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CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM

A LECTURE

BY THE

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Christian Socialism.*

LONG before the Fabian Society was founded I learnt the principles and was familiar with the title of "Christian Socialism" from Maurice and Kingsley, the Professors of Philosophy and History at Cambridge.

There were those then, as there are those now, who object both to the title and to the principles it expresses: the connection of the adjective "Christian" with the noun "Socialism" seems to them out of place. And the reason for this is, that for long both earnest Christians and those who have equally earnestly opposed the Christian religion, have been in the habit of thinking and talking as if "other-worldliness" was the note of a true Christian—as if his main object should be to get to Heaven after death. Whereas, on the contrary, so far at any rate as the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself is concerned, you will find that He said hardly anything at all about life after death, but a great deal about the Kingdom of Heaven, or the righteous society to be established on earth. And as the whole of what I have to say to you depends on the truth of this, I must ask you to allow me to elaborate it to you a little at length.

Take, first of all, that long series of works of Christ's which are generally now called "miracles," but which St. John, at any rate, used to call "signs," significant acts shewing what kind of a person Christ was, and what He wished His followers to be; and you will find—without troubling for the moment how they were done, but merely considering what all those who believe they happened are bound to learn from them—that they were all distinctly secular, socialistic works: works for health against disease, works restoring beauty and harmony and pleasure where there had been ugliness and discord and misery; works taking care to see that the people were properly fed, works subduing nature to the human good, works shewing that mirth and joy have a true place in our life here, works also shewing that premature death has no right here. In fact, if you want to point the contrast between Christ and modern Christians, you cannot do better than consider the different way in which He and they speak about premature death. They are in the habit of saying, when their children die, after their first grief is over: "Oh, it is well with them—they have gone to a better place"; but Christ, so far from encouraging that kind of talk, deliberately, according to the stories which all Christians believe to be true, took pains to bring back into this beautiful world those who had passed off it before the time. The death of an old man, passing away in his sleep, that,

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Christian socialism.

according to Christ, is a natural, an orderly, almost a beautiful thing; but the death of a child, or a young man, or a man in the prime of life—that is a monstrous, a disorderly thing: not part of God's order for the world, but the result of wrong-doing somewhere or other. And if you want a rough description of the object of Christian Socialism I should be bold to say that it was to get rid of premature death altogether; and, when I say that, I am not saying anything absurd or utopian, as you will well understand if you simply compare the death-rate of a poor neighborhood with the death-rate of a well-to-do neighborhood, when you will find that even now, while sanitary science is in its infancy, premature death is very largely indeed the result of poverty or of the many evils connected with poverty.

Turn your attention next to that series of teachings of Christ's which we call parables—comparisons, that is to say, between what Christ saw going on in the everyday world around Him, and the Kingdom of Heaven. If by the Kingdom of Heaven in these parables is meant a place up in the clouds, or merely a state in which people will be after death, then I challenge you to get any kind of meaning out of them whatever. But if by the Kingdom of Heaven is meant (as it is clear from other parts of Christ's teaching is the case), the righteous society to be established upon earth, then they all have a plain and beautiful meaning: a meaning well summed up in that saying, so often quoted against us by the sceptic and the atheist, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you": or, in other words, Live, Christ said, all of you together, not each of you by himself; live as members of the righteous society which I have come to found upon earth, and then you will be clothed as beautifully as the Eastern lily and fed as surely as the birds. Well, we have lived, as you know, on the opposite principle to this; we have lived on the principle of every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost; we have lived as rivals and competitors instead of living as brothers, laborer competing against laborer, artisan against artisan, shopkeeper against shopkeeper, trader against trader; with the result that very few of us are clothed beautifully and many of us not fed surely. Christian Socialists therefore say that it would be worth while to try the experiment, which such an one as Jesus Christ said would succeed, to try and live in a rational, organised, orderly brotherhood, believing that then only, but then most certainly, all the men and women and children of England shall be fed surely and clothed beautifully.

