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CHRIST AND LIBERTY

AN ADDRESS

TO

NORTHAMPTON SECULARISTS.

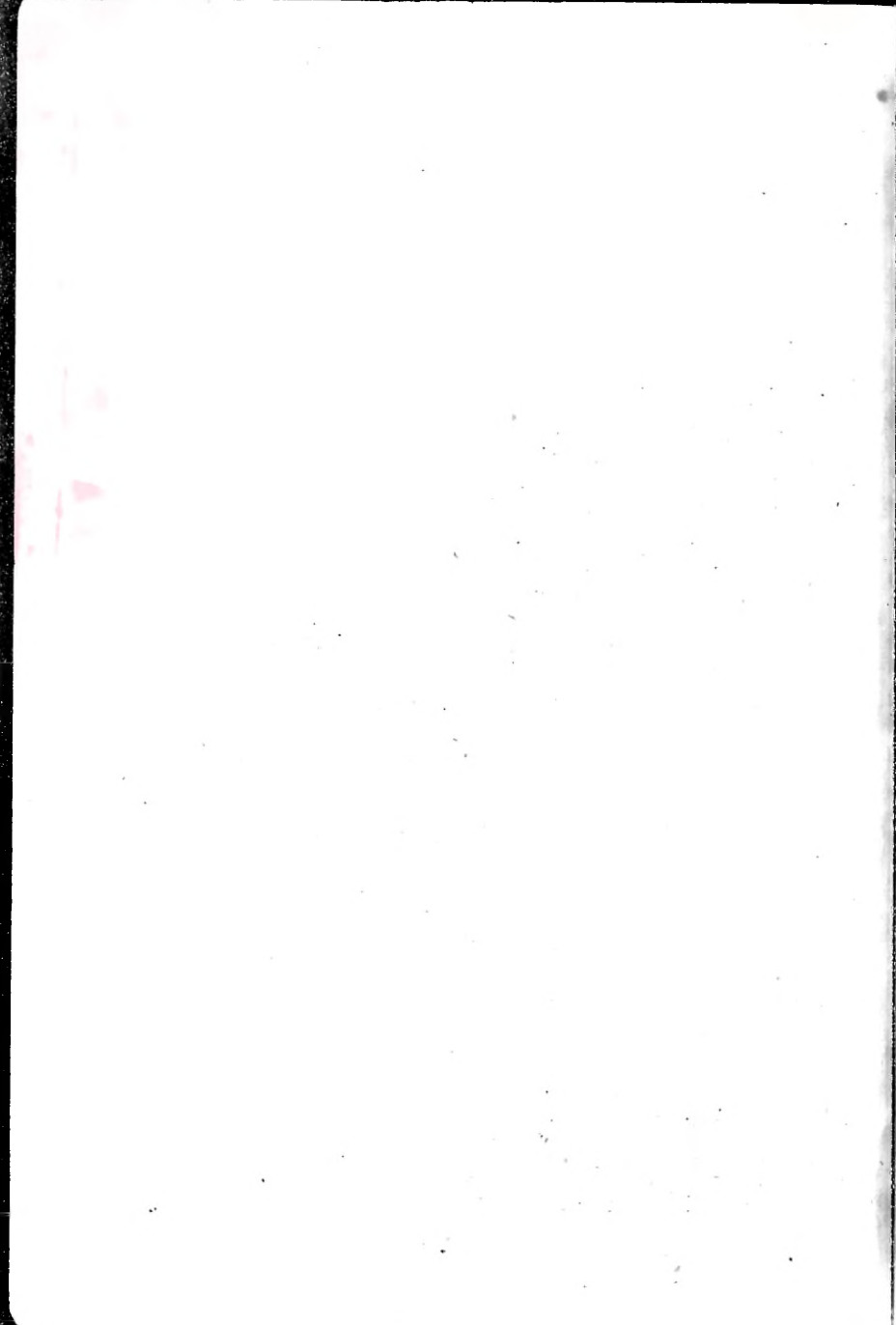
BY

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CHRIST AND LIBERTY.*

THERE is an old story about the Patriarch Abraham—whether of Arabian or Persian origin I do not know—which fills up, in its own fantastic way, what the Biblical account has been thought by some to imply dimly, running to this effect:—Terah, the father of Abraham, was a maker and dealer in idols. Being obliged to go from home one day, he left Abraham in charge. An old man came in and asked the price of one of the idols. Abraham asked him how old he was. “Three-score years,” he answered. “Three-score years,” said Abraham, “and thou wouldst worship a thing my father’s slaves made in a few hours? Strange that a man of sixty should bow his grey head to a creature such as that.” The man crimsoned with shame, and turned away. Then there came a grave-looking woman to bring an offering to the gods. “Give it them thyself,” said Abraham; “thou wilt see how greedily they will eat it.” She did so. Abraham then took a hammer, and broke all the idols except the largest, in whose hands he placed the hammer. When Terah returned, he asked, angrily, “What profane wretch has dared to abuse the gods?” “Why,” said Abraham, “during thine absence a woman brought yonder food to the gods, and the younger ones began to eat. The old god, enraged at their boldness, took the hammer, and smashed them.” “Dost thou mock thy aged father?” said Terah; “do I not know that they can neither eat nor move?” “And yet,” said Abraham, “thou worshippest them, and wouldst have me worship them too.” The story concludes by telling how Terah, in his rage, sent his son to be judged for his atheism before the king, and how Nimrod cast Abraham into a burning fiery furnace.

* This address was one of a course of lectures delivered in St. Edmund’s Church, Northampton, in Lent 1882. “Men of any religion or no religion” were invited; and opportunities of discussing the subject matter of each address were given in the schoolroom at the close of the evening service.

I think you will not have much difficulty in seeing the drift of my intention in quoting to you this legend. The fable is a parable. Abraham, it appears to me, is here but the first historical figure in that long line of religious reformers, accounted too often by their immediate contemporaries as atheists, and depravers of the orthodox gods, only to be recognised subsequently, with the primitive patriarch, as, in an especial sense, "*the friends of the true God.*"

