

Supplementary Readings

To be used with *The Shaping of American Congregationalism*

Readings in the History and Polity of the National
Association of Congregational Christian Churches

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Rev. Dr. Arlin T. Larson, editor

PREFACE

Learning about the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches is not easy. No comprehensive history has been written. Only a few of the founders remain active. No seminary offers a course tailored to it. Months or years of participation, informal contacts, and overhearing the scuttlebutt are usually required. The "Congregational History and Polity" course is designed to accelerate the learning curve by immersing the student in modern Congregationalism's traditions and practices, as well as in the more comprehensive Congregational story.

We see this as essential for seminarians seeking a firm foundation in the community they are preparing to serve. Equally important is educating the many ministers who come to Congregationalism from other traditions. Church members seeking a better understanding of their faith may also appreciate a package that brings widely scattered materials together.

The first volume, for instance, *of Readings in the History and Polity of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches* collects Congregational reflections of the nature of the church(es) as recorded in the *Congregationalist* magazine. The articles collected are neither comprehensive nor definitive; we are not even certain to what extent they are representative. What can, however, be said is that the authors are men and women active in the Association whose views the magazine's editors deemed worthy of distribution.

At the very least the readings collected inform the reader of the parameters of discussion within the NACCC. They will additionally provide an introduction to leaders of the Congregational way and hopefully some insight into this movement's peculiar contribution to the Body of Christ.

This project is in its early stages. We would appreciate your suggestions and notice of our errors and omissions.

Rev. Dr. Arlin T. Larson, editor

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INTRODUCTION

Though of paramount importance to the sixteenth century founders of Congregationalism, and to the twentieth century founders of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, polity concerns have never constituted the sole focus of Congregationalism. Congregationalists have been deeply involved in the full range of American intellectual, cultural, social, and political life. The Supplementary Readings will engage you in this wider scope of concerns. Most are excerpted from longer works, hoping to give the flavor of the authors' style and letting them define the issues in their own terms. Perhaps you will want to follow up with the complete version of some. The Congregational Library in Boston is available to help you find documents that are no longer in print.

These authors expressed concerns and views in ways considered exemplary or definitive by their contemporaries. It behooves us to pay attention. To understand earlier sections of the path we are now on. To gain insight into contemporary situations. Perhaps even to be wakened to issues and modes of understanding to which our ancestors were better attuned than we. Are certain actual events the will and action of God & others not? When, for example, Edward Johnson marvels at the "Wonder-working Providence of Zion's Savior," which he sees at work in the Puritan migration, it makes our contemporary sense of God's working seems vague & indefinite. As mainline Protestantism is challenged by Pentecostalism and evangelicalism, the early Congregationalists' focus on conversion and church membership again becomes relevant. Urbanism, multiculturalism, immigration? We have still not resolved the issues attended to by Josiah Strong and Washington Gladden.

Some works may feel vaguely alien, even objectionable, from a twentieth century perspective. It could be literary style. The use of "f" for "s" and "v" for "u" (and vice versa), the "thee's" and "thou's" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Or it may be more substantive. Jonathon Edward's "angry God." William Ellery Channing's debunking of traditional doctrines. Josiah Strong's celebration of (and challenge to) the "Anglo-Saxon" race. The point, however, is not so much to judge as to understand the depth and scope of Congregational faith, and to appreciate its enormous creativity. Hopefully to let our minds be expanded by our forebearers and join the dialogue with them in contemporary circumstances.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

OF

THE UNITED STATES

THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIAL CRISIS.

WASHINGTON GLADDEN, D.D., LL.D., COLUMBUS, OHIO.

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THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIAL CRISIS.

WASHINGTON GLADDEN, D.D., LL.D., COLUMBUS, OHIO.

I return to you, to-night, my brethren, the commission with which three years ago you honored me, with gratitude for the trust reposed in me, and with the desire to render some account of my stewardship.

You asked me to devote as much of my time as I could to a ministry at large, and I have endeavored to comply with that request. With health somewhat impaired, and with pastoral duties that could not be neglected, I have done as much as in me lay to express the fellowship of the churches, by bearing from one group to another words of greeting and fraternal good will. It has been, for me, a grateful service. Even this slight manifestation of the fact that we are one people has been cordially welcomed by Congregationalists of every section.

I have visited, during the three years, twenty-five states of the Union, and the District of Columbia; have crossed the continent twice, and have spoken about seventy-five times before state and local associations, clubs, congresses, and other Congregational assemblies. I have gone, of course, only where I was invited, and I have been constrained, for lack of strength, to decline many services of this kind which I should have been glad to render.

