialism has brought us to this point. We have found that there is a conception of a Christian society which is suggested by the teaching of Christ. That is enough for most Christian Socialists. They are content to rest for their criticism of society as 'it is, and their hope of society as it should be, on the bedrock of the word of Christ, and to leave theological questions alone. But no Christian movement is without theological bearings of some kind, and this is no exception to the rule.

If one has been accustomed to view a landscape from the east, and is suddenly transported to the west, the old landscape presents new features. The lights bring into prominence different aspects of field and valley and copse. There is a like gain in changing our theological point of view, even though we keep in sight the familiar doctrines. We may look for some interesting suggestions from the change of view which makes the society central rather than the individual.

For instance, the thought which makes social relations primary for man finds a warrant and justification in the Christian idea of God. The peculiarity of the Christian belief in God is just this, that it regards the Divine Life as a perfected society. The highest conception of life is not individual but social. The belief in the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Spirit abiding in a complex unity in all eternity—found a place first in the teaching of Jesus and His apostles, not at all as a metaphysical but as an ethical relation. The relations of Father, Son, and Spirit were revealed as a type of life. It was a type of life deliberately suggested by Jesus as something to which His disciples were to approximate. 'That they may all be one: even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us.'

Looked at in this way, a doctrine which is put aside by many as a hopeless metaphysical subtlety, becomes full of value. The vital social relations are there, each in its perfect form. Authority is there in its highest expression. Justice and mercy, righteousness and love, are all revealed in the relation of the Father and Son. Obedience is there in its ideal form of submission of will, resting on perfect mutual understanding and confidence (cf. Jn 5:19-47; 8:28-68). Service is perfected in the perfect servant (Jn 13:1-20). Care and insight are absolute. Dependence is there (Jn 8:28; 11:16); generosity (Mt 7:11); fidelity (Jn 11:42); truth (Jn 11:14). Mutual sympathy is absolute because the Spirit is the perfect interpreter, the Divine exegete of every purpose and the channel of every expression of will. In this perfect society familiar relations are seen in an aspect which suggests that this is what they were meant to be. We find the Trinity—the Divine society—presenting to us the image in which human society was created.

As soon as the Christian has interpreted his creed for himself in this way, he finds that it has become a criticism of the social relations he knows. If human society is created in the likeness of the Divine, it cannot be according to the purpose of God that authority should be in the hands of a metallic god which has neither heart to feel nor head to think, but only power to crush these out of others. It cannot be according to His purpose that to be a servant should ever mean to be crushed between the upper millstone of avarice and the nether millstone of starvation. It cannot be in His purpose that fatherhood should be reduced to a mere physiological relation by hours of labour, and motherhood sacrificed to the exigencies of an industrial system. It is a flat rejection of the Divine ideal of fatherhood and sonship that a son may be driven to compete against his father in the labour market and drive him out of work.

The belief that humanity is made in the likeness of the Divine social life is a substantial reason for attaching supreme importance to perfecting social relations. Only in a perfected society can even the individual fulfil his destiny. Completeness is not solitary but social. Authority is to conform to
the type of the father, obedience to the type of the son. Dependence is not to be severed from sympathy. Insight and patience meet alike in the relations of man and servant. The whole society is to be bound by mutual understanding created by unity of spirit. A history which begins with 'in the beginning God —— ' does not reach its natural end until we 'see the holy city.'