Every fresh march of knowledge brings with it some phase of what men call atheism. But the sceptics of one age are not seldom found to be the most devout religionists of the next. Christ himself was an atheist and a free-thinker to the Pharisee. The disturbance of an inherited belief can never, I should suppose, be an agreeable experience to any one. And yet—as Mr. Mill, I think, once said—the history of religion, like the history of science, has been the history of exhausted error. In every age of progress the revision of the traditionary creeds has been forced upon men by those advances in life and knowledge with which received traditions are unable at first to reconcile themselves. After a time, however, the traditional restrictions have been broken through, corruptions have been purged away, and, as a final result, the revision of theological belief, which at first could only be regarded with apprehension and fear, comes finally to be accepted with thankfulness and hope, as the necessary displacement of old ideas is seen to result in intrinsically deeper and wider and more real conceptions of the divine ways.

Now there is no denying that we are passing through such an age of revision at the present time. On all sides we see signs of change and adjustment. A new world, both of action and thought, has opened before us. New acquisitions of physical knowledge are daily upsetting old ideas. A general process of overhauling and testing has set in. Antiquated and worn-out doctrines are gradually being eliminated. Old religions, old philosophies, old political systems, are, as the phrase goes, "*on their trial.*" The elementary conditions of life have to be reconsidered. From various points of view, the methods of adjusting these conditions to the necessities of modern civilization have to be undertaken. Lessons derived from the experience of the past must be applied to the new and developing conditions of the future. In a word, a conscious development in social and political conditions has taken the place of an

unconscious evolution. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God . . . in hope to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

It is because those who are the accredited teachers of Christianity in this place are deeply conscious of this transitional condition of much of the popular theology that they have organised this course of lectures. The subject of "Christ and Liberty," about which I am to speak to you to-night, should, it seems to me, for a special reason, have importance for any body of men who are interested in what are known as Secularists' doctrines.

There are few men who give any serious study to the social problems which of necessity must arise in a democratic state of society like that which we have to-day in England, in which the greatest inequality of condition is found in conjunction with the widest distribution of political power, who do not come sooner or later to see that the solution of the social problems must either precede, or at least coincide with the religious, and that consequently no religion, much less any Church, is likely to make much way with the popular classes which does not place social reform among the most prominent and most important of the religious doctrines which is its mission to preach.

