

THE CHRISTIAN
LABORER IN THE
INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

...BY...

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"But seek ye first the Kingdom of
God and His righteousness, and all
these things shall be added unto you."

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PREFACE.

The labor problem is one of the greatest problems of our age, profoundly affecting the social and economic life of all civilized nations. In our country, too, we feel round about us the surging tide of industrialism, that forces upon us questions of the greatest importance. And though it may seem to some the part of wisdom to ignore these and to sail on through life as if the sky were clear overhead and no breakers in the distance, yet it will appear sooner or later that we cannot neglect them with impunity. Moreover, it is unworthy of a Christian that he should simply cast himself on the stream of life, to be borne on passively like a rudderless vessel to an unknown shore. He must choose position in the great struggle of life. The desire to aid, if possible, our Christian laborers in the conscious determination of their proper place in the industrial struggle induced me to deliver and also to publish the lecture that is now offered to the public. The many notes appended to the lecture will, it is hoped, clarify several points that might be obscure to the general reader, and also serve to give additional information on some of the most important points. May it be instrumental in some small measure to guide our Christian workingmen in their endeavors for the improvement of the conditions of labor.

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The Christian Laborer in the Industrial Struggle.

The dominant note of present day life is industrialism. The natural sciences advanced with rapid strides in their victorious march of the previous century and, coupled with invention, gave men an ever increasing mastery over the forces of nature and lengthened enormously the leverage of his power. They caused a phenomenal increase in the material wealth of the nations, but alas! did not, as a rule, foster a corresponding moral growth. They gave rise to the spirit of industry that now stalks over the earth, leaving agriculture far in the rear. That spirit is embodied in the numerous large cities with their teeming thousands and millions, where on the one hand fabulous wealth is hoarded, and on the other abject poverty saunters pale-faced, hollow-eyed and ragged through the streets. That spirit is concentrated in the factories, large and small, where the principle of the division of labor is applied in an effective way, so that each one of their products embodies the labor of several, in some cases of a hundred and more individuals. The factory-system replaced the system of home industry, in which master and servants labored alongside of each other in a spirit of companionship, the skilled artisan single-handed turned the raw material into the finished product, and the servant of today was the master of tomorrow. The delightful independence of that age of homespun made way for an ever increasing dependence of one laborer on the other, so that in the words of Mrs. Browning:

“T will employ

“Seven men, they say, to make a perfect pin;

“Who makes the head, content to miss the point;

“Who makes the point, agrees to leave the joint.

“And if a man should say, ‘I want a pin,

“And I must make it straightway, head and point,’

“His wisdom is not worth the pin he wants.

“Seven men to a pin, and not a man too much.”

That spirit of industry finds its most characteristic expression in the noisy, monotonous humdrum of the machine that revolutionized the entire industrial world by taking the place of muscular strength, greatly increasing the products of labor, and reducing the market value

of the articles produced. The halting monotone of the machine forms a rather revolting contrast to the flexible and richly varied voices of nature, and is symbolical of the regular, almost mechanical, constantly repeated movements of the men, who are in many cases scarcely more than the appendices of the machine.

That spirit is fostered by the technical schools of various descriptions in which, though the liberal studies are not neglected, the emphasis is placed on the natural sciences, either theoretically considered, or as they are applied in the different vocations of life. And if we study the proceedings of the legislative bodies in civilized countries, we soon find that they clearly reflect the industrial spirit of the age. The past seventy-five years saw the birth of many laws, regulating the sanitary requirements in the factory, the hours of labor, the protection of life and limb, women and child labor, accident insurance, etc. In short, we find that *Industrialism* is written large in modern life.

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Now every age has its characteristic struggle. In the feudal age preceding the French revolution the economic system was based on agriculture and land ownership. In the early stages of feudal civilization the tiller of the soil was in constant danger of having his fields devastated, so that both the man with the sword and the man with the plow were equally necessary. Along these lines a division of labor was formed, the warrior protecting the husbandman and receiving his substance out of the latter's crops. In course of time, when conditions became more permanent, the knight turned into the noble and the tiller of the soil was lost in the serf, the former lording it over the latter in an unwarranted manner, and even extending his tyranny to the artisans that plied their trades in the cities. In these centers of commerce and industry, however, the spirit of freedom awoke, and asserted itself with ever increasing success. Much of the history of the Middle Ages and even of later times resolves itself into a struggle of the cities to obtain and to retain their independence. Finally, at the end of the eighteenth century, the bourgeoisie¹ locked in a life and death struggle with the nobles, who were supported by the clergy, and in the terrors of the French Revolution triumphed over its insolent oppressors.

But if we should imagine that the Revolution established right relations and brought peace to the world, we would be greatly mistaken.

¹ "Bourgeoisie" is a French term originally denoting the citizens of a town, in distinction from the nobility and the working-classes proper. Socialists, however, gave it a wider signification, applying it to the entire propertied class, including the manufacturers, the money-lenders and even some of the landowners. "It is," says Hillquit, "the entire 'third estate,' less the wage workers."

It emphasized an important truth, no doubt, but this was, as a certain writer says, "truth clad in hell fire." "No lord, no master", became the slogan of the surging masses. Not only the authority of the nobles and of the clergy, not only the authority of the king, but the authority of God himself was swept away, and man, the autonomous man who was a law unto himself, was enthroned. Stark individualism paraded the streets, without as much as the redeeming blush of maidenhood. Even the guilds, those valuable expressions of the co-operation and comradery of a previous age, were lost in the upheaval and nothing better was substituted for them.

Naturally such a radical revolution had far-reaching consequences. In economics the Mercantilists², that aimed at state regulation of the entire economic life as the only means of obtaining the material pre-eminence among the nations, were succeeded by the school of the Physiocrats³, which acted on the fundamental principle of Rousseau that man is by nature good, and that his course of action is always commendable, if he but follows the laws of nature. It stands to reason that they were averse to state interference in the social and economic life of the nation. Unlimited, free competition became the rule, and was supposed to be the acme of wisdom and the highway of social salvation. The Physiocrats, in turn, yielded to the Classical or Industrial school, founded by that great Scotsman, Adam Smith. He derived his fundamental principles from the Physiocrats that preceded him, but at the same time represented a decided advance on their teachings. He boldly based his theory on what he called the *homo economicus*, the economic man.⁴ Without denying that man is also swayed by the higher principles of morality and religion, the Classical school proceeds on the assumption that in the economic transactions of man

2 I speak of the Mercantilists rather than of the Mercantile school, because it is doubtful, whether they can be said to have formed a school, though some economists seem to think they did. In describing their characteristic position I follow Diepenhorst, who takes issue with those economists who regard the belief that wealth consists in gold and silver and that the state should therefore encourage the importation and discourage the exportation of these precious metals, as the fundamental tenet of the Mercantilists.

3 The Physiocrats held that all wealth was derived from the soil, and that industrial labor could only transfer and transform, but not produce it. Hence they also argued that the state should derive its revenues only from a direct tax on the land, thus becoming the predecessors of the later single taxers. To them we owe, too, the famous theory of "laissez-faire" in industry and commerce.