The work to which the moderator thus finds himself called is not likely to be a sinecure. The amount of it is limited only by his capacity. When he is not itinerating, a pretty heavy correspondence protects him against idleness. And when this work of a general ministry is added, as it is likely to be, to the cares and duties of an exacting pastorate, the incumbent is made sure of three pretty strenuous years.

How much the churches are likely to get out of this service is more than I can say. It is clear to me that the moderator of the National Council, passing as the representative of all the churches from group to group, does render some service as a

visible symbol of the common bond that makes us one people. If, at the same time, he could be the bearer of an awakening and informing message, if he could stimulate the churches to larger visions of the things to be done, and more courageous and united purposes, his ministry at large might be of great value.

A purely moral influence it must always be; any attempt by the moderator of the National Council to meddle with the business of the churches or of the state or local bodies is not rationally conceivable. I have been slightly amused, now and then, by signs of an apprehensive fear lest the mention even of the title of the moderator might lend some color to hierarchical claims which he might insidiously be making for himself, but such solicitude can only be ascribed to a defective sense of humor. Hierarchical power is not, among us, I make bold to say, a thing to be grasped at by anybody in his right mind. Our perils do not lie in that direction. The thing which we have most to fear is not concentration of authority, it is disintegration of life. The sentiment which we most need to cultivate is not suspicion of encroachments on our liberty, it is rather a sense of our solidarity, an enthusiasm for the interests that are common to us all.

That the moderator, if he were a man of light and leading, might do some valuable service along this line, goes without saying. For myself, I can only say that I am profoundly grateful for the privilege you have given me of attempting some such work as this. It is very little that I could do, but I have done what I could. It has been to me a great delight to meet in council with the Congregationalists of every section; to rejoice in the breadth and courage and loyalty to truth with which they are working out their problems of thought and life; to be quickened and comforted by the earnestness and vigor with which they are taking up the tasks before them; and especially to feel the thrill of hope and expectation with which the young men of our ministry are going forth to the work of this new day. And my last days will be happier days because of the friendships I have formed and the visions I have seen in these three years of my ministry at large.

You will pardon, my brethren, these personal words; as the first occupant of this office to whom this ministry at large was

especially committed, I thought it proper that I should make some report of the manner in which I have tried to exercise it.

We have come together, I am sure, at the beginning of this great meeting, with a profound sense of its significance, with the feeling that it may prove to be the most important assembly which the Congregational people have ever held on this continent, and with the strong desire that in all the great matters which are to come before this Council and before the societies affiliated with it we may have the guidance of the Spirit of Truth and Wisdom. I hope that we shall feel that there is really but one assembly here; that the National Council does but gather up and make coherent the interests which are represented in the other organizations; that every session of these ten days is to be devoted to our common Congregational work, for which we are all responsible.

To undertake any general survey or discussion of the various questions which are to come before us during these meetings would obviously be out of the question; I must content myself with endeavoring to set forth some considerations of more general character which may help to shape our ideals and direct our aims in all the work before us.

The three years which have elapsed since we turned our faces homeward from Des Moines have been eventful years. It is not necessary to undertake any résumé of the things which have been happening; the conviction that the time in which we are living is epochal is not long absent from any sober mind.

Most of us have lived through periods which were clearly not critical; when the current of time lapsed gently from decade to decade with hardly a ripple; when there were few complaints or questionings. But such a time is not the present; its movement is swift and tumultuous; our faiths, our philosophies, our social conventions, our political and industrial institutions, are tossed upon its plunging flood, and we are watching to see how many of them will outride the rapids.

These perturbations are not local. Like the shocks and eruptions which have rent the earth's crust and ravaged great cities; they have appeared in many places, and we seem to hear a great voice saying: "Yet once more I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven." And even as the everlasting hills totter and crumble under the impact of in-

scrutable subterranean forces, so the political dynasties which deemed themselves secure against all enemies have been rent and riven by powers whose existence they hardly suspected.

Who of us would have predicted, three years ago, that before our re-assembling the greatest despotism the world has ever known would be shattered into fragments? We might have hoped that, as the issue of war then raging, Japan would win a substantial victory, but that the result of that victory would be the complete collapse of the Russian autocracy; that this great military power would be reduced to political chaos and financial beggary; that the czar would be, in effect, a prisoner in his palace; that the all-powerful grand ducal conclave, whose domination was absolute, would dwindle and disappear; that the whole body politic of this vast empire would become so thoroughly permeated by democratic and socialistic ideas that no reasonable hope could be entertained of a restoration of the autocracy — who of us could have dreamed? The foundations of that despotic rule seemed to have been laid in adamant; the army and the navy appeared to be irresistible weapons in the hand of an irresponsible despot; the expectation of any popular resistance to such an engine of oppression would have appeared to most students of politics utterly visionary; yet to-day that autocracy is the jest and by-word of the nations. No stable rule has taken its place, nor can any such thing be hoped for in the near future; years of tumult and disorder are likely to pass before the foundations of justice and good will can be securely laid; the only sure thing is that the western world's last and mightiest stronghold of absolutism is in ruins.