Now it is just here, I think, that the strength of the system of Secularism lies, and I may also say of the system of Positivism, for although that philosophy has not as yet made much progress among the people, it is one, both by its doctrine and by its method, so eminently calculated to do so, when once it has been assimilated by some of the more intelligent of the popular leaders, that I feel sure we are destined to see the social philosophy of Auguste Comte exercising in the future a very marked influence over the course of democratic thought in England, unless indeed, as I for one most cordially hope, the Church of Christ should in the meantime succeed in absorbing what is after all in its main features but a restatement of the Christian doctrine of social duty.

Now it is a continual contention, always implied if not openly expressed, on the part of Secularists, that the social well-being of the people, the upward movement of the non-propertied or labour classes to material welfare, which they regard, and rightly regard, as the most important element of human progress, is continually being obstructed by con-

ceptions of political subserviency and passive obedience to despotic authority, which are directly traceable to Christian doctrine.

It becomes important, therefore, to examine how far such a contention as this is true.

Let us begin, then, at the beginning. You will readily see that it is necessary that we should do so, if we are to avoid that far too common controversial injustice of mistaking the Christianity of Christians for the Christianity of Christ, which is very often quite a different thing.

To my mind, it is one of the most curious instances of the irony of history, that Christianity, against which few accusations have been so often brought as that of fostering a spirit of narrow legalism and clerical assumption of infallibility, should itself have arisen out of a revolt from the clerical and dogmatic spirit in religion. Certainly few things stand out more prominently in the life of Christ than this—that almost from the first He was at open feud with the religious authorities of His day. He, the mildest and gentlest of men, who had a good word for even the publican and the prostitute, had nothing but denunciation and hostility for the Scribes and Pharisees. In language which is certainly not wanting in energy He denounced this all-powerful order as traitors to the cause of human well-being, and poisoners of the wells of the national life. "They took away the key of knowledge from the people, neither entering themselves into the realm of spirit, nor suffering others to do so. They bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, whilst they themselves were not willing to touch them with one of their fingers." His words finally culminated in such a fiery and bitter denunciation of their hypocrisy and bigotry as drove them to the "necessity," as such men would term it, of putting Him to death.

The political attitude of Christ in this connection has been compared to that of the Roman Gracchi. "As they assailed a close and selfish ruling order by marshalling the people against it, and assuming that peculiar position of authorized agitators which the Roman constitution offered in the tribunate, so did Christ assail the order of legalists." His attitude was in fact that of one of the old prophets of His country. The Jewish prophets have been spoken of by Dean Milman as "the constitutional patriots of the Jewish state." They were in fact the champions of popular liberty

and popular progress, at a time when those virtues met with little regard from either priests or kings. They furnished, as Mr. Mill has shown, that antagonistic element in the national life—the element, that is to say, of free and open discussion—without which it is possible indeed to have order and industry, but not possible to have either improvement or progress.

Now this office, though for some centuries it had been in abeyance, the Jews by no means regarded as being abolished. The reign of the prophets they believed would begin again. And it did begin again in the person of John the Baptist. "For all men," we read,—and the popular plebiscite was one which not even the dominant Pharisaic order dared to disparage,—“all men counted John to be a prophet.” To his authority Christ succeeded. Those words which He quoted from the great statesman prophet of his country, when, at the commencement of His public ministry, He stood up for the first time in the synagogue of Nazareth to address the people, show clearly enough how He had appreciated the popular conception of the prophetic office as the champion of freedom and liberty :—

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because He anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor :
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Nor was this attitude of Christ contradicted by any of His subsequent teaching. Look, for example, at that characteristic watchword so to speak of His message. We are so familiar with the phrase, “Kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven,” that we miss much of the meaning it must have had to those upon whose ears it first fell. If we were to translate it into the political phraseology of our own day, I suppose there is no word which would more precisely express the meaning of the Jewish phrase “Kingdom of heaven,” than the word “the Revolution,” in the sense in which the modern French political philosopher would use it. Certainly much of the New Testament only becomes intelligible when we recognize how intense was the passionate “hope of the redemption of Israel” in the popular heart. Christ and His Apostles were, in fact, surrounded by everything which could tempt human reformers to enter on revolutionary courses ; the nation was grievously oppressed