4 In criticizing this school Mr. Diepenhorst correctly points out the monstrosity of the idea that the soul-life of man is confined in separate little chambers; and emphasizes the fact that this life does not consist of independent centers from which lines can be drawn that do not meet. He says, "there is no *homo economicus*, no *homo politicus*, no economic and political man, and alongside of these a *homo religiosus*, a *homo moralis*, a religious, a moral man."—*Voorlezingen over de Economie* I, p. 95.

these are dormant and can safely be left out of consideration; while the controlling motive is selfishness, it being the constant desire of employer and employee, of seller and buyer, of producer and consumer to obtain all they can with the least possible exertion or sacrifice on their part. The *homo economicus* is the man who in his economic activity is controlled only by self-interest. He is a thing apart from the religious and the moral man, and does not permit higher spiritual principles to dominate his social life. These principles for a long time had a fatal grasp on life, and even now prevail in many circles.* No wonder that merciless competition became the rule, and that the existing inequality greatly increased, especially after steam power was discovered and the machine made its triumphant entrance into the industrial world. Home industry was replaced by the factory system; the artisan was separated from his tools; and an impassible line of cleavage was formed between employers and employees, so that it became all but impossible to pass from the one class into the other. In course of time two well defined classes came into existence, the bourgeoisie and the proletarians⁵; and the downtrodden and oppressed of a former age now became the haughty, relentless, iron-handed tyrants of their less fortunate brethren. The growth of industry naturally resulted in an unprecedented development of the wage system, and incidentally led to a search for the law or the laws that control wages, since the *homo economicus*, as he was incarnated in the capitalist or employer found that it served his interest to pay as little as possible, while the same *homo economicus*, as he had taken on flesh and blood in the laboring man saw that it was his duty to get as much as possible. In this conflict of interests, capital had the advantage in several ways, so that for a long time it continued without let or hindrance to seek its selfish ends, stolidly indifferent to the needs of others. It exploited men, women, and even children not yet in their teens, in a ruthless manner, demanding long hours and paying starvation wages, causing the workingmen to huddle together in hovels, while its representatives themselves lived in princely state. For a long time it was able to continue without serious opposition from the proletarian class, because, in the first place, in the case of conflict it was able to hold out, while the laborer had to work or face starvation; in the second place the government, especially in England, often suppressed

⁵ The name "proletarian" was in ancient Rome applied to one who contributed to the state nothing but his offspring (proles), and is now an appellative of the indigent classes of a community, including day-laborers and all persons without capital or assured means of support.

*Diepenhorst, *Voorlezingen Over de Economie* I, p. 83 ff; Thompson, *Political Economy*, pp. 18 f.

the united efforts of the wage earners to better their condition; and in the third place, the iron law of Ricardo⁶, that it was impossible to raise wages perceptibly above a certain level, had a fatal grip on the masses, and served effectively to keep them in subjection.

Eventually, however, the spell was broken; the humble toilers were possessed with a new spirit of liberty and resorted to various means for the improvement of their condition. In England, the classical land of industry, government intervention was sought, but often in vain; Maurice and Kingsley attempted to solve the problem by co-operative establishments, only to fail; and, especially since 1850, trades unions were established that were indeed instrumental in accomplishing great good for the fourth estate. Other countries followed suit, and in our own country these unions since 1881 have their national confederacy in the American Federation of Labor. Through these organizations the *homo economicus* of the workingman now seeks to assert itself and to obtain as much as possible of the world's riches. In Germany the mighty voice of Marx was heard in the wild words: "Proletarians of all countries unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to gain!" He, together with his pupil and friend Engels, advocated what they called scientific Socialism, to distinguish it from the earlier utopian Socialism of St. Simon, Fourier and Owen. They did not merely aim at a correction of existing abuses, but laid the axe to the root of the entire social fabric. Nothing short of a complete social revolution could satisfy them, and therefore they preached the gospel of class consciousness, class hatred and class struggle. Today organized capital and organized labor are facing each other, much as two armies, always on the alert for the psychological moment to strike. There were many skirmishes in the past, but unless all signs fail the great battle is still to come.

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Now the question arises, whether there is good reason to speak of a specifically Christian attitude in this great social struggle. The question is related to that put by Slotemaker de Bruine as to the controlling influence of one's world and life view in Social Science.^{7*}

6 Ricardo held that the laborer could not for any length of time earn more than was required for the subsistence of the class in such a degree of comfort as custom made indispensable, for as soon as they earned more population would be stimulated and their wages would necessarily fall again.

7 We feel his position clearly in the following words: "In het economisch proces handelt de mensch; wij kunnen niet aannemen, dat hij ergens, waar dan ook, zou handelen, zonder dat zijn geestelijke overtuiging zou blijken en zonder dat zijn geestelijke gesteldheid zich verraden zou. We kunnen allerminst aannemen, dat het ethische wel van beteekenis is in het gansche sociale leven, alleen maar in het economische niet." p. 49.

**Sociologie en Christendom*, p. 29 ff.

If, on the one hand, we believe with Adam Smith that the economic man is something quite apart from the ethical and the religious man, we shall naturally contend that our Christian view of the world should in no way affect our economic activity, but must be left out of consideration. Though there are many in our country who act on that very principle, it is at once bad psychology and limits the field of our moral and religious activity in an unwarranted manner. Or if, on the other hand, we follow those many well meaning Christians who regard Christianity as a system designed merely for the salvation of the individual, placing him in a new spiritual relation to the world beyond, without affecting his status in the social and civil relations of this life, it would also be the height of folly to speak of a specifically Christian attitude in the industrial struggles of the age.

In the last decades there is a strong tendency to emphasize the moral and social side of Christianity at the expense of its religious and individual aspect. There are many Christian preachers and authors to-day who all but forget the spiritual mission of Christianity and have their eye fixed only on its social importance. The individual's concern for the welfare of his soul, his anxious inquiry for the way of salvation and his constant endeavors to obtain the blessed assurance of faith, are branded as selfishness; while a life of social activity is lauded to the skies as Christian altruism and as the sure way to everlasting bliss. But however much we condemn this one-sidedness, we perceive in it an element of truth that is often disregarded. It is a great mistake to think that a Christian may rest satisfied, if he is but assured of his personal salvation. He is not taken out of the world, but allowed to remain in it, just because he has an important mission to fulfil, viz. to counteract sin. The entrance of sin into the world wrought havoc in God's beautiful creation, disturbing all the relations of life and darkening the understanding of man. And had it not been for common grace, it would have brought utter ruin on the handiwork of God. In the life of man a struggle began between the good elements that were sustained by grace and the evil propensities that resulted from sin. As a result we find both in the life of individuals and in that of society much that is good and beautiful and noble, but also a large quota of evil and many ignoble, foul and even devilish traits. Moreover the darkening of the mind prevents man from seeing things in their proper relations and in their true perspective. Now the common grace of God merely restrains the evil that is in the world, but does not correct it; neither does it dispel the clouds that obscure the mind. It is indeed a sustaining, but not a redeeming force in the life of man and of the world. And yet it was God's desire to save the world and to re-establish proper rela-

tions between himself and his creation, between man and his fellow, and in the different spheres of life. With this end in view he enriched man with a revelation of his special grace in Jesus Christ, a revelation embodying at the same time the principle of a new life, that will ultimately issue in a renewed humanity and in a new heaven and a new earth. The significance of Christ is not only soteriological, but also cosmological. His grace operates primarily in the Church, it is true, operates directly only in the hearts of believers; but through these it is destined to exercise a profound influence on the world at large. And the Bible is not only a revelation of the way of salvation, but also contains invaluable directions for life in general; it quickens the conscience of man and enlightens the mind by adding greater brilliancy to the nebulous light of God's common grace. It is a revelation that has normative value for every sphere of life, containing, as it does, the divine principles that must govern our life in the home and in society, in the state and in the Church. Guided by the light thus received from above, the Christian must seek the kingdom of God in every walk of life, must seek it in science and art, in commerce and industry, in social and political activity. And because the spirit of evil is working in every sphere, the spirit of Christ is bound to contend with it. This remains true, even after the spirit of Christianity permeated the life of a nation, especially in social life. The family and the state, each having a fixed organization, may show a definite imprint of Christianity, while in the far more flexible life of society there will be strong forces of evil, often organized, that wage a desperate war with the power that makes for righteousness. Hence it is absolutely necessary that in the sphere of free social life the Christian should unfurl his banner and take a position all his own. Therefore the question is justified: What position must the Christian laborer assume in the industrial struggle?

