

**AN EXPOSITION OF
SOCIALISM
AND COLLECTIVISM BY A
CHURCHMAN**

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By a CHURCHMAN.

I. DEFINITIONS.

Although often used interchangeably, a distinction may well be made between the two terms socialism and collectivism. Collectivism is the newer word, first used by French writers, and later by German and English, to denote the economic side of socialism. In brief, then, socialism is a doctrine, a belief, a religion; collectivism is an external scheme, a proposed institutional system, embodying more or less perfectly the idea of socialism.

Socialism is the doctrine of the socialization of production and distribution; it starts by recognizing that the making and distributing of commodities are functions not of the individual but of society; it perceives that these functions can be rightly carried on only by

being subject to the collective conscience and intelligence of society ; and it holds that the sole animating purpose of the plan by which society is to carry on industry must be the welfare of all the human beings who make up society. In brief, the idea of socialism is to apply the common sense of mankind to the common task of mankind.

To make the distinction between socialism and collectivism clear, let us consider the parallel distinction between free education and the public school system. Free education is a doctrine, the public school system is the visible organization through which the doctrine is put into practice. In the doctrine we have true socialism, and in the working system we have an installment of collectivism. For free education, to which the American people are so steadfastly devoted, is a fundamentally socialistic demand, involved in the dogma of socialism : "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." The present school system gives us this doctrine in a visible result ; the demand, "from each according to his ability," is attained by the school tax ; the distribution, "to each according to his need," is attained, in some measure at least, by teaching all children the "three Rs" and a little more ; as much, that is, as the popular judgment up to the present time deems needful.

II. SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

I have said that socialism is a religion. Considering the reverence, the devotion, the satisfaction to the craving for an ideal which it inspires in its adherents, and the disinterested activity which it calls forth from them, this is none too much to say. And considering the identity of its formula with the great primary human doctrine of Jesus—that to render service is the be-all and the end-all—socialism is entitled to be called the ethical religion of Jesus in the application to-day most needed by mankind.

This identity of socialism with Christianity has been often pointed out. It has been insisted upon by divines such as Charles Kingsley, Frederick Denison Maurice and Stopford Brooke. It is pointedly stated by the author of the article on socialism in the "Encyclopedia Britannica," who says: "The ethics of socialism are closely akin to the ethics of Christianity, if not identical with them." And that it is a truth which gains every day a more widespread recognition is apparent from the unquestioned growth of socialistic thought among the Christian men and women of England and our own country, and the remarkable number of conversions to outspoken socialism among Christian ministers.

It is true that in the countries of continental Europe this interior identity has not become so apparent. The organized socialists in those countries consider themselves generally as opponents of Christianity; and this is quite natural, since official Christianity there has set itself strongly against the socialist movement from the beginning. The so-called "Christian socialist" movements of Germany and France were organized and fostered to combat socialism, and they have carried out this initial program. The result has been little else than the widening of a deplorable and unnatural breach.

But in the United States the case is different. Not only is there a constant increase in the number of real Christian socialists, but in the socialist party itself the element which is Christian in name as well as in spirit is rapidly becoming dominant. In New Jersey, for example, during the recent active campaign, the socialist candidate for governor was a Universalist minister; the most prominent speaker after him a Methodist minister; the chairman of the state committee a Presbyterian in good standing and the organizer a good Methodist. In the speeches of these men and of their colleagues the identification of socialism with the religion of Jesus was continually made.

III. THE SOCIALIST INDICTMENT OF THE PRESENT ORDER.

Socialists hold that it is the obligation of the community—of the aggregated intelligences and consciences of the people—to see that the principle—"From each according to his ability, to each according to his need"—is made effective. They are convinced that this principle ought to be put into institutional form, and that industry ought to be carried on in accordance with it. They maintain that our present way of leaving the supplying of the needs of the people for work and for the products of work to the initiative of private individuals is crude and wasteful; that it stints enormously the average of human comfort otherwise attainable, that it results in great and unjust inequalities of possessions and that it dooms the unsuccessful to misery perpetual and appalling. Private individuals necessarily carry on industry, *not* primarily for supplying needs, but for making profit; they produce for sale, not for use. One result of this motive for production is the heaping up of a vast volume of commodities of little intrinsic utility or beauty, but which, for one reason or another, can be sold; and another result is that the bare necessities of many of the people must remain unsatisfied.

According to socialists, the present manner

of production is crude, because it is haphazard, speculative, without organization, without unity of action. It is enormously wasteful, because it necessitates diffusive and multiplicative industry—the expenditure of time, labor and capital in a thousand scattered places upon an identical commodity which might more advantageously be produced in a single workshop. It stints the average of human comfort because it employs labor in a constant warfare of cross purposes; whereas the setting free of labor now employed competitively against other labor, and its direction into other channels of needful production would increase from three to five fold the productivity of mankind. Finally, the present manner of production results in great inequalities of holdings because it sets no limits to the exploiting power of capital; it divorces the workman from his tools and materials, and makes him dependent for his bread on the sale of his muscle-power (of which the supply is almost always in excess of the demand under capitalism) at the price the employer is willing to pay, and it grants to the employer the right to take to himself the entire volume of the net surplus product. The present manner of production, therefore, does not exemplify the socialistic principle. Rather it reverses it; broadly speaking, it takes from each according to his need and gives to each according to his shrewdness.

The socialist's contention is that the present way of carrying on the world's industry, not through a planned and rational system, but by leaving production and distribution to the chances of individual competition, is a discredit to man the intellectual being, to man as disciple of science; and that equally is the heartlessness of the present method unworthy of man as moral and spiritual being, as disciple of Christ. From the Christian point of view, the principle which should rule in this field, as in every other, is that laid down by Christ (in His usual form of a concrete instance) namely, that man's welfare is supreme over outward institutions—that commerce is made for man, not man for commerce. In our present civilization (of which the factory is the type) men, women and children are cogs in the wheels of industry, which turn by intention, not for the sake of the human beings concerned, but for the sake of the grinding on of the machinery itself, and of the profit it grinds out for those who are its legal owners. Mercilessly the machine feeds upon the life of the individual so long as he has life which it can absorb, and remorselessly it breaks his heart and flings him away when it can use him no longer.

The volume of misery among the poorest classes, the final victims of the process, is in almost all non-socialistic countries simply appalling, so appalling that the misery of an