and shamefully degraded, the rulers and princes of Judæa were sensual and cruel tyrants, and their tyranny was supported by a central tyranny equally cruel and sensual. Injustice in the form of Pilate sat on the judgment seat. A foreign soldiery filled the land, "doing violence," "accusing men falsely," "not content with their wages." "So oppressive was the fiscal system, that the name of the collector of taxes was a by-word of loathing and shame; the distress of the people was such that multitudes were ready to follow a teacher into the wilderness, not for the sake of his words, but for the sake of a little bread; and for this oppression there was no appeal to remorse in the breast of the oppressor, or to the tribunal of a civilized world. There seemed no hope but in patriotic arms. Nor was the nation incapable of wielding them. The spirit of Gideon and Judas Maccabæus glowed in it still. It cherished the constant hope of a deliverer."

And the Deliverer came; a radical revolution did take place; an immense transformation of society was brought about. The popular ideal was realized, though not according to the popular idea. The Sermon on the Mount, although it must have seemed little short of mockery to those whose passionate enthusiasm for the redemption of Israel centred in the expectation of a militant Messiah, did in reality contain the popular charter of the world's liberties, did inaugurate as vast a revolution as the world has ever known. To ascribe the heroic character to those citizens of the new kingdom who were not proud and rich, valiant and strong, but meek-hearted, poor in spirit, peace-makers, childlike, innocent, simple, may have come as a chilling disappointment to the popular hopes of His day; yet beneath those Beatitudes of the new kingdom Christ had placed a principle, which has proved itself not only the most powerful solvent of ancient civilization, but also the great motive force in the progressive social order of the present.

Let us look at the matter a little closer. What do we exactly understand by this word "liberty"? Wilhelm von Humbolt long ago defined freedom as a man's right to do whatever he thought proper, so long as he did not thereby interfere with the equal rights of his neighbours. And similarly Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his work on Social Statics, has thus stated the principle of liberty, or the law, as he terms it, of right social relationship:—"Every man has freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not

the equal freedom of any other man." And the steps of the argument by which he reaches that conclusion he himself summarises thus,—“God wills man’s happiness. Man’s happiness can only be produced by the exercise of his faculties. Then God wills that he should exercise his faculties. But to exercise his faculties, he must have liberty to do all that his faculties naturally impel him to do. Then God intends that he should have that liberty. Therefore he has a *right* to that liberty. This, however, is not the right of one but of all. All are endowed with faculties, all are bound to fulfil the Divine will by exercising them. All therefore must be free to do those things in which the exercise of them consists. That is, all must have rights to liberty of action. Hence there arises necessarily a limitation. For if men have like claims to that freedom which is needful for the exercise of their faculties, then must the freedom of each be bounded by the similar freedom of all. . . . Wherefore,” concludes Mr. Spencer, “we arrive at the general proposition, that every man may claim the fullest liberty to exercise his faculties compatible with the possession of like liberty by every other man.”

Such is the abstract argument for human liberty as enunciated by the greatest social philosopher of the present day. I need not, however, remind you that the achievement of our liberties has not been left to the accident of a philosophical inquiry. Had we been obliged to trust to abstract considerations, such as those I have quoted, to restrain the undue use of the despotic faculties, I fear we should still, in all probability, have been waiting in vain for Magna Carta.

It is the contention, however, of those who accept the Christian philosophy of history as the true one, that the struggle for liberty, in its various forms, which has in effect been the subject of the civil history of modern Europe since the time of Christ, is directly to be traced to the Christian doctrine of the intrinsic value of the human soul as such. That, it may be said, is a spiritual idea. True; but it is a spiritual idea which easily bears translation into a political one. “The consciousness of freedom,” says the German philosopher Hegel, “arose first in religion, in the inmost region of spirit. It is the freedom of spirit which constitutes its essence. . . . Freedom first arose among the Greeks; but they and the Romans likewise knew only that *some* men were free, not man as such. Even Plato and Aristotle

knew not this. . . . That was an idea which came into the world through Christianity, which recognized that the individual as such had an infinite worth."