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This question has been answered in various ways. There are some who hold that the Christian position should be one of resignation. The doctrine of non-resistance, as advocated by count Tolstoy,⁸ need not detain us, but there are two other forms in which the doctrine of resignation is preached, that appeal to many serious-minded Christians and therefore deserve consideration. Some, taking their starting-point in

⁸ This Russian count inferred from such Scripture passages as Matthew 5: 21, 34, 39; 7: 1; 20: 25, 26; 23: 8, that evil should not be resisted, and that, if everything is allowed to develop freely, the good will naturally triumph. As a *conditio sine qua non* of this development everything that represents force or unnatural restraint, as governments, judicatories, police and armies, should be abolished.

the providence of God, which governs all things and also rules our life and destiny, are of the opinion that it would be sinful to resist its guidance in any way. Here, you will realize, we are confronted with that ever recurring great problem of predestination and the free will of man. On the one hand we believe that everything is predetermined and governed by the providence of God, and on the other, we conceive of man as a free self-determining ego. No philosopher or theologian has yet been able to harmonize the two; in the study of this problem they were always constrained to admit the futility of the attempt and to confess that "high truths, like high mountains, often veil themselves in clouds." It is indeed very easy to deny one of the terms, as many do, but this offers no solution. But even though we do not understand, we must accept both of the terms in this problem with a believing heart. And this is just what the Christian does in daily life. When in moments of distress he presents his case to God in prayer, he virtually confesses that God rules his destiny; and when, after praying, he attempts to turn the unfavorable tide of affairs, he gives proof positive that to his mind the overruling providence of God does not exclude or make of non-effect the free activity of man. In case some natural evil, as sickness or fire, threatens him or his possessions, he immediately resorts to the necessary means to avert it. And if he feels this to be his duty, he should realize even more strongly that it is imperative to combat moral evil wherever it is encountered. This being so, he should not hesitate but rather be eager to take part in the righteous struggles of the industrial world.

There is another class of Christians that advocates non-resistance on the principle that finds expression in the questions: "Is it not a Christian's duty to deny himself? Should he be an anxious seeker of his own interests?"—Now there is undoubtedly an element of truth in the assertion implied in these questions. The man who has truly learnt the lesson of self-denial, does not thirst for revenge, does not insist on his right, but is willing to bear with persons and conditions that are an affront to him. But this is not exactly relative to the matter under consideration. To bear personal insults is one thing, and to tolerate what dishonors God and is unjust to one's neighbor, is quite another. We have no right to countenance unrighteousness in social life, to look on with patience, when our wives and children are insulted or maltreated, or to acquiesce in the outrages committed against labor on the one hand, and against capital on the other. It is our sacred duty to contend against evil, wherever and in whatever form we find it, with all the legitimate means at our command.

Now it is sheer folly to imagine that Christians can contend single-

handedly against the evils of the industrial world, which are organized evils. And yet it is his duty to grapple with these, whether they be found on the side of labor or on that of capital. Again it is unreasonable to think that the Christian laborer can aid in establishing right relations in the world of labor, unless he seeks strength in organization. Arbitration, collective bargaining, efforts to obtain better labor legislation, strikes, etc., are possible only, where labor is organized. Neither does it seem right that so many Christians should stand aloof, while others are devoting time and strength and money to fight labor's battles; that they should quietly smoke their pipe by the fireside, when others are in the thick of the fight; and that they should serenely enjoy the advantages won in spite of their indifference.

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Over against the extreme position that a Christian should remain passive in the industrial struggle, we have the other extreme, viz. that he should join the Socialist party and aid in the eventual overthrow of the present economic system. It may seem to some that this proposal scarcely merits consideration, because, as they imagine, no sincere Christian would think of casting his lot with the Socialists. Now there was indeed a time, when Socialism was abhorred by all, even by the most liberal Christians, because they identified it with the spirit out of the abyss. And no wonder, for Socialism went hand in hand with a strong anti-religious propaganda and very few self-respecting persons were found in its ranks. But a very perceptible change was wrought in the attitude of many professed Christians to the Socialist movement; and this is due to a variety of causes. In the first place the materialistic theory of Marx and Engels, of Liebknecht and Bebel were so toned down by the Revisionists⁹ and the Fabians¹⁰ and the Christian

9 The *Revisionists* claim to base their economic and political activity on the doctrine of Marx, but hold that some of his theories sorely need revision. In fact, however, they reject the most characteristic doctrines of Marx, so that it is rather difficult to see how they can still be called Marxians. Their ultimate aim is, like that of Marx, to establish the Socialist Republic, and they also accept the doctrine of the class struggle; but they reject the fundamental doctrine of economic determinism, find fault with the Marxian doctrine of value, deny that the Socialist state will be established catastrophically. The coming of Socialism, they say, will be simply a matter of evolution. Hence they, in distinction from the catastrophists, welcome ameliorative measures, and claim that what is now done for the working-classes by trades unions, co-operative societies and legislation, is of the utmost importance and, instead of retarding, will hasten the coming dawn.

10 The *Fabians* are a society of Socialists in England that "aims at the re-organization of society by the emancipation of land and industrial capital from industrial and class ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit." They reject the class conscious position of Marxian Socialism and adopt an opportunist policy, seeking to reach the desired end by whatever means are nearest at hand, educational, reformatory or legislative. Especially do they advocate municipal ownership of monopolies and municipal trading.

Socialists¹¹ that it is scarcely recognizable. In the second place Socialists to a great extent changed their tactics by casting a veil over the ultimate consequences of their theory. And in the third place, as a result of the changes just named, many that move in the higher strata of society, and several Christians too, crossed the Rubicon and committed themselves to the course of Socialism. In England not only J. R. Campbell of New Theology fame (now in consequence of the war again returned to the camp of orthodoxy), but even ministers of the state Church joined the ranks. In the Netherlands the men of "de Blijde Wereld",¹² mostly liberal Christians, among whom are several ministers of the Gospel, sing in the choir of Socialism, and Enka¹³ (mejuffrouw A. v. d. Vlies), an orthodox schoolteacher of Rotterdam, organized an alliance of Christian Socialists. And in our own country several ministers and professors (theological professors included) are declared Socialists.¹⁴ H. C. Vedder, professor of Church History in Crozier Theological Seminary, makes bold to say in his work on *Socialism and the Ethics of Jesus*, that every Christian is at heart a Socialist. All these things help to explain the changed attitude toward the movement of many Christians who are in no way affiliated with it.

But just what is Socialism? The question is simple indeed, but it is not easy to find the answer. In the study of this movement several

11 Christian Socialism is a rather indeterminate quantity. The name is applied in many different ways, sometimes merely indicating the application of Christian principles to social problems. More accurately, however, it denotes Socialism indeed, but "Socialism in the name and spirit and on the principles of Jesus Christ." The Christian Socialist Societies generally accept at least the fundamental economic principles of Socialism, and in several cases its entire program, substituting Christian principles, however, for the materialistic foundation of Marx. They accept the class struggle as a necessity imposed on them by the present economic conditions. Thorough-going Marxian Socialists scout the idea of Christian Socialism, and maintain that Socialism has absolutely no use for a quota of Christianity, but is sufficient unto itself. Cf. Jas. Loopuit, *Christen Socialisme*, in Pro en Contra, Baarn, 1907.

12 They are so-called after their organ that was published since Oct. 31, 1902. The majority of this group also joined the Social Democratic Labor Party. They are not Socialists because they are Christians, but place Socialism and Christianity alongside of each other as mutually complementary, as a perusal of, *Het Christen Socialisme*, by S. K. Bakker, will clearly show. They also accept and carry on the class struggle, but reject the historical materialism of Marx.

13 Enka's position is clearly stated in a brochure entitled, *Kan een Rechtzinnig Christen Socialist zijn?* She answers this question affirmatively, emphasizing the fact that Socialism is essentially an economic system that can easily be divorced from the philosophy of Marx, though not, perhaps, from the class struggle. Those affiliated with the alliance which she organized did not, like the men of "de Blijde Wereld," join the Social Democratic Labor Party.

