

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL REFORMS

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JAMES R. HOWERTON

**THE CHURCH AND
SOCIAL REFORMS**

The Church and Social Reforms

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With an Introduction by
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Introduction

THAT the social unrest of the day arises from a sense of real and wide-spread social wrongs, utterly anti-Christian, the Christian conscience more or less acutely apprehends. That if left to itself society, angry and short-sighted, will seek adjustment of these wrongs by counter-vailing wrongs, the repeated lessons of history teach us to fear. That He who is the only Light of the World has given us in His teachings complete answer to every social problem, the Christian confidently believes. That those who thus trust Him, must, as His commissioned light bearers, be up and at our sacred though difficult task of letting His light shine through us upon the present shadows, is the growing conviction of the Church.

In the three lectures following, Dr. Howerton endeavours to point the way of the Church as she hears on the one hand the cry for help, and on the other her Lord's summons, not to unaccustomed, but to wider and more energetic ministries.

Her task the author views as a twofold one. She, directly, without silencing her proclamation of the Christ as the needed Saviour of sinners, is as insistently to proclaim Him as Lord of life, individual and social; and is to proclaim the principles on which He bases His kingdom and the precepts

in which these principles appear as the kingdom's working laws. This is her first duty. The second one is to summon her members to go forth, whether they belong to the so-called classes or masses, and each one for himself, at any cost, to live these principles in his own life, and, in such collective association as shall promise most effective result, to use the utmost endeavour to bring the wrongdoer and the wronged into obedience to these holy laws.

That all this is not idle dreaming Dr. Howerton shows from the record of other crises which have resolved themselves into beneficent advance or into chaotic retrogression in measure as the Christ voice has been heeded or ignored.

Because we knew of the author's wide and well-used opportunities for observation, of his clarity and force of thought, and of his loyalty to Christian truth in which all effective social reform must root itself and by it be guided, the New Brunswick Theological Seminary asked from him these lectures, and now gladly seeks for them a wider audience. We feel that there is in them that which will aid towards the coming of the kingdom for which the Lord Christ gave Himself and over which He will reign as the Prince of Peace.

J. PRESTON SEARLE.

New Brunswick, N. J.

Preface

THIS little book is the outcome of lectures delivered by the writer. The first lecture in the book is an adaptation from an address made in the spring of 1909 before the presbyteries of Baltimore and of Maryland at their joint celebration in Baltimore of the four hundredth anniversary of John Calvin's birth. The third lecture was delivered in substance before the Presbyterian Union of Washington, D. C., in February, 1911. It was rewritten for the purpose of delivering it as an address as retiring president of the Council of the Reformed Churches in the United States holding the Presbyterian System at the biennial meeting in Pittsburgh, March, 1912, but, owing to a misunderstanding, it was not delivered. It was submitted to Dr. J. Preston Searle, of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, for his reading and criticism. As a result an invitation was extended from the faculty of that institution to deliver it before the students. After being rewritten and enlarged, the second lecture being added, it was so delivered in three lectures in December, 1912.

The book in its present form has been slightly altered since the delivery of the lectures in New Brunswick. At the suggestion of the publishers the lectures have been subdivided into twelve chapters,

consecutively numbered. All historical matter in the first lecture not essential to the discussion of principles has been omitted. The third lecture has been somewhat expanded, almost the whole of the tenth chapter having been added. Not only sentences, but whole paragraphs and sections, especially in the second lecture, have been quoted or adapted from my lectures on Theory and Method of Ethics to my classes in Washington and Lee University. I reserve the privilege of repeating myself therefore if those lectures should ever be published.

These lectures were written from the standpoint of that group of Churches to which the writer belongs, the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System, but the effort has been made to avoid any sectarian narrowness, and to state the principles so broadly that they may be acceptable, not only to members of other evangelical churches, but to all who believe in the moral progress of man and of society towards a Divine ideal.

The aim has been to discuss not methods of political and economic reform, but the moral principles and motives which must underlie them. The latter come within the scope of the Church's message; the former do not.

I wish to acknowledge indebtedness to Dr. J. Preston Searle for his kindness in securing the invitation to deliver these lectures, in criticizing them, and in writing the introduction to this volume; also to the faculty and students of New Brunswick Theological Seminary; and to Dr. John H. Raven of the

seminary faculty for his kindness in the matter of publication.

I take this occasion also to acknowledge the kindness of the Rev. D. M. Douglas, formerly of Baltimore, and of the Rev. Dr. Wallace Radcliffe, of Washington, D. C., to whom I was indebted for former opportunities to speak on this subject.

J. R. H.

Lexington, Va.