Less spectacular, but perhaps no less significant, are the portents visible in that great Eastern empire, whose civilization, for so many centuries, has been stationary, whose law has been tradition, and to whose habitual mood any kind of gospel was a heresy. A people not, indeed, without God in the world, for he leaves no land and no age without witnesses of his presence, but surely without hope; a people who refused to think of better days to come; who were always looking over their shoulders for the light upon the way before them, and thus forever walking in their own shadow — this people has been roused and stirred as never before in all their history. What is about to happen in China it would be hard to predict, but it is

evident that something very serious is taking place. It is hard to see how anything short of a complete reversal of the prevailing mode of Chinese thought can result from the contact of China with the western world. Western civilization is ruled by the future. Chinese civilization has always been ruled by the past. They are moving in opposite directions. If their contact is so close that they are forced to move together, one or the other of them must change its course. We are fain to hope that western civilization will not be the one. What a tremendous revolution this means, the mutterings and upheavals now audible and visible in that ancient society may give some indication. Nothing more portentous has been seen in history than the ground swell of that great deep of humanity, now for the first time answering to the tidal movements of the universe.

Such are some of the overturnings in other lands, of which, during the past years, we have been witnesses. The world in which such things are going on is not a commonplace world. The era in which changes of such vastness are in progress is one in which thoughtful men will be vigilant and heedful of the meaning of the great Voice by which the earth and the heavens are shaken.

But it is not to the things that are taking place on the other side of the world that our attention has been chiefly drawn. Enough has been doing at our doors to keep us wondering. The earthquake that demolished one of our fairest cities was scarcely more dramatic than some of the upheavals that have taken place in the industrial and social order. What we have been witnessing is a new apocalypse — an uncovering of the iniquity of the land.

First came that exposure of the shame of our cities, in which we were forced to see how dreadful are the conditions under which the governments of many of our great municipalities are administered. Most of us knew something of this, but few had any adequate conception of the extent to which graft and corruption were rioting in the places of civic power. It has been a ghastly revelation; the danger is that in our purblind optimism we shall slur its significance. There may be cities in which the boodler does not flourish and where the grafter is unknown, but it is not best for any of us to cherish, in behalf

of our own localities, too much municipal self-complacency. We in Columbus were thanking God not long ago that we were not like unto those publicans of St. Louis and Philadelphia, but our mayor inserted the probe, and some of our officials are in the penitentiary.

The causes which produce these effects are widely operative. Everywhere there are millions of capital whose business interest it is to have weak or bad city government, and what we have seen is the natural consequence of this. The shame of our cities is due to nothing but the commercialization of the public conscience. So long as it is the popular belief that it is the chief end of man to make money, we cannot reasonably expect that men in civic office will follow any higher rule. Office will be for such men a business opportunity. It is the practical philosophy of the mart which has come to ripeness and rottenness in our cities.

In the midst of these exposures of municipal depravity came the astounding discoveries of misdoing in a quarter which most of us had always believed to be the dwelling place of fidelity and honor. No shock to the public faith could have been severer than that which was suffered in the insurance investigation. The names in these directories were the most honored names in the business world. To conceive of their being privy to such things as have been proved against them would have been impossible three years ago. Nothing but the relentless logic of facts could have forced this conviction upon us. The foundations of civilized society have not been often so rudely shaken.

The packing-house investigation which followed was scarcely less disquieting. That a business on which the life and health of so many millions depend could be managed with such a cynical disregard of human welfare, would have been incredible to most of us three years ago.

The disclosures which have been made during the same period, through prosecutions by the nation and the states, of the powerful combinations between railways and big shippers, intended to crush competition and aggrandize the strong at the expense of the weak, have also brought to light a state of things which may well cause anxiety to every upright citizen. This titanic plunder has been proceeding, year by year, in

utter contempt of law, and it is one of the chief means by which have been heaped up the swollen fortunes which are such a menace to our liberties.

Coupled with this monumental extortion of the discriminating rates is the piratical finance whose aim it is to load all the greater public-service industries with debts, the interest of which must be paid by the public. Billions of fictitious capital have been thus created, and every consumer of the land is thus compelled to contribute to the earnings of men who live in ease and opulence upon supposititious wealth which represents no addition made by anybody to the common weal.