14 Our country, too, has several organizations of Christian Socialists, as the Society of Christian Socialists, organized in Boston, 1889; the Christian Social Union, 1891, in the Episcopal Church; the Church Association for the Advancement of the Interests of Labor, New York, 1887; and the Brotherhood of the Kingdom. Some of the most important men in these organizations are, Rev. W. D. P. Bliss, Bishop Huntington, Dr. Holland and Prof. R. T. Eli.

pious wishes arise in the heart. The first ejaculation is, "Oh, that Socialism had a creed!"—One would naturally be inclined to regard the *Communist Manifesto* as an authoritative declaration of its principles. It is valued highly and generally, for it is translated into nearly all modern languages; Hillquit speaks of it as, "the classical exposition of modern Socialism,"* Austin Lewis calls it, "the first proclamation of the fundamental principles now underlying the world-wide Socialist movement,"† and it is constantly quoted by Socialists as a deliverance of great authority. But as soon as you attempt to prove some of the more objectionable features of Socialism by an appeal to the *Communist Manifesto*, you are forthwith reminded of the fact that it represents after all only the private opinion of Marx and Engels.

In the absence of a creed the student of Socialism turns to its most prominent authors, and soon finds himself sighing that there might be more unanimity in their representations of the theory, since the lack of it causes all sorts of embarrassment. If some back number among us should still think that Socialism aims at a well defined utopia, Engels reminds him in his, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*, that it has now outgrown that stage. True Socialists indeed despise a check on the bank of heaven, and expect a golden age on earth; but they do not feel competent to picture the community of the future in detail. You may desire to demolish the delusive ideal of Socialism at a single stroke by hurling your invectives against its very foundation, the historical materialism or economic determinism of Marx, but you soon find that the Revisionists, under the leadership of Bernstein, spurn that doctrine and disclaim your right to saddle Socialism with it.‡ Your righteous indignation turns against class hatred and the class struggle, so clearly recommended by many Socialists,|| but Spargo admits that such a doctrine would be outrageous, and McDonald even maintains that the Socialist "cannot consistently address himself to class sentiment or class prejudice", thus fostering the very thing it seeks to eliminate from society.¶ Marx informs us without hesitation that Socialism aims at the abolition of private property, including the family, and that, when these disappear, religion will naturally follow suit, since it is merely the reflex of past economic conditions; but other Socialists are equally explicit in declaring that the doctrine of the socialization of

**Socialism in Theory and Practice*, p. 332.

†*The Militant Proletariat*, p. 6.

‡Cf. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, p. 6 ff.; J. R. McDonald, *The Socialist Movement*, p. 141 ff.

||Cf. Le Monte, *Socialism Positive and Negative*, p. 46 ff.; Austin Lewis, *The Militant Proletariat*, p. 5 ff.; *The Communist Manifesto*, etc.

¶*The Socialist Movement*, p. 147.

private property must be taken with a grain of salt,* and the *Erfurt Programme* declares that religion is *privatsache*.¹⁵ No wonder therefore that we continue to ask: Just what is Socialism?

There is still a third wish that asserts itself in the study of this movement, viz. that we might be sure of the sincerity of those Socialist writers that make it a point to discount many of the more radical tenets of Socialism and present their idol in a more respectful form. Some of their own number give us reasons to doubt this. Thus Le Monte writes: "Some Socialists will deprecate what may seem to them the unwise frankness of the paper on, *The Nihilism of Socialism*. To these I can only say that to me Socialism has always been essentially a revolutionary movement. Revolutionists, who attempt to maintain a distinction between their exoteric and their esoteric teachings, only succeed in making themselves ridiculous.†

Happily we need not discuss the question, whether a Christian can also consistently be a Socialist in any one of the many possible meanings of the term. The problem for us is, whether he can, in view of his Christian principles, join the Socialist movement for the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the workingman. This, of course, will depend on the character of that movement. And I think we can safely say that the Socialism that sways the masses to-day is not that of the Revisionists, nor that of the Fabians, nor that of the Christian Socialists; but is the Socialism of Karl Marx. In *The New Encyclopedia of Social Reform* we read that the Socialists of the Marxian school are "admittedly, at present, at least, the large majority of the organized political Socialist movement", *Art. Socialism*. Spargo tells us that the Socialism that is alive in the world to-day, and upon which the great Socialist parties of the world are based, is the Socialism of Marx and Engels. And Vaughan, after a study of the subject, not only from books but among the masses, comes to the same conclusion and says that "Socialism as a living energizing concern is not a mere economic, or politico-economic principle; it is a growth planted

¹⁵ In connection with this declaration Prof. Ferri says in his, *Socialism and Modern Science*: "It is true that Marxian Socialism, since the Congress held at Erfurt (1891), has rightly declared that religious beliefs are private affairs and that, therefore, the Socialist party combats religious intolerance under all its forms. . . . But this breadth of superiority of view 's, at bottom, only a consequence of the confidence in final victory. It is because Socialism knows and foresees that religious beliefs. . . . are destined to perish with the extension of even elementary scientific culture," p. 63.

*McDonald, *The Socialist Movement*, pp. 125, 187 note.

†*Socialism Positive and Negative*, p. 8. Cf. also A. Lewis, *The Militant Proletariat*, p. 10; and further Diepenhorst, *Voorlezingen over de Economie I*, p. 311; Joh. Land, *Het Roode Gevaar*, p. 7.

deeply in philosophic and religious theories.* And it need not surprise us that it is this form of Socialism rather than the others that is embodied in the Socialist parties, for, in the first place, it is, abstractly considered, the most logical presentation of the subject, though it does not tally with the facts of history; in the second place it furnishes a more or less definite idea of the future state, as to its general outlines, while the Revisionists and the Fabians scarcely know just where evolution will lead them; in the third place it guarantees absolutely the coming of the golden age of Communism; and finally its doctrine of class consciousness and the class struggle appeals strongly to the exploited class.

The question then resolves itself into this: Can a consistent Christian join the ranks of Marxian Socialists? And the answer is a decided negative. The Socialism of Marx, you understand, is far more than an economic theory; it is a philosophy of life that is the exact antipode of the Christian view of the world and of life. To subscribe to it, means to accept historical materialism, an application of the philosophy of materialistic evolution to history. According to its teachings the system of production and distribution in any given age determines the character of the entire life of man; and science and art, ethics and religion, are but the reflex of economic conditions, changing or, possibly, disappearing, when these change.¹⁶ Subordinate to this main leading idea, it interprets the entire past economic history of the race in terms of class struggle, and teaches that this struggle will and must be intensified as the rich grow richer and the poor poorer, and will thus inevitably lead on to the great revolution and to the Socialist state. Marxians preach the gospel of hatred without any moral scruples, since they do not recognize objective standards of right and wrong.¹⁷ What is good for the proletarian is right, and what is bad for him is wrong. And their grand ideal is the socialization of the means of production, of capital and of the land, the communistic society, in which, contrary to the ordinances of God, the lines of demarcation between the state

16 Says Le Monte: "To him (the Marxist) systems of religion, codes of ethics and schools of art are, in the last analysis, just as much products of material causes as are boots or sausages." *Socialism Positive and Negative*, p. 58.

17 After pointing to the supposed fact that conduct tending to perpetuate the power of the economically dominant class, was always regarded as moral and the reverse as immoral. Le Monte says: "There you have the key to all the varying codes of ethics the world has seen. For it must not be forgotten that the ideas of right and wrong are not absolute but relative; not fixed, but fluid, changing with the changes in our modes of producing food, clothes and shelter. Morality varies not only with time, but with social altitude." *Socialism Positive and Negative*, p. 59 f.