Or look for a moment at two of the parables a little more in detail. Take one of the few parables in which Christ spoke about Hell. For though He did not speak of Hell so much as some of His modern followers do, it is important to bear in mind that He was not only the Jesus meek and gentle of whom some of you may have sung in your childhood, but also the Jesus stern and angry; He had His eight woes as well as His eight blessings; He had fierce denunciations for those who, as He phrased it, devoured widows' houses and for pretence made long prayers; for those who made the sabbath-day a dull, dreary day by their narrow rules and restrictions; for those

who had the key of knowledge and would not enter into the treasure house themselves, and hindered those who wished to enter in from entering. Yes, even He had language which some superfine people would call outrageous, ungentlemanly, when He sent that message to the king of His country, calling him a jackal—a word of the utmost contempt when we remember that the jackal was the natural scavenger of the Eastern city. We need not be surprised, then, that He who at the right time could be so righteously angry, now and again spoke about Hell.

But who, according to Jesus Christ, was the man who was in Hell? It was the rich man who was in Hell; and why was he in Hell? Not simply because he was rich, for Christ said it was possible, though difficult, for a rich man to enter into His society. No; the rich man was in Hell simply because he allowed the contrast between rich and poor to go on as a matter of course, day after day, without taking any kind of pains to put a stop to it. That, according to Christ, was the worst state into which it was possible for a man to fall.

Or take another parable, the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, or the parable of Judgment. In it, if you remember, Christ summoned before His imagination all the nations of the world for judgment; and it is important to note that it was nations and not merely individuals who were summoned by Christ to judgment; for you cannot be a good Christian merely by being good in private life, or domestic life: you must be a good citizen in order to be a good Christian: and so it was nations, and not merely individuals, who were summoned to judgment. And what, according to Christ, did the goodness of a nation consist of? That nation, according to Christ, was good, not which said "Lord! Lord!" most, which was most eager about outward worship or formal religion, but which took care to see that its people were properly clothed, fed, and housed, which looked after those who were in difficulty and distress; and even in the case of those who said they did not know God, who would call themselves or be called by others Atheists, Jesus Christ said that if they were taking pains to see that the people were properly clothed, fed, and housed, however much they might say that they did not know God, God knew them and claimed them as His. Now, what I have to suggest is that modern English Christians need not presume to be more religious than Jesus Christ was; and if He said that the goodness of a nation consisted in seeing that the people were properly clothed, fed and housed, then surely it is the bounden duty of every minister of Christ, from the Archbishop of Canterbury down to the humblest Sunday-school teacher, to be doing their best to see that the men, women and children of England are properly clothed, fed and housed. I hope, then, that I have said sufficient to make it clear that, so far as Christ's works and teachings are concerned, not only is there no contradiction between the adjective "Christian" and the noun "Socialism," but that, if you want to be a good Christian, you must be something very much like a good Socialist.

I know, however, that there are two or three sentences of Christ's which are often quoted against this, the whole tone and tenor of His

work and teaching. There is the sentence, "Blessed are ye poor"; the other, "The poor ye have always with you"; and that passage where, when the younger brother wanted Christ to compel his elder brother to divide his inheritance with him, He said, "Who made me a judge and divider over you? Take heed and beware of covetousness." Let us take this last one first. The younger brother, you will note, was not at all anxious to bring about a general, righteous distribution of wealth; he was merely anxious to get into his own possession that which was then in the possession of his brother: he was for all the world like those who nowadays are anxious for the abolition of the laws of primogeniture and entail, but who take no interest whatever in general righteous social legislation; and with that kind of thing Jesus Christ said He would have nothing to do—He saw that mere selfishness was at the bottom of it; but He did not on that account say that He and His followers were not to judge between the claims of the monopolists and the owners of land-values on the one side and the industrious people on the other, and to do all that is possible righteously to divide the nation's wealth as it is produced amongst those who produce it. Or, again, "Blessed are ye poor" said Christ, looking on the rough common fishermen and others who were learning from Him, and comparing them with the Scribes and Pharisees, the leaders in Church and State, who were opposing them and Him, and at last got Him killed. He said that these poor men, notwithstanding their poverty, were better and happier men than their opponents; and surely we can well understand that that was a true simple statement of fact; but that simple statement of fact gives no kind of sanction to the teaching that has been drawn from it, that poverty—especially the grinding poverty which is found in our modern centres of civilisation—is the normal condition of things; that what the poor have to do is to put up with their lot here, looking for a great reward hereafter; and that what the ministers of Christ have to do is to teach the poor to be resigned and submissive here, and to tell them of the rich reward hereafter. On the contrary, it seems to me to be the duty of every minister of Christ to do all he possibly can to stir up a divine discontent in the hearts and minds of the people with the evils which surround them. And, once more, "The poor ye have always with you," said Christ; "The poor ye shall have always with you," say modern preachers, and notably the good old Archdeacon of London who was called up on a memorable afternoon to preach to the Socialists in St. Paul's Cathedral. By the way, it is interesting to remember that on that occasion the Socialists were allowed to go to church without having their banners stolen from them by the police; and as they were ranged in front of the west door of their cathedral, I noted that inscribed on those banners and flags there were words taken not from Karl Marx, or Lassalle, or Mr. Hyndman, or Mr. Morris, or Mrs. Besant, or Mr. Champion, or any who were then supposed to be leaders, but taken in almost every case from the sayings of Jesus Christ or His great apostles—so much so that my friend Mr. Hancock shortly afterwards preached and published a sermon which he entitled "The Banner of Christ in the hands of the Socialists." Well, when these men went into their