While these rank injustices have been growing and these flagrant inequalities have been accumulating, we have witnessed, with solicitude, a widening of the breach between the wage-workers and the employers of labor. Whether we like it or not we must recognize a rapidly growing tendency to separate our people into antagonistic classes. The growth of a plutocracy, the increasing power of the tremendous aggregations of capital, must foster such antagonisms. Conditions like these have no place in a democracy. The growing resentment of the many whose industry is exploited for the aggrandizement of the few is not a matter of wonder. We must not imagine that such a reign of greed and oppression as that on which we have been glancing can be permitted without inciting bitterness and hate and social mutiny. Accordingly we have to own that the relations between the people who own the instruments of production and the people who use them are more and more strained; on both sides the battle lines are sharply drawn and the signs of the times are often disquieting. We have just passed through a heated criminal trial which threatened to precipitate a war of classes. The question whether Haywood was guilty or innocent of the crime charged against him was made, from the start, by multitudes on both sides, a subordinate question. On the one side there was an angry determination to punish him, whether he were guilty or innocent, because he was a member of a labor organization; on the other side there was a furious demand that he be set free, whether he were innocent or guilty, because he represented a labor organization. The thousands of workmen and women who paraded the streets of several of our cities, in advance of

the trial, prejudging the case and threatening vengeance if he were convicted, furnished a spectacle on which no good citizen could look without a sinking heart. It is to be hoped that these tens of thousands do not, after all, represent the rank and file of the American working classes. At any rate, we must confess that we saw, in that demonstration, a symptom, an ugly symptom, of the hatreds and resentments that are threatening the life of this republic.

It must not be imagined that the things which I have been describing are the only kind of things which have been happening in this country during the last three years. All over the land at every season the sun has been shining on the evil and the good, and the rain has been falling on the just and the unjust; the gracious benignities of nature have been vouchsafed us; plentiful harvests have made glad the heart of man; fidelity and honest toil have earned their meed of happiness, and many a deed of mercy or of heroism has made life beautiful.

Nor must we harbor any doubt that in the large view all things are working together for good, and that there is a far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves. I am optimist enough to be sure that God is in his heaven and that all's right, in the long run, with the world. But I have also read history enough to know that this secular forward movement is consistent with many lapses and reverses; and that while "humanity sweeps onward," many peoples and nations, with whom it once seemed that the hopes of humanity were identified, have halted in the march and been trampled into the dust of the dead generations. The material triumphs of American civilization are splendid, but I do not know that this nation, from that point of view, has any better guaranty of enduring life than Rome had in the days of Augustus, or Egypt in the days of the second Rameses, or Babylonia in the times of Hammurabi. And these social phenomena, upon which we have been looking, are certainly startling enough to challenge the attention of all serious men and women. They may not bring us to the point of crying out with Isaiah, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers. . . . From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and festering sores"; we may be able to discern many saving elements in our social life, and

yet it may be possible for us to see that there are influences at work in our society which no patriot can afford to ignore.

It is idle, it is fatuous, to hide from ourselves the fact that we are facing, here in the United States of America, a social crisis. The forces which are at work here — the forces whose operation I have been pointing out — mean destruction. The tendencies which have been gathering strength since the Civil War — the tendencies to the accumulation of power in the hands of a few; the tendencies to use this power predateously; the tendencies to boundless luxury and extravagance; the tendencies to the separation and the antagonism of social classes — must be arrested and that speedily, or we shall soon be in chaos. A social order which makes possible the rise of a Harriman or a Rockefeller is a social order which cannot long endure. These swollen fortunes that many are gloating over are symptoms of disease; they are tumors, wens, goiters; the bigger they are, the deadlier. They are not the reward of social service; they are the fruit of plunder. We have made them possible only by permitting the gate of opportunity to be made narrower and the burden of toil more unrequiting for millions of the poor. They exist only because by our acts we approve or by our indifference we consent to monumental injustice. A society which tolerates such conditions cannot live.

It is because we have begun to have some dim conception of this truth that we are moving, now, toward the correction, by law, of these grave injustices. We must exterminate them; that is the fight in which there must be no faltering. If we would not be destroyed, we must destroy the destroyers. This is the truth which our brave President, by word and deed, is always enforcing upon us, and he is entirely and everlastingly right about it. He means that the law shall do all that law can do to prevent and punish the rapacity of the strong. He means that our democracy shall not harbor subtle and cryptic tyrannies, forms of robbery with webs like gossamer, that drop on us out of the dark, and entangle us when we are asleep; impalpable spoliations that drain away our earnings in dribbles and leave us not only poor but ignorant of what has impoverished us. These are the arts by which swollen fortunes are heaped up in these days, and our President is bound to put an end to them. He means that the gate of opportunity shall not

be shut; that the ways of freedom shall be kept clear for the climbing feet of the high and the lowly. If he has any worse purpose than this he has well concealed it, and though there are many who hate him and malign him, those to whom justice is dearer than policy and courage than finesse, honor him and trust him and thank God for him.