**Socialism from the Christian Standpoint*, p. 43. Cf. also Diepenhorst, *Voorlezingen over de Economie*, p. 229.

and society are obliterated and the former, a direct institution of God, is merged in the latter; a society that will not honor the divine authority of the employer who occupies his place in virtue of the intellectual superiority, the practical wisdom, the technical skill and the executive ability with which God endowed him above others, making him the responsible head, whom the employees must obey; a society, in which private property, a form of possession that existed from the beginning of the world, that is deeply imbedded in human nature and human life, that is recognized and honored and carefully guarded in the Word of God, must make place for social possession; a society too which, in the words of Le Monte, will witness, "the atrophy of Religion, the metamorphosis of the Family and the suicide of the State."

* * * * *

Now a Christian can also avoid the two extremes of which we have spoken, and work for the improvement of industrial conditions through the medium of labor unions. These differ from Socialism in bending their efforts to the amelioration of the conditions of labor within the form of the present system, while Marxian Socialism or the Socialist parties, regarding the present economic system as tainted, blighted, cankered, rotten to the core, and altogether past cure, aim at its complete dissolution. They work for the immediate present, while Socialism aspires to some future ideal; they believe in self-help, in bringing about improvements by their own initiative and are filled with distrust of state interference, while all Socialist parties desire to work through the state, coaxing it to the delightful task of committing suicide.

Now it is our conviction that, generally speaking, the workingmen can best guard their interests and improve their conditions through the agency of labor unions. Their history both in Great Britain and in our own country prove their value in the industrial struggle. But the question arises, whether Christians can conscientiously join the unions that now have the field, and thereby ally themselves to the general labor movement. Now that question is by no means settled in the affirmative by an appeal to the fact that they can, with a good conscience, be citizens of a so-called neutral state, because it is fallacious to compare two things that are so utterly unlike in essentials. In the state with its government we encounter an authority that is directly instituted by God, such as we do not meet with in any association in social life. The state practically includes all those that reside in its territory, and certainly has authority over them, whether they be citizens or not. Our Constitution says: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States are subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens

of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." Is anyone ever born into a labor union, and is there any organization in social life that embraces practically the whole of society, or all the laboring men for that matter? Prof. J. L. Laughlin says in his, *Industrial America*, published in 1906: "In fact, the unions include only about seven percent of the total body of laborers," p. 81. Again the state, having the supreme authority in its territory, is warranted in using force to compel obedience, whether of individuals or of organizations of individuals, but a society, a union never may.* Neither should we imagine that we can prove the affirmative by referring to the law of solidarity, for by an appeal to that law pure and simple it is quite possible to prove that we must all serve the devil.¹⁸ We naturally admit that in any given sphere we should have as much solidarity of action, as is consistent with our Christian principles; but these principles determine the position we must take in social life. We find Mr. Anema advancing the same idea with respect to party formation in the state.† And Christians generally are conscious of this; it is for that very reason that they will join conservative movements in social life rather than radical ones. And this is perfectly rational, since they feel that they become responsible for the doings of every organization with which they become affiliated. It is true that in some cases they may relieve themselves of this responsibility by protesting, but we deny that they can thus excuse themselves, if the wrong perpetrated resulted from the very essence of the movement, or is a part of its regular, expressed or unexpressed, program of action. That would be like protecting a man with your left hand and hitting him with your right. In such a case the

18 In regard to this so-called law of solidarity, as applied to the world of labor, I desire to say, (1) that it is absurd to base it on the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of all men, because (a) Scripture teaches neither the one nor the other, but only a Fatherhood of God in Christ, and a brotherhood of believers; and (b) in case it did teach this, we might conclude from this that there ought to be a solidarity of all men, but not that there should be a solidarity of one class over against another; and (2) that the solidarity of the workmen is neither a demand of the Bible, nor of the structure of the social organism. The lines of this organism rather call for the solidarity of the employer and the workmen in any given industry. The law of solidarity to which the unions appeal is merely a fiction of a class-conscious proletariat. Slotemaker De Bruine correctly says: "En ten andere: solidariteit woont niet daar, waar elke kring in zichzelf zich solidaire opsluit, maar tegelijk anti-solidair van de andere zich afsluit. Doch slechts daar, waar allen samenwerken en elk zoekt naar de eigen taak voor het groote, gezamenlijke werk. De klassenstrijd is een belaching van Menenius Agrappa's gelijkenis en van Paulus' woord over het eene lid en de vele leden, een belaching van alle echte solidariteit." *Sociologie en Christendom*, p. 187.

*Cf. Stuckenbergh, *Sociologie* II., p. 65, ff.; Anema, *Grondslagen der Sociologie*, p. 60, ff.; Kuyper, *Gemeene Gratie*, III., p. 424.

†*Grondslagen der Sociologie*, p. 91.

protest would have to be followed up, and would have to lead to a radical reformation or to separation.

We need not stop to consider the possibility of a Christian's joining the I. W. W.¹⁹; the question that is of the greatest moment for us is, whether he can consistently affiliate himself with the trades unions that belong to the American Federation of Labor. Now it seems to me that he can do this only on condition that these unions are, at least in a general way, characterized by a Christian spirit; aim at establishing right relations, i. e. righteousness, and not the supposed rights of one particular class; and employ just means to reach the desired end. We shall look at the unions a moment from these points of view, but at the outset ask you to bear in mind that our treatment of the subject is necessarily of a general character and that, while some of the individual unions may be better than you might infer from my representation, others are worse.

Let us inquire first of all into the general Christian spirit of the unions. It would be puerile to infer from the fact that our country is a Christian country, that these unions are also dominated by general Christian ideas, for then the same would follow with respect to the Socialist party, the I. W. W. and even in reference to the Anarchist societies in the land. In Sheldon's, *The Heart of the World*, Dr. Stanton, a Christian Socialist, says to Harvey, the labor leader: "Your trade union as it exists in Lenox is a Godless institution. You are after nothing but bread alone." I think that this statement can safely be generalized in the following way. The prevailing spirit in the unions generally is grossly materialistic and is bound to have a blighting effect on the lives of those Christians that affiliate with them. You cannot associate for any length of time with the average trade unionist without feeling this; you can see it in his manner of life and in his utter disregard for religion and religious institutions. Life became for him almost exclusively a question of bread and butter, as Dyer D. Lum tells us very bluntly in his, *Philosophy of Trade Unions*, a publication of the American Federation of Labor, when he says on page 3: "We have had Philosophies of religion—by the ton, but they no longer concern us. We feel that they are 'back numbers'—past year's almanacs—

19 "The Industrial Workers of the World," is the name of a labor organization formed in Chicago in 1905. It differs from the American Federation of Labor especially, (1) in the policy of having the unions, as unions, enter Socialist politics; and (2) in aiming at the solidarity of all branches of an industry in one organization, instead of granting the largest amount of autonomy to the organization of the separate trades. In distinction from the A. F. of L., too, its membership consists almost entirely of unskilled workers. Its radical tenets are well known, and even Socialists sometimes interpret the letters I. W. W. as "I Won't Work."

in this world of active relations. The questions they propound do not touch us; they seem suited for another atmosphere than that of the shop. Our Hereafter is undoubtedly as important as the Here—when we get there; but the prosaic fact of 'bread and butter' concerns us mainly just at present. 'Christ and a crust' may involve happiness, but—we don't hanker after it. We put all such studies back on the top shelves where they stand dust-covered—their day seems past." This is a perfectly frank word and true. Unionists on the whole have no conception of the value of eternal and unseen things over the seen and the present,²⁰ have no regard for the word of the Saviour: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

A rather interesting and important question arises in this connection as to the exact relation in which these unions stand to Socialism. Now I desire to point out first of all that there are many Socialists of the Marxian type who have little patience with trades unions, because these attempt to bolster up the present economic system, which is fit only to be destroyed;²¹ and that there are several prominent leaders in the American Federation of Labor who refuse to be identified with the Socialist party. And we naturally ask, why? Not because they or the Federation is opposed to the ultimate aims of Socialism; but since they and the unions they represent are interested in the present betterment of social conditions and fear that alliance with a political party may retard their progress. Moreover they do not favor the industrial organization of laborers for which the Socialists contend; and are, like the opportunist Socialists, averse to theorizing respecting the future.* But this does not mean that the spirit of Socialism is not abroad in the unions and does not to a great extent control their activity. In the first place there is a large contingent of Socialists in the Federation. A test vote taken at the 1912 convention fixed the Social-

²⁰ Prof. Peabody of Harvard says in his, *The Approach to the Social Question*, p. 167 f.: "The same indifference to formal religion marks the methods of labor organizations in all countries. At the hour when religious people meet for worship, unions of hand-workers meet to deliberate on industrial problems and programmes, and do not hesitate to claim that these debates are quite as instructive and uplifting as sermons. To the average hand-worker religion may appear to be occupied with matters too remote from daily living to possess real interest, and the contemplation of eternity may seem to him a luxury reserved for the capitalist class."