cathedral they were met by the Archdeacon with words to this effect: No matter, however much you may educate, agitate, organise, you will never get rid of poverty, for Christ has said "The poor ye shall have always with you." Now, from what I have already shown to you, you will see that, if Christ had said that, He would have contradicted the whole of the rest of His work and teaching; if He had said that when His kingdom was established—one object of which was to get rid of poverty—there should still be poverty He would have stultified Himself; but He did not say that, He did not prophesy. He simply said, looking back on the history of His nation, looking round on the then condition of His nation, before His kingdom was established, that He noted the persistence of poverty—a very different thing from saying that there always should be poverty. But even if He had said, "The poor ye shall have always with you," would He have been giving any kind of sanction to the state of things which we see now? I take it that we are all agreed that under the best Socialist *régime* imaginable, if a man is a loafer, whether of the east or west; if a man refuse to work when he has every facility and opportunity for working, he will fall into poverty or into something much more disagreeable than poverty. But what is it we see now? Why, this: that on the whole those who work the hardest and produce the most, have the least of the good things of this world for their consumption; and those who work very little and produce nothing, or nothing adequate in return for what they consume, have the most of the good things of this world for their consumption. So much so, that as we have been taught, all society at present can be classified into beggars, robbers, and workers. If a man is not working for his living, he must either be a beggar, living on the charity of others, or a robber preying upon the hard-won earnings of others. And if, again, you want a rough description of the object of Christian Socialism, I should say that it was to bring about the time when all shall work, and when, all working, work will be a joy instead of the "grind" it is at present, and to bring about the time when the robbers shall be utterly abolished. I hope, then, you will see that there is nothing in these three passages, so often quoted against us, to contradict the whole of the rest of Christ's work and teaching, and that therefore a follower of Christ is bound to be an out-and-out fighter against poverty, not merely alleviating its symptoms, but getting at the very root and cause of it.

But you know that Christ not only worked and taught like this, but He deliberately founded a society to keep on doing, throughout the world on a large scale, what He began to do by way of example, in miniature, in Palestine. He said, you know, shortly before His death, to those who were to be the leaders in that society: "He that is loyal to me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works shall he do." The Christian Church therefore is intended to be a society not merely for teaching a number of elaborate doctrines—important as they may be for the philosophical defence of the faith—not even for maintaining a beautiful ritual and worship—important as that is if men and women are to have all their faculties fully developed; but mainly and chiefly for doing on a large scale