Everything that law can do to restrain and extirpate these unsocial forces must be done — this is President Roosevelt's policy, and I trust we are all with him in it. The least we can do to save this country from destruction is to enforce with all rigor the law which punishes every kind of robbery and extortion, and especially those artistic schemes of plunder by which our plutocracy has been created. But after President Roosevelt and those who now stand with him and who may come after him have done all that law can do to extirpate these social injustices, I greatly fear that their roots will be found imbedded in the soul and their sprouts springing up right and left and growing a-ain. Law can do something, but there is a great deal that it cannot do because, as Paul says, it is weak through the flesh. It deals only with the external act, it cannot touch the inward motive. What our social order most needs is not more and better laws, nor a more rigorous enforcement of law; it needs to be permeated by a better morality, to have its whole conception of the meaning and purpose of life revolutionized. The trouble with this social order of ours is not a matter of forms and methods; its ruling ideas are wrong ideas. Ever since we got rid of absolutism and feudalism and paternalism we have been trying to build our civilization on the basis of moral individualism. Self-interest has been recognized as the regulative principle of the social organism. All our laws, all our civic and industrial organizations, have been based on this principle. That self-love is the mainspring of human action, and that all rules of conduct must be adjusted to this as the supreme controlling motive, has been the assumption of all our political and practical philosophy. We have not denied the existence of good will and kindness, but we have contended that these were minor and subordinate forces; that no reliance could be placed on them as regulative principles of human action; that society was rightly organized by giving practically unrestricted play to the working of self-

interest. In the family, of course, and to some extent in the church, we have recognized the supremacy of altruistic motives, and we have set them free in our philanthropies; but these are lesser interests; in all the central, masterful, absorbing affairs of life, in industry, traffic, politics, the spheres in which by far the largest part of our activities find exercise, we have insisted in enthroning the principle of self-interest.

That this principle had not worked very well through the old days of absolutism and aristocratic feudalism, we could see; but we laid that failure to the monarchs and the aristocrats. When one man behaved selfishly there was trouble, that was evident; but there was a fond hope that when all men had free rein to be as selfish as they chose, all would be well. Our notion was that when all political yokes were broken and democracy came to its own, the principle of "every man for himself" would give us universal welfare. We have had now a few generations of democracy, long enough to test the operation of this principle. The phenomena upon which we have been looking give us the result. Here on this broad continent, with every vestige of political privilege swept away, under a pure democracy, such social conditions as those which we have been considering have been developed. Inequalities of the most glaring sort, oppressions that are continental in their reach, a race of plunderers more powerful and more cunning than ever before appeared in history, with great lawyers to aid them in their predatory schemes; a reign of debilitating luxury that would put to the blush the Romans of the decadence, and, as the fruit of the tree, misery and poverty at the other end of the social scale, and deadly class hatreds steadily deepening and threatening revolution — this is the logical, natural, inevitable outcome of the moral individualism on which we have been trying to build society. Instead of its being true that democracy will transfigure egoism, we have found that no form of society can march hellward faster than a democracy under the banner of unbridled individualism.

That, past all doubt, is the way we have been going. That, and nothing else, has precipitated the social crisis which we are confronting. You will hear a great many other explanations of it, but they are all superficial; the bottom trouble with it all is that we have been trying to found a social order on

selfishness. The word to be spoken to this industrial and social order of ours is the word that John the Baptist spoke, and that Jesus caught from his lips and repeated: "Repent! Change your minds! Your idea of what life means is fundamentally wrong. You are building your whole civilization on a false basis. You imagine that human beings can live together usefully and happily when every man lives for himself. You cannot live together in that way. You will simply devour one another. The weak will always be the prey of the strong. You will have strife, confusion, misery as your perpetual portion.

"You were made to share in one another's good, to be helpers one of another: not to strive and fight, but to cooperate. It is not that you are to neglect your own interests in promoting your neighbors'; simply to identify yourselves in interest with your neighbors; to love your neighbors, not better than yourselves, but as yourselves. This law of good will, which is simply the law of justice, nothing more, will bring peace and welfare to all."

Such was the challenge of Jesus Christ to the social order which he found existing, which was, in its fundamental principles, the same social order that exists to-day, the same social order out of which have grown our rotten cities and our insurance piracies and our rebate robberies and our meat trusts and our labor wars. He condemned it as radically wrong; he called for its reconstruction upon a ruling idea which would *change the direction of human conduct*. And this, as any one may see who will read the synoptic gospels; was the main thing that he came into the world to do. To establish in this world the kingdom of heaven was his mission; he assumed that men would be ready for heaven if they lived the heavenly life upon earth.