²¹ This explains also why the Socialist parties of all countries often try to defeat ameliorative measures. They fear that too great an improvement of social and economic conditions will dull the sharp edge of the class struggle and thus retard the coming of the golden age.

*Cf. Gompers, *The American Labor Movement*; Lum, *Philosophy of Trade Unions*; Bliss, *Encyclopedia of Social Reform*, Art. *Trade Unions in the U. S.*; Hillquit, *Socialism in Theory and Practice*, p. 236 ff.

ist element as one third of the delegation.* In the second place the unions, rather than entrust themselves to the guidance of scientific economics, feed on the literature of Socialism. Says Prof. Laughlin in his, *Industrial America*, "In the main, the literature of Socialism and unionism is indistinguishable. Of course many unionists are not Socialists; but the literature actually read, if at all, by the unions, is the inheritance of Marxianism, a brew of all the different theories of European radicals, assuming specific form or expression according to the individuality and eccentricity of the prophets of the "new order," p. 79. In the third place the unions derived from Socialism the fundamental belief, that is widespread among them and on which many of their demands are based, that labor only creates the value in the product of industry. This is also the foundation of Marx's doctrine of surplus value.† In the fourth place they are not averse to the tenets of Socialism, but rather favorable to its present measures of reform. W. J. Kirk writes in the *New Encyclopedia of Social Reform*, *Art. American Federation of Labor*: "With most immediate socialistic proposals the Federation, however, is in sympathy." And finally, as in the circles of Socialism, so also in the unions the idea is wide-spread that the interests of employers and employees are irreconcilable, and they therefore base their action, as Lum expresses it, "not on any sentimental desire for 'the other fellows', but for self alone." Samuel Gompers reiterated time and again, in answer to the assaults of Socialism, that neither he nor trade unionists in general ever declared that there exists or should exist, "harmony between capital and labor."‡ We therefore meet with a strong class consciousness and the resulting class hatred in the unions; and Helen Marot, herself a unionist with an inside knowledge of things, informs us that this is by no means peculiar to the Socialists that belong to the unions. She says: "The strongest trade union non-Socialist representatives of San Francisco, those who have the most influence in labor councils, declare with pride that in San Francisco they are for labor, right or wrong." Moreover the desire of the unions for an ever greater share in the industrial profits necessarily leads to the socialization of industry.|| No doubt, the spirit of Socialism is rampant in the unions. Many of those Christians who were or are still affiliated with them, testify to that fact. Some of them find the atmosphere in their meetings so oppressive that

*H. Marot, *American Labor Unions*, p. 13.

†Cf. Gompers, *What Does Labor Want?*, p. 7.

‡Cf. Gompers, *Socialist Methods versus Trade Union Methods*, p. 7; *The American Labor Movement*, p. 23; Lum, *The Philosophy of Trade Unions*, p. 11.

||Hillquit, *Socialism in Theory and Practice*, p. 240; Laughlin, *Industrial America*, p. 77; Lum, *Philosophy of Trade Unions*, p. 19.

they would rather pay their fines than attend them. And where such a spirit prevails the influence of a few protesting Christians is nil, their principles are smothered and their spiritual life is endangered. Under such conditions we hold, with Dr. Kuyper, Talma, Wisse and Slotemaker de Bruine,* that it is the duty of Christians to organize separately.

But let us view the aim of the unions at a little closer range, to see, whether this will lead us to any other conclusion. In general we can say that the unions desire to better, by their own efforts, the economic condition of the laborer. In the preamble to the Constitution of the American Federation of Labor we read that the object is to "secure the recognition of the rights to which they (the laborers) are justly entitled." That does not sound bad; it *may* mean that the object is to establish social righteousness. But when we notice that no mention whatever is made of the rights of the employers and of the duties of the workingmen, which are just as important as their rights, we feel that it *can* mean something else. And in view of the principle that, as Gompers expresses it, "the workman is the producer of the wealth of the world", and of the facts that the *homo economicus*, the selfish man, presides in the unions, and that their conduct is governed to a great extent by class ethics, so that San Francisco declares for labor, right or wrong, and several city central organizations made decisions to the effect that, when "the obligation to fellow-unionists and contracts with employers were in conflict", they were to stand by their fellow-unionists,†—in view of all these things we are quite sure that the unions take "the rights of the workingmen" to mean, that which is good, profitable for them, irrespective of the rights of others. In this light it is indeed significant to hear F. K. Foster speak of "those so abnormally constituted as to feel that they serve conscience best by serving their fellowmen least."‡

Let us look at the Federation's object a little closer in connection with one of its subsidiary aims, viz., to obtain "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work." That sounds just as good as the other. But the adjective "fair" is rather elastic, and the question naturally arises, who is going to determine its exact meaning? Two parties, you will understand, are interested, the employer in the fair day's work and the

**Pro Rege* III., p. 184; Talma, *De Arbeidersbeweging*, p. 72; Wisse, *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing en Moderne Arbeidersbeweging*, p. 66; en Slotemaker de Bruine, *Christelijke Sociale Studien*, p. 200.

†Helen Marot, *American Labor Unions*, pp. 14, 15.

‡F. K. Foster, *Has the Non-Unionist a Moral Right to Work How, When and Where He Pleasès?* p. 3.

employee in the fair day's wage; hence it certainly seems reasonable that both should have a voice in this matter, not only the employer, but also the workingman. A voice in the matter,—that is just what we desire the unionist sometimes says. And yet we cannot get away from the idea that in fact the unions are trying to dictate in both terms of the proposition; and why should they not, as long as only labor produces value? Helen Marot does not hesitate to say: "Boldly stated, the position of the unionist is *less work and more pay*."* And W. F. Thornton, quoted by Trant in his work on *Trade Unions*, p. 16 says: "The object of unionism is not merely to free men from the dictation of their employers, but to change position and to dictate; and their rule is to get as much as they can, and to keep as much as they can get." This statement is, I think, borne out by the practice of the unions, for, on the one hand, they desire to, and wherever it is possible actually do, limit the output,^{22†} and, on the other hand, they constantly strive to increase their share in the product of labor. They demand a "fair day's wage"; but how do they determine just what this is? Adopting the one-sided theory that wages must correspond with the standard of living²³—which of course can be raised indefinitely—they in fact recognize no limits, "as long as any large profits are taken out of a business by the owners." Gompers in speaking on this subject says: "The workers will never stop in any effort, nor will they stop at any point in an effort to secure greater improvements in conditions or for a better life in all its phases." And again: "The working people will not stop, when any particular point is reached; they will never stop in their efforts to obtain a better life for themselves, for their wives, for their children and for all humanity."[‡] This process then will naturally have to go on until the socialization of industry, the ideal of the Socialists, is reached, an ideal that is tentatively held out by Lum, while Gompers

²² Unionists sometimes deny that they limit the output, but, generally speaking, this admits of no doubt. If several unions do not yet resort to this practice—which is indeed the case—this is not because the principles on which they act do not demand it, but usually because for some reason or other they deem it inexpedient in the present circumstances. Closely connected with this is the policy of the unions to limit the apprentices in many trades, and to impose all sorts of restrictions on the entrance of workers to a particular trade, a measure that often causes bitter complaints among the unionists themselves, since it checks their ambition and prevents their advancement. Here the so-called "aristocracy of labor" makes itself felt.