throughout the world those secular, socialistic works which Christ did on a small scale in Palestine. Now this being so, you would expect to find that the first leaders of the society, though they would be mainly occupied in foundation work, would have something to say on these secular, socialistic questions. Take, for instance, St. Paul; what is his great labor law? The husbandman that laboreth, said St. Paul, should be the first to partake of the fruits. The laborer is to be the first, not the second after the capitalist or the third after the landlord, to share the profits resulting from his work. Or again, St. Paul said, in words which it would be well indeed to din into the ears of the Duke of Westminster and the other appropriators of ground values, "Let the robber rob no more, but rather let him labor"; recognising that fact of which I have spoken, that if a man is not working for his own living he is preying on the living of others. Or again, take St. James, who was in such close companionship with Jesus for years. His little pamphlet, which has come down to us through the ages, is full of burning words on the labor question. Take one sentence as a sample, where he says that the cry of the reapers who had been defrauded of their wages had entered into the ears of God, who fights; that God fought against every law or custom which tended to deprive the laborers of the full reward of their work. And if God so fights, then surely it is certain that it is the imperative duty of every Christian in England to fight against all laws or customs which prevent the workers in England from enjoying the fruits of their work. Or again, take the two great permanent institutions of the Church, the two sacraments which are universally necessary to salvation—Holy Baptism and Holy Communion; you will find that they are both entirely on our side. In Holy Baptism, you know, we claim every little baby born into the world as being the equal with every other little baby, no matter whether it be the child of a costermonger or the child of a prince; not waiting for conversion or illumination, or election or proof of goodness, but simply because it is a human being, we claim it as of right a member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor—not merely a future heir but a present inheritor—of the Kingdom of Heaven. The great sacrament of equality is assuredly entirely on our side. And so, too, is the Holy Communion. The very name tells you that those who partake of it are bound to live in brotherhood, in fellowship, with one another. There is a hymn sung in church about having mystic, sweet communion with those whose work is done; and those of you who, like rational beings, have been in the habit of praying for the dead, will know the value of that communion. But it is even more important to have communion equally mystic and sweet with those whose work is going on. And that is what this great sacrament teaches us to have. Indeed, it has been well said that the real, terrible blasphemer is not the man who uses foul language at the corners of the street, nor the men who used to publish those woodcuts in the *Freethinker*—libels as they were on dead men and a beautiful literature; but rather the man or woman who says the "Our Father," morning and evening and takes no kind of pains to realise through-

out the day the brotherhood which the fatherhood implies, or who comes to the Holy Communion, Sunday by Sunday, month by month, or festival by festival, and is not striving in every-day life to realise the fellowship which the Holy Communion implies. Yes, the great sacrament of brotherhood is entirely on our side.

Once more, take the one only document which is binding on all members of the Church of England, the Church Catechism.* You will find it full of good, sound teaching in the principles of Christian Socialism. Let me give you one sentence only, a piece of ethical teaching, which, if it were carried out, would alter the whole face of English society. It is there taught that it is the duty which each one, man or woman, rich or poor, owes to his neighbor, to learn and labor truly to get his own living; not to himself, be it noted, in order that he may "get on"—for you cannot now get on without getting somebody else off—but to his neighbor, that he may be an honest man. It has been calculated, as you know, that if all took their share of the work of the world, none would have to work for more than four hours a day; that the reason why so many have to work under such evil conditions and for so long a time is because they have to produce not only sufficient for themselves and their families, but also sufficient for a large number of others who are themselves producing nothing, or nothing adequate, in return for what they consume. It is against this evil that our socialistic Catechism is aimed. And let it be remembered that, according to its teaching, it is no kind of excuse for a man or a woman to say: "True, I do not give back in return for what I consume anything that I myself have produced, but I give back something which my ancestors have produced." To such we say, You eat your own dinners, you wear your own clothes, you require for yourself so much house-room; your great-grandfather can't eat your dinners, or wear your clothes, or use your house; and therefore, in common honesty, you are bound to give back, not something which your great-grandfather has produced, but which you yourself have produced. And lastly, think of that Song of Our Lady, the gentle mother of Jesus Christ, she whom we speak of as not only bright as the sun, fair as the moon, but also terrible as an army with banners. You will find that she has some terrible words there. She holds up to the scorn of the ages, as pests of society, three sets of people, the proud, the mighty, and the rich. "He hath put down the mighty from their seats (or dynasties from their thrones), He has scattered the proud; the rich He hath sent empty away." No wonder that some of the more far-seeing Socialists are eager now and again to go to their cathedrals or parish churches, when they have such revolutionary language as that sung to them.

This, then, must be sufficient to indicate to you what is the religious basis of our Socialism. The work and teaching of Jesus Christ, the testimony of His apostles, of the two greatest sacraments, of the Church Catechism, of the Magnificat—they all surely make it

* See the author's "Laws of Eternal Life: being Studies in the Church Catechism." *Church Reformer* Office, 8 Duke Street, Adelphi, London, W.C. One Shilling, nett.

clear that a Christian is bound to cut right away at the root of that evil which is the main cause of poverty, and which prevents men from living full lives in this world.