If the world could only have learned from him that great truth, what ages of strife and misery would have been spared us! But, alas for human stupidity, the truth which he meant that we should learn first, the head-stone of the corner of his teaching, has been ignored or rejected through all the generations. We have learned many things of this great Teacher. We have learned much about the ordering of our homes; his love and peace abide in many of them. We have learned to

honor womanhood, and to hold sacred and precious the life of little children; we have learned to show compassion to the sick and the blind and the deaf and those of clouded mind; we have learned to be merciful to the criminal and kind to the needy; we have learned to trust, for ourselves, in the love of our Father in heaven; to believe that he is ready to forgive our sins, to comfort us in trouble, and to take care of us when this life is ended; all this and far more is precious gain; no word can tell how much it is worth to our sinning and sorrowing humanity.

But he has always wanted to give us so much more! If we could but have taken his yoke upon us and have learned of him how to order the relations of our social lives, how to live together in factory and shop and counting-room, how much happier and better off we should have been! Some of us would not have been so rich, many of us would not have been so poor.

To this part of the teaching of Jesus we have, however, persistently turned a deaf ear. For other parts of our lives we confess that he has good gifts; but in all this part of our lives — and it includes by far the larger portion of our thoughts and energies — we do not yield to his authority. Here, we have insisted, another law than his must rule — the law of strife, the law that gives dominion to the strongest. So it has come to pass that through all these centuries the chief part of the work that Jesus came to do has been left undone, practically unattempted. The consequences we have seen, in that culmination of the world's selfishness which to-night we have been reviewing.

But how has it happened that the chief thing which Jesus came to do has been left undone? Was there no agency here to which this work had been intrusted? Had he no representatives in the world on whom he could depend for the application to human society of the saving truth which he came to teach? It would seem that the Christian church must have been intended to be such an agency. We often speak of it as the Body of Christ; we mean that it is a social organism which his mind controls and in which his spirit dwells. Doubtless that was what he meant his church to be.

That his life has been, in some imperfect way, manifested to the world through the Church, most of us believe. How very

imperfect the revelation has been, all of us know. The Church is the light of the world, but often it has been but a dark lantern, quenching the ray that it ought to have reflected. Doubtless our Master knew that it would be so; human nature in its crude condition is hardly transparent to the heavenly beam; ages of cleansing and purification must pass before the light will shine through.

Therefore the Church, which is, after all, only a human agency, has very dimly understood its Lord, and very imperfectly represented him. Often and often it has utterly misplaced the emphasis of his teachings; it has put first things last and lowest things highest; it has spent its energies on trifles and shirked the great tasks for which it was commissioned.

Thus it is that the truth which Jesus always made central in his teachings has never yet been made central in the teaching and the life of his church. For many centuries it waited for him to return in power and capture by miracle the kingdoms of the world; then it suffered this expectation to die out and shifted its hope to the regions beyond our sight, putting all the stress of its appeal upon the escape of the faithful from this world to another.

It is this overdone unworldliness of which the church of the present day is the inheritor. For, while we must make no sweeping statements, and must thankfully and hopefully recognize the existence of a strong minority of disciples to whom, as to their Master, the establishment of his kingdom in the world is the chief concern, it still remains true that to the vast majority of modern Christians the main business of religion is to keep people out of contact with the life of this world, and to get them safely away from it when they die. And while there are now not a few of the leaders of the church who are interested in the real work that Jesus came to do, there is still a host of them like the occupant of one of the most conspicuous pulpits of Christendom, who, when asked if his church had any institutional features, answered, "God forbid! My own deep conviction is that the institutional church is the devil's own invention," and who then went on to testify: "I detest these semi-social and semi-political subjects. I have never touched them in the pulpit. Of course, as a private individual, I have my own private opinions, and I vote. But when God makes

a minister, he is to declare the unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus, and he is limited to that." That is the tone; you hear it continually; the business of the Church is saving souls for heaven; it has nothing to do with making a better world of this. How little such a man knows of what "the unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus" really are.

It is because the Church, to so large an extent, has long been under the control of such a sentiment as this; because it has turned its gaze away from the world that Christ came to save and has fixed it so intently upon the heaven for which it hopes or the hell which it dreads, that the work which he came to do in the regeneration of human society has not been done. We can forgive the medieval saints for forgetting their social obligations; most of them had but few; but how a Christian man in a democracy, with the chrism upon his head of God's ordination to rule this world rightly, can separate his religion from his social obligations is hard to understand. And we cannot forgive the Christian Church, the Christian Church must not forgive herself, for failing, in these great years of freedom and opportunity, to leaven human society with the truth as it is in Jesus.

What has the Christian Church been doing while these powers of piracy and plunder have been gathering their forces and spreading their nets and heaping up their spoils? Where was the Christian Church when the grafters were ravaging the cities and the rebate robbers and the frenzied financiers and the insurance sharks were getting in their work? For the most part she has been standing by and looking on, winking her eyes, and twiddling her thumbs, and wondering whether she had any call to interfere.