To trace out historically the development of this principle would evidently be far beyond the limits of our present opportunity, for it would be to tell the history, not only of Christianity, but of modern civilization. The very briefest recollection, however, of some of the prominent facts of social development will be sufficient to remind us how potent an influence the Christian principle of equal freedom has exercised on that development.

Can any one doubt, for example, that the institution of slavery, upon which the civil order both of Greece and Rome was economically based, must have been definitely affected by the Christian doctrine of the inherent dignity of human nature, the witness, that is to say, in behalf of that which is essentially spiritual in all men, apart from all accidental distinctions of status or condition? It is true that the beneficial influence of the Christian Church upon slavery was very slow in its action,—slavery lasted in Europe down to the thirteenth century,—yet of the final result there surely could be no doubt, so long as both Christian slave and Christian freeman were equally taught, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God," "partakers of the divine nature;" "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. There is no distinction of Jew or Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, for in one Spirit were ye all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Similarly can we doubt that that conception of family life which in modern times we regard as the surest guarantee for the social happiness and moral progress of man would have been much more difficult of realization, had not that same Christian principle of equal freedom and individual responsibility succeeded in abolishing the despotism of paternal power, which was the dominant idea in the domestic life of Græco-Roman civilization? Or again, when we remember that social contention among the disciples, which Christ rebuked with the words—"The rulers of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but

he that is greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve," does there seem anything but what is most consonant with His spirit and with the genius of His religion, in the ready adaptation of the democratic municipal system of the proconsular towns of Asia Minor to the needs of primitive church organization, or in the adoption of the principle of merit, rather than the principle of birth (which Jewish analogy would have suggested), in the constitution of the Christian priesthood, or in the attempt to find a settlement of doctrine by popular appeal, which gave its origin to the earliest ecclesiastical councils? And although it cannot, of course, be denied that much of the early independence of Christian character died away as the democratic tendencies of primitive church polity gradually gave way before the monarchical idea, which was the hereditary instinct of Rome, yet what impartial student of history will deny, that in the crisis of the great change, when Roman civilization was declining before the repeated attacks of the Germanic races, it was the Christian Church which went forth once more "into that wilderness of the peoples," and found sympathetic response in Teutonic hearts for a new reading of their own characteristic virtues of liberty and loyalty, which has formed the basis of all that is most stable in the social order of the present?

In the history of our own country, do you forget that the political principle of representation, which is the radical doctrine of true democratic government,—and remember that the union of the democratic principle with representative government is an entirely modern fact, which throws out of court all interested appeals to the failure of the democratic principle in ancient history,—is directly to be traced to the action of the Christian Church in England. The Church in this country—I summarise the eloquent words in which the historian of our constitution has recounted the early debt of the English nation to the English Church—"has been not only the agency by which Christianity was brought to a heathen people, a herald of spiritual blessings and glorious hope in another life; it has been not merely the tamer of cruel natures, the civilizer of the rude, the cultivator of the waste places, the educator, the guide, and the protector, whose guardianship was the only safeguard of the woman, the child, and the slave, against the tyranny of their lord and master. The Church has been this in many other countries besides Britain, but here it has been

much more. The unity of the Church in England was the pattern of the unity of the State; the cohesion of the Church was for ages the substitute for the cohesion which the divided nation was unable otherwise to realize. Strong in its own conformation, it was more than a match for the despotic rule of the early kings, and was the guardian of liberties as well as the defence of the oppressed. It was to an extraordinary degree a national Church—national in its comprehensiveness as well as its exclusiveness. Englishmen were in their lay aspect Mercians or West-Saxons; only in their ecclesiastical relations could they feel themselves fellow-countrymen and fellow-subjects. . . . The ecclesiastical and the national spirit thus growing into one another supplied something, at least, of that strong passive power which the Norman despotism was unable to break. The churches were schools and nurseries of patriots, depositories of old traditional glories, and the refuge of the persecuted. The English clergy supplied the basis of the strength of Anselm, when the Norman bishops sided with the king. They trained the English people for the time when the kings should court their support and purchase their adherence by the restoration of liberties that would otherwise have been forgotten. The unity of the Church was, in the early period, the only working unity; and its liberty, in the evil days that followed, the only form in which the traditions of the ancient freedom lingered. It was again to be the tie between the conquered and the conquerors; to give to the oppressed a hold on the conscience of the despot; to win new liberties, and revive the old; to incite Norman and Englishmen in the resistance to tyrants; and educate the growing nation for its distant destiny as the teacher and herald of freedom to all the world.”*