But at this point I can fancy some of my hearers saying, This is all very well, but if this be true, then the logical result of it is that the bishops in each diocese with their cathedrals, and the parsons in each parish with the churches, should be real leaders and centres of Social-Democracy, leading the Church forward to war against poverty; whereas we know that the bishops and clergy, so far from leading, have often tried to hinder all who would help. And though I probably should maintain that there are many more exceptions to the truth of this charge than my hearers would be disposed to admit, I acknowledge the truth of it, and I seek for the cause of it. And there is one reason, at any rate. It is this: that you and your forefathers have allowed the Church to be gagged and fettered; instead of allowing the Church to elect her own bishops and clergy, you have forced them on her from outside. And so, now, anyone rather than the whole body of the parish elects the parish priest; sometimes the landlord, sometimes the bishop; or a builder who wants his villas to let, or a college at Oxford or Cambridge, or a peer, or a jockey at Newmarket; anyone, rather than the only people who ought to do it, has the power given them by you to do it. I suggest to you, therefore, by the way, that you cannot expect the Church to live up to the law of her being until you have disestablished and disendowed those whom you now allow to lord it over the Church, and left her free to manage her own affairs. A complete Christian Socialism cannot be brought about until the Church is free to use influence and discipline for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth.

In the meanwhile, much can be done by those Churchmen who remember that the State is a sacred organisation as well as the Church. They can unite with Socialists of every sort in their endeavor to seize the State and to use it for the well-being of the masses instead of the classes; or in more prosaic words, they may help to get delegates or deputies returned to Parliament who will carry out the people's will. And therefore for the rest of this paper, having given you what seem to me to be the principles upon which a Christian is bound to be a Socialist, I will touch upon three items on which, in practical politics, we should specially lay stress. And it is important to do this, both because many Christians are somewhat vague in their Socialism, and many Socialists, in my opinion, fail to get at the root of the matter in their joy at getting this or that restriction carried out effectually. First of all, then, we naturally think of the children; and having got the London day-schools free, we should put forth what energy we can for a liberal expenditure in making them comfortable and pleasant, spending ungrudgingly on such matters as music and swimming; decreasing the number of children for each teacher, especially in the case of the highest standard and of the exceptionally backward children. We should of course also make the continuation classes free, and, further, allow no grant of public money to be given in any form

whatever to privately managed schools. These may seem but mild matters to many of the Fabians ; but I cannot help thinking that if our society had been in dead earnest about them last November, the result of the elections would have been different. Of course, it must be frankly stated that these little reforms will not directly tend to raise wages, unless they could be accompanied by general raising of the school age, and then only slightly. While the means of production are monopolised by a few, the reasons for giving the many the best possible schooling are not that it will enable them to get on, but that it will give them the key of knowledge, that it will help to make them discontented, and that it will to some degree teach the value of discipline and inter-dependence. We school them to a large degree with this in view, that they may know what is the evil they have to attack and how to attack it. We *do* want to educate them above their station—not indeed above that state of life into which it shall please God to call them, but above that into which devilish robbery and monopoly has forced them. Let us once have a generation of young people growing up, fairly well educated and thoroughly discontented, and the legal, orderly social revolution for which some of us are working cannot be long delayed.

Secondly, in considering their practical political program, Christian Socialists have to remember, and to remind others, that we are all employers of labor. Now it is a commonplace of Christian ethics that, while there exist employers and employed, they have duties towards each other. No self-respecting middle-class householder would deny this in the case of his housemaid. What we have to do is to extend the sphere of duty—to get men to understand that nationally or municipally they have thousands of servants whom they employ, and to feel that it is their duty to see that these are not overworked or underpaid ; or, in other words, to follow the example set by the last London School Board, and see to it that all those employed by School Boards, Vestries, County Councils, and Parliament are not worked for more than, say, eight hours a day, and are paid the minimum trade union rate of wages. This a Christian Socialist must insist upon simply as a duty of the delegate of the people to those whom the people employ. If he so treats it, he will not be surprised to find that three years after the duty had, for the first time in English history, been done, those who had benefited by it were so far from being grateful for it that they would not take the trouble to come out on a wet afternoon and vote for those who had got them the benefit. But, further, the people have to remember that no railways, tramways, water-pipes, gas-pipes, wires, etc., can be laid down without their consent ; and that therefore it is their duty, whenever through their various delegates or deputies they give that consent, to make as a condition that those who are employed in these various industries should not be overworked or underpaid. This I am urging as a matter of duty from the people to those whom they employ, not as a matter of right on the part of the workers from those who employ them. Duty is a stronger motive power than right ; and it will be time enough for the great mass of the workers to claim their rights from those who employ