The prophets of old had no such embarrassment in defining their function. Here and there a prophetic voice has been heard in our own time, but against these monumental injustices with which the nation is now in a life and death grapple the Church has lifted up no clear and effectual protest. Indeed, she has gathered into her communion many of the most conspicuous of the perpetrators of these injustices, — they are nearly all church members, — and has made herself a pensioner upon their bounty, and has been content with preaching to them the "simple gospel" that such men always love to hear!

It is a sad business, brethren, a sad and shameful business, and I am afraid that most of us have had some part in it. But I wonder if it is not true that, in this hour of the nation's testing, the church is beginning to awake to some sense of her past infidelity and her present opportunity. I wonder if she knows that *now, now*, is for her the accepted time and the day of salvation. Is she not aware that the treasure with which she has been intrusted is for the redemption of the society in which she is living? Does she not comprehend the fact that the morbid and threatening social conditions which have been appearing during the last three years are due simply to the absence from industrial and civil society of those elements which it is her business to supply? If she had made men hate robbery as they ought to hate it, there would have been no rebate robbers. If she had enforced upon the world, as she ought to have done, and could have done, the social ideals of Jesus, there would have been no frenzied financiers. If the Christian Church, with her present membership and social influence, would but accept, heartily, for herself, the simple truth that Jesus taught about life, and would begin honestly and bravely to put it in practice, society would soon be filled with ideas and sentiments in which such unsocial evils as those which we are now confronting could not long endure.

And this is the work to which in this great day the Church of Jesus Christ is summoned. It is a day of judgment. Those who have ears to hear can hear a great voice saying, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." What we are witnessing is nothing other than the culmination and collapse of the existing social order which rests on moral individualism. And the Church of Jesus Christ is called to replace this principle of selfishness and strife with the principle of good-will and service. It is called to give to society a new organic law, the law of love. It is called to organize industrial and civil society on Christian principles. This is its business in the world, a business too long neglected, but not now impossible, if the Church can discern this time and gird herself for the work.

This social change cannot be an instantaneous metamorphosis; the processes of growth are never so; but it can begin at once, and the vitalizing, transforming energy will soon make

itself felt in every part of the social organism. It will be a great thing if the Church can grasp the idea of the thing to be done and can believe that it is possible. It is not necessary to work out the methods all at once; let them be developed as needs arise. It is only necessary that the Church shall know that she is here in the world to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; to seek it, not by turning her eyes to the skies, but by fixing them upon the world; to seek it and find it here, in shop and store and factory and mine, in bank and counting-room, in kitchen and drawing-room, in sanctum and studio, in public office and private station, wherever human beings join hands or touch elbows in the tasks and pleasures and comradeships of our daily life. To fill all these human relations with the spirit of good-will and kindness, of unselfish ministry; to make men and women feel that the great joy of life is not the joy of strife but the joy of service; to populate this world with a race of people whose central purpose it shall be, not to get as much as they can, but to give as much as they can — this is what Jesus came into this world to do, and what his Church will be doing as soon as she comprehends her mission.

When she takes up this task with full purpose she will get some light on questions that now puzzle her. She will be able to see that while these social injustices which now disturb our peace have been culminating, her own growth has been seriously retarded. The Christian Church has not been making, during the last decades, the kind of progress that she ought to make. Her membership increases very slowly; her benevolences languish; there are signs of decrepitude that none of us is willing to confess. The strenuous efforts that have been made to replenish her forces by evangelism have not been effectual. Upon the outside masses the appeal has little power. It does not now appear that an evangelism whose objective is the individual sinner is likely to accomplish much until some things are done for which the world has long been waiting. The fact is plainly apparent that the Church has lost her grip on the world, and she is not going to regain it until she finds out what is her real business in the world. Her enfeeblement is due to her failure to grapple with the task assigned her. Let her address herself to that with faith and courage and she

will soon find her resources returning. It seems to me that the responsibility now resting on the Church in America is something tremendous. If this nation is destroyed the guilt will lie at the door of the Church.

Carry your thought back for a moment to what we were saying at the beginning of this hour. What has wrought the ruin of Russia? It is the church of Russia. The church of Russia has not only failed to enforce the social teachings of Jesus Christ, she has flatly repudiated them. Under the lead of that mighty prelate whose philosophy of society, more than any other teaching, has shaped the entire policy of the empire, the minds of the ruling class have been filled with ideas and sentiments which are distinctly anti-Christian. The revolution registers the doom of a social order resting on stark egoism, and of a church which stood sponsor for that social order. For us this tragedy holds a note of warning. I do not think that the Church in America is promoting an anti-Christian social order; she is simply permitting it to exist. She must prevent its existence or she will go down in the ruin which it is sure to bring.