²³ We speak of this as a one-sided theory, since it is undoubtedly true that the real value of labor must also be taken in consideration, and this depends to a great extent "on the state of the market and the ability of the laborer."

**American Labor Unions*, p. 4.

†Cf. Helen Marot, *American Labor Unions*, p. 222; Laughlin, *Industrial America*, p. 80.

‡*The American Labor Movement*, pp. 20, 21.

speaks of "a speedy evolution of society—aye, even on upward to the millennium."* And then, of course, the tables will be turned, and once more, as after the French Revolution, the oppressed will become the oppressors. Present day labor unions lose sight of the important facts that it is by no means labor only—by which they generally mean manual labor—that produces value; that the industrial manager, representing the brains of the industry, investing capital and having all the responsibility, has a perfect right to a greater share in the returns than any of his employees; that we must have regard for the rights of others as well as for our own;²⁴ and that the workingmen have not only rights, but also duties. The aims of the unions cannot be the aims of consistent Christians; hence there is need of unions on a more equitable basis.

Let us finally direct our attention for a moment to the means employed by the unions to reach the desired end. If we listen to a word like that of Samuel Gompers, spoken before the U. S. Commission on Industrial Relations in New York, May 21-23, 1914, "I would appeal to the devil and his mother-in-law, if labor could be helped in that way", we are not predisposed to expect any scrupulous care in the choice of means. The unions seek to gain their ends by arbitration, collective bargaining, the union label, labor legislation, the boycott, the strike and the closed shop. We cannot delay to consider these various means, of which, to our mind, some are commendable, and others, at least in the way generally conceived, radically wrong; but can only make a few general remarks. Starting from the Christian postulate that in social life generally only the government has the right to use coercion, to enforce its decisions, to compel obedience, we are constrained to say that the boycott, the strike and the closed shop, as means by which the unions seek to enforce their demands, contain an element that is decidedly wrong, resulting from the principle that might is right, and that every man is his own judge. This savors of

24 Anent this R. W. Trine, who is favorably inclined towards the unions, says: "Wherever the teaching or the influence of the union is for greater gain for the individual members—shorter hours, higher wage, or whatever the gain, if it is not accompanied by that of greater interest and a greater degree of efficiency for the benefit of the employer, whether company or individual employer, the union is doing its members a distinct injury and also an injury to the public, and such a union deserves not only the condemnation but also the execration of all decent and healthy-minded citizens; not only does it deserve this, but this it will surely get." *Land of the Living Men*, p. 177. But this is exactly the sort of preaching that the union deprecate. Helen Marot says: ". . . .but the unionist is not comfortable in alliance with those who talk that way." *American Labor Unions*, p. 4.

**Philosophy of Trade Unions*, p. 19; *Socialist Methods versus Trade Union Methods*, p. 6.

barbarism rather than of Christianity and naturally often results in violence. We admit that such proceedings can often be explained both historically and psychologically, but they are not thereby justified. But, you might say, has not every man a perfect right to leave his employment, if he is dissatisfied? He certainly has, provided this does not involve the breaking of a contract. And if an individual has this right, you insist, a body of men has also. We will grant that too; if a strike means nothing but that it is perfectly lawful, though it may not be expedient, unless the general welfare of the public is thereby endangered. But among the unions only the Railroad Brotherhoods,²⁵ that keep aloof from the American Federation of Labor, have that conception of the strike.* Union men generally assume that, when they lay down their work, they nevertheless retain their claim to the job and no one else is justified in seeking it. Whoever attempts this, becomes a traitor to his class, even though the strike be morally wrong, and is therefore a fit object for intimidation and coercion. Says Dyer D. Lum respecting the "scab": "No sentimentalism will attenuate, no olive branch will be extended, no tears will be shed over whatever misfortune befalls him, nor ought but utter loathing felt for him. He stands forth by his own act recreant to duty, bankrupt in honor, infidel to faith, destitute of social sympathy, a self-elected target and pathetic narratives of the sufferings of a scab in case he runs against

25 There are four of these, viz.: *The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen; the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen; and the Order of Railway Conductors.* Refusing recognition to the idea of labor unity, to place the emphasis where it belongs, viz., on unity of interests between limited groups of workers and their employers. They lay strong emphasis on the personal conduct of their members, who may be expelled for intoxication, the keeping of a saloon or attending a bar, for habitual gambling, etc. They all unequivocally declare their belief in the identity of the interests of workers and employers, and emphasize the necessity of co-operation and of the cultivation of harmony. As over against the general labor movement they make it perfectly clear that class action is not a part of their program. Instead of strikes—which they make it a business to avoid—they fully endorse the arbitration of disputes. Naturally they realize that a strike may sometimes be necessary, but they make no attempt to prevent anyone who is not connected with any of the Brotherhoods from taking the place of the strikers. If the enginemen are on a strike, the firemen may continue their work, even if the engines are run by strike-breaking engineers. Hence they do not practice picketing; the president of the Brotherhood of Trainmen makes it clear that the order to strike means that, "members will be expected to cease work at a given time and to peacefully and quietly depart from the company's property," etc. Their conservative organization brought upon them bitter attacks from some of the other unions. Says Helen Marot: "Some radical labor unions strenuously object to business organizations and their methods; they consider that the first lesson in labor organization is class opposition to the whole business institution." *American Labor Unions*, p. 31 ff.

*Cf. H. Marot, *American Labor Unions*, p. 46.

a missile will not trouble our tender hearts.”* The unionist conceives of the strike therefore as a means to compel the employer to yield to the demands of the union; and in order to make it effective, he must resort to some form of coercion, either intimidation or violence, he must act as if the unions have the monopoly of labor, while little more than seven percent of the laboring men are organized. Now I desire to make two strictures on this idea of the strike as a general proposition. In the first place the laboring men are either laboring under a contract or they are not. If they are, they have no right to strike, except when the employer breaks the contract; and in case they are not, they can lay down their work, but do not retain their right to the job. And in the second place, even if the right is all on their side, they are not, generally speaking, justified in forcing their demands by intimidation or violence. Now this condemnation of the strike could be absolute in case the state had provided the necessary organ to settle these disputes between employers and employees that could not be decided in any other way. In the absence of this a strike is warranted as an ultimate measure of defense, just as in an unorganized society a person has a perfect right to protect himself, and even to slay his opponent, if all other means fail. At most then a strike can be justified on Christian principles as an ultimate measure of defense.† Now if we consider the practice of unions and listen to some of the leaders of the American Federation of Labor, we fear that their strikes are neither ultimate measures nor exclusively measures of defense. Gompers denies that the strike is advocated only as a last resort; and says in addition: “The American Federation of Labor advocates strikes whenever they will be most effective to resist a wrong or to attain a right.”‡ And certainly the 957 strikes reported by the Secretary for the year 1914 do not favor the idea that the strike is employed only as a last remedy.¶ The general objection made against the strike that it is a means to compel the employer to yield to the union, also holds against the closed shop as generally understood. Its ultimate aim is to take the management of any particular industry out of the hands of the manager and place it in the hands of some union men who have no responsibility for it whatever. With a view to this its proximate aim is to corner labor, to form a monopoly of labor, which is just as worthy

**Philosophy of Trade Unions*, pp. 11, 13. Cf. also Foster, *Has the Non-Unionist a Moral Right*, etc.

†Slotemaker De Bruine, *Christelijke Sociale Studien*, p. 196; Smislaert, *Het Recht van Werkstaking*, in *Pro en Contra*.