them when they have discharged their duties to those whom they employ. This will involve losing half-an-hour's wages and running the risk of getting a wet coat perhaps once or twice in three years ; but men who do not care to make that sacrifice in order to discharge their duties are not worth helping in order to get their rights.

Lastly, I come to what is the main plank in the platform of the Christian Socialist, the chief political reform at which he aims ; being bound by his creed to go to the very heart of the matter ; to be content with no tinkering. It is summed up in the resolution which was moved by the English Land Restoration League in Trafalgar Square ; after which the authorities, being Conservative authorities, wisely settled that no more should be said there for the present. It ran as follows :—“ That the main cause of poverty, both in the agricultural districts and in the great centres of population, is the fact that the land, which ought to be the common property of all, is now monopolised by a few ; and that therefore those who want to cut away at the root of poverty must work to restore to the people the whole of the value which they give to the land, to get for the people complete control over the land, and to that end see to it that those who use land pay for the use of it to its rightful owners, the people.”

Let me make it clear to you how far-reaching will be the revolution worked out by this reform. Let me remind you that if the laborers could get access to the land in the country, even under the condition of paying the same rent per acre to the landlords for a few acres that the farmers now pay for a large number of acres, they would be able, by cultivating those few acres, to get more for themselves and their families than they now get by means of the current rate of wages in the district. This has been proved over and over again by the landlords refusing to let land to the laborers at the same rent per acre for a few acres as they let it at for a large number of acres to the farmers, giving openly as the reason that if they did so wages would be raised. Now, I need hardly remind you that if wages are raised in agricultural labor, there is a tendency for wages to rise everywhere. Much more therefore would the laborers be better off if, instead of paying rent for those few acres to the landlord, they simply paid the rent in form of taxation to the State, having to pay no other taxation whatever. They would be better off, not only owing to the relief from taxation, but because the so-called iron law of wages would then no longer operate ; that law being that while the means of production are monopolised by a few, wages tend to go down to the minimum at which the workers will consent to live and reproduce. But once get the land, which is the main means of production, into the hands of the people, and then instead of laborer competing with laborer for employment, you would have employer competing against employer for labor ; which would bring about a very different state of things. Or again, consider what is going on throughout the agricultural districts. The laborers by the action of landlordism are being forced off the soil. Where do these men go to ? Our own experience tells us ; the Dockers' Union will tell us ; the defeated gas stokers will tell us. It is probably useless and certainly unchristian for comfortable canons to denounce these men

as blacklegs. The useful and the Christian thing to do is what Mr. Verinder and his Red Vans have done, and help to keep them in the country and there fight landlordism. For of course you know that, forced off the soil, they crowd into the already overcrowded large towns; there they compete against the men and women of the towns in their trades and employments and so tend to lower their wages; and they compete also for house room, and so tend to raise rents. This, I say, is proved by experience, and could be proved by statistics; the population of the villages and country districts not having increased in anything like the ordinary normal increase of the birth-rate over the death-rate; while the population in the large towns has increased very much more than the ordinary normal increase of the birth-rate over the death. So I have shown to you that landlordism prevents wages from being raised, tends directly to the lowering of wages and the raising of rents. Am I not right therefore in saying that this is the root question, the bottom question, which must be dealt with if we want not merely to alleviate poverty by charity, or tinker at it by semi-socialistic trade restrictions, but to get rid of it altogether?