Recall, now, for another moment, that other tremendous phenomenon on which we were looking, — the awakening of the Orient. How is our nation to be affected by the rapidly hastening contact between that civilization and our own? It will not be long before the East and the West will be hurled together, not, I hope, in physical combat, but in a commercial and intellectual competition which will test the strength of each. Our safety in this struggle will not lie in fleets or forts; the critical contest will not be fought out with carnal weapons. It will be a contest between ruling ideas, between types of character.

If we can meet the onset of the Oriental hosts with a thoroughly Christian civilization we shall save ourselves and them. If we can arm ourselves with the mind that was in Jesus, — with justice and truth, with honor and kindness, — they can never overcome us; we shall subdue them, and lead them in the paths of peace. A thoroughly Christianized nation, Christian in all its policy, seeking always to do them good and not evil, putting forth its energies to befriend and serve them, would have nothing to fear.

A Christian people, living the life of the Sermon on the Mount, not greedy of gain, following simple ways, lovers of peace rather than strife, could go into a contest of this nature with no anxiety; but a people whose vitality had been lowered by the kind of influences now tending to prevail in our society, who had grown luxurious, effeminate, and false; who had been, in short, Russianized by the selfish philosophy which has dragged Russia to her doom, would be overrun and trampled out of existence in its contact with Oriental paganism.

It rests with the Christian Church to determine what kind of a people it shall be that enters this contest now swiftly impending. To get ready for such work as this will call for sober thought and strenuous amendment. If the Church would gird herself for work like this she will need to lay aside every weight and the sins that so easily beset her; she will be constrained, in many ways, to simplify her own life and revise her social standards. Deepest of all her needs will be the need of a better acquaintance with Jesus and a more genuine faith in him, not merely as the Deliverer from the pains of hell, but as the Messiah, the Lord and Ruler of life in this world.

I think, also, that the Church which expects to transform and unify humanity will find some work to do in restoring her own unity. There is many a rent in Christ's seamless robe which she must mend if she would hide her own nakedness. So long as the main business of the Church was supposed to be getting people out of the world to heaven, the scandal and shame of the schisms was not so serious. The saying has always been: "One road to heaven is as good as another." But when it is understood that what we are seeking is the unity and peace of human society; that our business in the world is to banish hateful and destructive competitions, and to bring men together on a coöperative basis, then our sectarian divisions will smite us in the face whenever we open our mouths to speak our message to the world. While the Church was consenting to the moral individualism which has been tearing society in pieces, she might keep her countenance when confronted with her own divisions. But when she begins to apply the principles of her Master to the wars of classes and the strifes of interests in the outside world, she will hear a stern voice saying, "Physician, heal thyself!"

That the Church will hear the call of her Master in this great crisis, and put away her weaknesses and scandals, and rise to the mighty task that awaits her, I cannot bring myself to doubt. That society cannot live upon the old basis of selfishness and strife is becoming increasingly plain, even to many outside the Church. That the Church will fail, in this juncture, to discern this fact and to seize her great opportunity I cannot believe. "If," says a modern prophet, "society continues to disintegrate and decay, the Church will be carried down with it. If the Church can rally such moral forces that injustice will be overcome and fresh red blood will course in a sounder social organism, it will itself rise to higher liberty and life. Doing the will of God, it will have new visions of God. With the new message will come a new authority. If the salt lose its saltness it will be trodden under foot. If the Church fulfills its prophetic function it may bear the prophet's reproach for a time, but it will have the prophet's vindication hereafter."

To us, my brethren, gathered here to represent the sixty-five hundred churches and the seven hundred and fifty thousand communicants of the Congregational communion, this call ought to come with commanding power.

I hope that I am not indulging in an overfond partiality for my own people when I think that this conception — that it is the main business of the Church in the world to realize the social aims of Jesus — has been constantly gaining a stronger hold upon our thought. I hope that there are a good many among us who believe that the Kingdom is coming, and who are eager to know what we can do to bring it in with power. That question, I trust, will hold our thought through the ten days of this Council. If we do anything here worth while, it will be in strengthening the ideas and forces which shall make the law and the spirit of Jesus regnant and effective over the whole of our social life. If, as we talk together here, we can come to a clearer understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus; if we can learn to believe in him; to feel that his way of living is the right way; to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, as Jesus has shown it to us in the Sermon on the Mount; to feel that the simple life, the quiet life, the loving life, into which Jesus invites us, is the best and happiest life; if we can consider all our missionary work and our philanthropic work

and our educational work as methods by which we are seeking to guide men into the way of Jesus; if we can go home from this place, at the end of our sojourn here, with the new purpose in our hearts of raising up a generation of men and women who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Ruler of this world, and who are ready to accept his law of love and govern their lives by it, then it will be well for us and for the world that we have come together.

