

# **THE SOCIAL GOSPEL AND THE NEW ERA**

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The social gospel and the new era by John Marshall Barker

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# THE SOCIAL GOSPEL AND THE NEW ERA

BY

JOHN MARSHALL BARKER, Ph.D.

*Professor of Sociology in Boston University  
School of Theology*

*New York*

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## FOREWORD

THE social function of the Christian Church is to bring God more consciously into human relationships with a view to have the Christian life flourish at its best. The reconstruction period has brought an enlarging conception of the kingdom ideal which is leading the modern Church to recast some of its notions and to re-adjust its methods, in order to broaden and intensify the personal religious life of the individual and to open up a larger field for social service.

The central purpose of the author is (1) to give a clearer and more adequate conception of the significance and value of the kingdom ideal and spirit. (2) To survey the widening fields of opportunity for social service in which the Church should enter and coöperate more earnestly to actualize the triumph of God in human affairs. (3) To suggest some of the well-tested methods in the field of experience by which an approach can be made through the coördination of social forces and collective action to make the Church a greater constructive agency in the social life of mankind.

The scope of the social task of the Church presents a multiplicity of opportunities and a diversity of activities for service, but these should not bewilder or confuse any one. The larger outlook tends to promote a common interest in the general work of the Church throughout the world and to evoke greater concentration and loyalty to the ideal of realizing a localized kingdom of heaven in each separate community.

The successive chapters are closely related. Their unity and coherence are involved in the principles underlying the social ideal of Jesus, whose leadership is recognized throughout. The book will have served its purpose if it meets the felt want of pastors, laymen and students for a compact statement of the Church's social task, together with its limitations and privileges. The list of books at the end of each chapter will help the reader to pursue further the subjects treated.

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

A MARKED *comprehensiveness* bespeaks appreciation for this manual. Within its compass all the great topics pertaining to social obligation and service are given a careful exposition. Neither the pastor nor the layman will find that any theme has been neglected upon which he might reasonably expect instruction in a book bearing the title of this volume.

With the fullness and variety of matter characteristic of the manual there is united a still more substantial ground of appreciation. This is best expressed by the single word *balance*. Amid the flood of socialistic speculations which is being poured forth in our age, extravagant and one-sided theories not infrequently make a bid for attention and patronage. There is consequently a special demand for a treatise written in such a judicial spirit and with such breadth of vision as to qualify it to furnish secure guidance and to work effectively to conserve all true interests. Professor Barker's treatise has this character. To a very conspicuous degree it is distinguished by balance. For example, it awards a suitable place and function at once to piety and to humanitarianism. It makes no false antithesis between them. Pains are taken to enforce the view that a vital sense of relationship to God as the common Father of men affords the needed sustenance to an energetic and persistent humanitarian impulse. At the same time great care is taken to safeguard the humanitarian interest by repudiating an individualistic