But this question can be dealt with, if you like, entirely from the point of view of townfolk and their rights. If, when discussing the matter, you find that your friend is learned in manures and crops and scientific agriculture, you can for the moment, for the sake of argument, give him in the country altogether, and look at the question solely as the dweller in a large town. I remember, some years ago now, at the Industrial Remuneration Conference, held in Prince's Hall, Piccadilly, presided over by Sir Charles Dilke, whom that most immoral Mr. Stead is still trying to keep from serving his country, that Mr. Balfour, the atheist coercionist, was reading a learned paper, in the course of which he said that the land question, however interesting to philosophers and economists, was not a practical question; for land in England was almost unsaleable. I ventured to interrupt him by asking whether the land on which we were then met was altogether unsaleable. He replied that he was only speaking of land in the country. Well, I have already pointed out to you, that if the laborers could get access to it, land in the country would not be altogether unsaleable; that it may not be well able to support landlord, farmer, and laborer, but that it could well support one man willing to work hard if he was landlord, farmer, and laborer combined. And by the way, however much men say land is unsaleable, you never find them willing to give away, out and out, one single acre of it. But I say, if you like, you can look solely at town lands. And what do you find then? Why, you find land in the City of London worth more than £30 per superficial foot; land in Belgravia worth more than land in Bethnal Green; land in Bethnal Green worth more than land in Epping Forest. Now what is it that makes the land more and more valuable? Simply the people living or working in any neighborhood, or wanting to live and work there. Yet into whose pockets does the whole of this value go? Not into the pockets of the men and women who create it, but into the pockets of those who, often simply because they are

the sons of their fathers, are the owners of the ground rents and values. Robbery is the only accurate word which a Christian Socialist can use to describe this state of things. And there is another reason why robbery is the only right word to use to describe our present system of landlordism. It is this: that land in England used to be held in return for services; so much for the army, for the navy, for building bridges, making roads; so much for what is now done by means of the poor laws. These were the various conditions under which land was held. By degrees, however, a Parliament of landowners and their friends began to shift off from themselves the responsibility of returning these services to the State, and began to tax the ordinary articles of the people's consumption, leaving upon themselves a paltry tax of 4s. in the pound; which tax, being assessed not upon the value which land now has, but which it had about 200 years ago, is, I believe, now practically a tax varying from 1½d. to 2¾d. in the pound. Now what we Christian Socialists urge is that a Parliament of the people, if they will but take the pains to send honest and obedient delegates to carry out their will, ought gradually but as quickly as possible, to reverse that process; to take off all taxation from the articles of the people's consumption, and by degrees to tax the land values, till at last, taxing them 20s. in the pound, you take the whole of the land values for the benefit of those who create them. I know there are those who maintain that this would do but little to benefit the worker, because they allege he is hardly taxed at all at present. To them of course we reply that while the main object of the reform is not the relief from taxation, but to get the land, the main means of production, into the hands of the people, so that the iron law of wages might no longer operate; yet practically the relief from taxation would be important. For I believe I underestimate it when I say—and this should bring every frugal housewife on to our side—that if you spend two shillings on a pound of tea, at least one shilling of that is tax, or the expense of collecting the tax; for every shilling you spend on cocoa, 1¼d. is tax; every shilling on coffee, 1¼d.; every shilling on currants and raisins, 1¾d. If you spend 3d. on tobacco, a full 2½d. of that is tax; and if by degrees you spend five shillings on whisky, 4s. 4½d. of that is tax or the expenses connected with the tax. But it is not only the surface of the earth—to which this value, so evidently designed for taxation, is attached by people living and working in any neighborhood—which the landlords claim; but also the minerals which, in the equally marvellous processes of nature, it has taken centuries to create under the earth: the limestone, the coal, the iron—three things so essential for our great English industries—are claimed by robber landlords. And so, too, the sea-shore and the rivers; so that, as Henry George has well said, every salmon which comes up from the sea might just as well have a label on it, "Lord or Lady So-and-So, with God Almighty's compliments."

We Christian Socialists, then, maintain that this is the most far-reaching reform; that it is demanded by justice; and not only that it can be carried out in consistence with the highest morality, but that morality is impossible without it.