‡*The American Labor Movement*, p. 37 f.

¶*Proceedings of the 34th Annual Convention of the A. F. of L.*, p. 26; Cf. also Laughlin, *Political Economy*, p. 369.

of condemnation as cornering wheat.²⁶ And as long as this monopoly is not really established it seeks to maintain an artificial monopoly,—which it can only do by intimidation and violence.*

My second objection is in fact involved in the first; yet I desire to state it explicitly. When the means that are employed by the unions infringe on the personal liberty of others, who are no party to the dispute that has arisen, and imply that one body of men has the right to prevent another body of men from working,—they are condemned by an enlightened conscience. And this is exactly what is done in the case of strikes and of the closed shop. The struggle thus resolves itself mainly into a conflict between different classes of workingmen.† But on what principle is one body of men justified in lording it over the other? Foster bases this action of the unions on general utility, and on the right of the majority to rule. But in the first place, even if the immediate end were good, it cannot justify the means; and in the second place the majority of which he speaks is only apparent, since little more than seven percent of the laboring men are organized. I can very well imagine that some conscientious workman may feel constrained to leave the union, when a strike is called that he cannot justify, or when the burden of his family rests heavily upon him; and however unpleasant this may be for the staunch unionists with their class ethics, it gives them no right to loathe him, to stigmatize him as a scab and a traitor, and much less to say with Lum: “. and with the utmost submission to the higher law permeating social growth we reverently raise our hats to say prayerfully: ‘To hell with the scab!’”‡ Again I can easily understand that many persons are not willing to join the unions, because they feel that their Christian principles forbid it; and we deny that the union has any right to exclude them from the labor which they could otherwise secure. And what a travesty on Christianity it would be to find one brother in Christ thus opposing another, guided only by the spirit of class consciousness. Surely the brotherhood of believers takes precedence over the brotherhood of labor. The only proper way for the unions to seek an increase in their

26 R. W. Trine correctly remarks: “A ‘labor trust’ is just as obnoxious to the great common people as is a capitalistic trust, and they will stand for the one no more than they will stand for the other; and moreover, they will in time find a method of putting down and out of business the one, the same as they surely will the other.” *The Land of Living Men*, p. 177.

*Cf. Laughlin, *Industrial America*, p. 87 f.; Helen Marot, *American Labor Unions*, p. 121; *The New Enc. of Social Ref., Art. Open Shop*; R. W. Trine, *The Land of Living Men*, p. 177 f.

†Cf. Laughlin, *Political Economy*, pp. 242 ff., 366 ff.

‡*Philosophy of Trade Unions*, p. 14.

membership, is the educational way. In using intimidation and violence they bring contempt on themselves.

Finally the question arises: What should our Christian laborers do in view of the anti-Christian character of the general labor unions? Shall we say that they ought to join the existing organizations and attempt to reform them? From what we said in the foregoing you can easily infer that we do not intend to give any such advice. It is our firm conviction that the idea of such a reformation is purely illusory, for it would not merely mean the correction of a few abuses, but a radical change in the essential character of the whole labor movement. And they who are not unmindful of the lessons of history, know that it has always proved impossible to reform even a Church from within; are we then justified in supposing that it will be an easier matter to reform the trades unions of the present day? We repeat that the influence of individual Christians scattered in the various unions will be practically nil, while the danger will be by no means imaginary that their spiritual sensibilities will be blunted, and they themselves gradually conformed to the standards of the world. Moreover if our Christian laborers identify themselves with these unions, they are no more able to show the world by a living organized example what Christian principles mean for the world of labor, and they clearly expose themselves to the charge of hypocrisy. It seems to us also that, where in the past some Christian workingmen, that had a clear conception of the Christian view of the world, joined the general labor unions, they did not do this in virtue but rather in spite of their principles, simply because it was the line of least resistance, or since it offered them good prospects of material returns.

Conditions being as they are, we can only come to the conclusion that our Christian laborers must organize separately, if they feel constrained to take an active part in the industrial struggle. We say this advisedly, notwithstanding the position recently defended in one of our Church papers, that a Christian may join "an organization in the sphere of natural life that does not officially name the Word of God, and is therefore neutral in religion." For our contention is that the general labor unions are not neutral and cannot, strictly speaking, be neutral. Undoubtedly the idea of neutrality is rather hard to define. The terms *neutral* and *neutrality* came into use about the middle of the eighteenth century to describe the position of nations that stand aloof, while others are carrying on war. It indicated that they sided with neither one of the belligerent parties, a possible attitude indeed. Since that time, however, the terms were also applied in the sphere of ethics and religion, where their application is extremely difficult, to describe

the non-committal attitude of persons or organizations toward the Church, toward religious convictions, or toward the fundamental principles that underlie the moral order of the world. Now if we study history, we soon find that the flag of neutrality often covered an anti-religious cargo. It was in the name of neutrality that the men of the French Revolution trampled religion and religious institutions under foot; it is in the name of neutrality also that many institutions of learning in our day foster the spirit of unbelief. In view of this it is but natural that, when the modern trades unions are described as neutral, we immediately ask, just what does that mean? Simply that the unions do not officially name the Word of God, as the above quotation would seem to imply? No, it means more than that, viz. that in the unions each one is free to have his own religious convictions and also to give expression to his views.—Gompers.* Now, as we already pointed out, the spirit that actually expresses itself in the unions is prevailingly a spirit of unbelief. Moreover the unions are by no means neutral in the sense that their course of action is neutral. This is not neutral and cannot be, because it is determined by their attitude to some of the most fundamental ethical principles, that are deeply rooted in religious ideas, such as righteousness and liberty, with its corollary of personal responsibility. In the main the unions are frankly evolutionistic and humanitarian, and consequently do not believe in objective norms.† And as we already pointed out, they have but slight regard for righteousness and personal liberty. Hence we repeat that we should have Christian labor unions.

From our standpoint we naturally prefer the organization of separate industries—organizations in which employers and employees are brought together—to trades unions. But in the opinion of Smeenk this ideal, strongly advocated by Sikkel, is illusory.‡ In view of the present condition of things in the industrial world, his judgment is probably correct. Nevertheless our Christian laborers should make it their ideal to organize as much as possible along organic lines, and even where they must satisfy themselves with trades unions, should make it a point to take the employers into their confidence, thus acting on the sound economic principle that the interests of employers and employees are harmonious. It would also seem best to organize, not along confessional, but on interconfessional lines, though in some cases

**The American Labor Movement*, p. 32.

†Cf. Foster, *Has the Non-Unionist a Moral Right to Work How, When and Where He Pleases?* p. 2.

‡Smeenk, *Voor het Sociale Leven*, p. 50; Sikkel, *Vrijmaking van den Arbeid*.

this will prove impossible.* These unions should provide means to educate their members to an ever greater degree of efficiency, since the competent workingman will seldom have to go idle. To swell their ranks they ought to institute an active propaganda among their fellow-Christians, relying only on moral persuasion and the moral support of the Churches. "Not for a class, but for the King", should be their slogan; and the establishment of social righteousness, their grand ideal. In their struggle they should not place their reliance on strikes and boycotts and the closed shop, those short-cut, revolutionary methods, but on collective bargaining, joint agreements, arbitration and efforts at better labor legislation. And if in this way of doing their Christian duty, of regulating their life by their Christian principles, they meet with derision and opposition and even personal loss, they have the blessed assurance that it is the cross of Christ that is resting on them, which they as consistent Christians cannot and do not desire to escape. Strong in the sense of doing the will of God they will then press on, ever mindful of the words of the Saviour: "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you!"

*Smeenk, *Voor het Sociale Lecen*, p. 59; Slotemaker De Bruine, *Christelijk Sociale Studien*, p. 220 f.