Yes, but someone says, this would be all right if you were starting in a new country, but the nation in the past has sanctioned the present system; it would be destructive of all credit to get rid of landlordism without compensating the landlords. To which we reply that the nation has never given its verdict one way or the other, and that now that it is gradually getting its power to speak, it is beginning to be evident what it will say; and further, that even if the whole nation in the past had given away to a few people in this generation that without which the whole body of the people cannot live full lives, it would have been doing that which it had no kind of right to do; that the land of every country belongs of natural and inalienable right to the whole body of the people in each generation, and as for compensation, from the point of view of the highest Christian morality, it is the landlords who should compensate the people, not the people the landlords. But practically, if you carry out this reform by taxation, no compensation would be necessary or even possible. We say therefore, "You need not kick the landlords out; you must not buy them out; you had better tax them out." And by this process no one will suffer; land will naturally get into the hands of those who will use it best; the thrifty artisan who has bought the piece of land on which his house is built will be much better off than he is now if all he has to pay in taxation, local or imperial, is its ground value to the State. The man—say, the vestryman—who is partly working for his living, and partly living by speculating on the wants of others by having bought a street or two of houses, will find that this reform will make it more convenient for him to live entirely by working. The Duke of Westminster and the Duke of Bedford—or rather their children—will be healthier and happier people if they have to take their fair share of the work of the world. Russell Square, if the owners of the houses round have the choice of being rated at what it would let at for building purposes, or of opening it to the public, would fulfil the old prophecy, and the gardens of the city would be full of boys and girls playing; and marriage-hindering Mammon being utterly annihilated, the Alma Venus of Lucretius would again have her way. *Hinc lætas urbes pueris florere videbis.*

I have now endeavored to put before you the theological basis of Christian Socialism, and the special political work with which it is concerned. But, although during the last few years there is an increasing number of the clergy who are becoming more or less socialistic in their teaching, it would be affectation to pretend that the kind of doctrine I have given in this lecture is the current teaching in the Church at present. In fact, we are often seriously condemned for the line we have taken. It is complained of that we ignore the Eighth Commandment, that we talk about rights rather than duties, that we value material rather than spiritual things. As to the Eighth Commandment, we should indeed be foolish as well as wrong to ignore it; for it is entirely on our side. "Thou shalt not steal" is proclaimed from the altar of West-end churches to upper and middle-class congregations, as well as in prison and peni-

tentiary chapels; because the Church recognises, even though individual clergymen may fail to do so, that it is just as possible, indeed much more probable, that the rich will rob from the poor, as that the poor will rob from the rich. "Thou shalt not steal" is just the commandment we want to get kept; we want to put a stop to the robbery of the poor by the rich, which has been going on for so long. And as for rights and duties, it is well said that there are no rights without duties and no duties without rights. But we admit that duty is a more sacred thing than right. And I thank my opponents for giving me that word, for it enables me to say, as I have to thousands up and down the country, that it is your bounden duty to claim your rights in this matter. It is not a thing which you may take up or let alone just on the ground that you feel the pinch of poverty or not, but a duty which you owe to yourselves, to your children, to the outcasts from society; to all who are tempted to degrade their lives in any way for the sake of a living. And more, it is the duty which you owe to God. The earth is the Lord's, and therefore not the landlord's; the earth is the Lord's, and He hath given it unto the children of men. And what would any man among you think if he gave to the woman whom he loved some valuable present, and she lightly allowed it to be taken from her? He would be jealous of the man who got it away; and so I say that God is jealous when He finds that we have allowed the most valuable of all the material gifts which He has given to His creatures—for "land is the mother and labor the father of all wealth"—to be filched away from us by the Duke of This or Lord That. God is jealous, and we are not doing our duty to God any more than we are doing our duty to our neighbor, unless we are doing our very best to prevent this. And as for material things and spiritual things, I know full well that man does not live by bread alone. I am as eager for the spiritual welfare of the people as the vicar of this parish or the bishop of this diocese. I know that it is not only the pasture but the Presence of which the people have been deprived. But when they say that because of the importance of spiritual things we should not turn our attention to these great material reforms, I wonder whether they have realised the heredity and environment of a vast mass of the people; whether they have considered the evils which result, not only from extreme poverty, but from poverty side by side with wealth; how art is now almost impossible, and lives which should be brimful of mirth and joy are stunted. Because, I take it, that when once a man realises the evils of our present social state, just because he is eager for the spiritual life of the people, he will be doing all he possibly can to put a stop to that robbery which is the main cause of poverty, and so by degrees to establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. *Credo in vitam venturi sæculi*: I believe in the life of the coming age.

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