Nor, again, are you in this town, I suppose, likely to forget that it was at Northampton, in the year 1214, that Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, overtook King John in his futile march against the north-country barons, and endeavoured to persuade him of the justice of those demands for political liberty and self-government which six months later were embodied, under his leadership, in the great charter of liberties signed at Runnymede. And if you remember this, you ought not in justice surely to forget that it was an English churchman who organised

* Stubbs' "Constitutional History," vol. i., p. 245.

that great national movement for freedom which culminated in the signing of Magna Carta, refusing to separate the liberty of the Church from the liberty of the nation, but upholding that "the cause of the people was alone worthy to be considered (I use his own phrase) as the cause of God and of the Holy Church."*

Nor ought we to forget the influence that was exerted by the Church of Christ in this country as a director of those new forces by which society has gradually been reconstituted on an industrial rather than a military basis; how, for example, at that time in our history which is known as the Epoch of the Peasant Revolt, when the cultivation of the soil was passing into a new phase under feudal influences, and there seemed no security that the serf might not relapse once more into the condition of the slave, the Church interposed, and not only prevented any such backward tendency, but prepared the way for that complete emancipation of the serf which has resulted in his transformation into the free

* "In one of those remarkable essays by a great historian who has been carried away from us all too soon, it has been pointed out that the ancient character of the Archbishops of Canterbury was to be the tribunes of the people. He says that the palace at Lambeth was placed exactly opposite the ancient palace of the kings, so that the Archbishop of Canterbury might be able to speak to the stern barons, the strong courtiers, and sometimes tyrannous kings in the name of the people; that he should be able to represent the cause of the people in the very centre of the government. It was for this object that he had given to him his place and position in the realm, so that he might speak for the people and the poor. This has been the traditional policy and the character of the See of Canterbury. Exceptions there may have been, but that is the spirit which runs through the whole line; and we pray God that this may continue to the end. No people have been more loyal to the Throne than the Archbishops of Canterbury. They have gone down with the Throne; they have died for it, and this they have done for the people. Here I am sure you understand how it was they came to do so, because I see there is such a happy union between the ecclesiastical and civic dignitaries of this city. (Cheers.) It was intended when cathedral chapters and the great corporations were originally formed that they should stand side by side, as we, the mayor and myself, stand side by side to-day—(loud cheers)—and that there should be in all things brotherly love and mutual co-operation. The first remarkable charter of England's liberty was given by William the Conqueror to the city of London. It runs thus:—'From William the king, to William the bishop and Gosfrith the portreeve,'—that is the old title for mayor. He charges them with one thing—'I will that ye be worthy of all the law which ye had in the time of King Edward.' That is to say, he gave them no new liberties, but promised to preserve to them their past."—*Reply of Archbishop Benson to the Address of the Mayor and Citizens of Canterbury the day before his Enthronization.*

labourer of modern times; or how, at a later time, that same influence was exerted in fostering the growth of the early guilds and industrial corporations, which, whatever may have been their subsequent evil effects, were the necessary agents in the creation, at the epoch of the enfranchisement of towns, of that industrial property springing from labour which from that time has had a position in our social system, independent of and rivalling that territorial property whose origin and constitution is purely military.

Nor, to bring this far too rapid historical summary to a conclusion, is it necessary for me to remind you how that same Christian principle of individual freedom was the systematic organ of emancipation, alike in the two great transformations of authority which belong respectively to the 16th and the 18th centuries. The elevation of the human individual to freedom, in the one case under the dogma of the right of private judgment, and in the other under the declaration of the rights of man, was alike the truth to which the Protestant Reformation bore witness in the religious sphere, and the French Revolution in the civil.

In thus endeavouring to trace back to Christian principles the law of equal freedom, I cannot suppose that I shall have carried with me the convictions of all my hearers. Some of your objections, I trust, will find expression in the discussion which is to take place this evening. One possible objection, however, I will venture to anticipate in a few sentences before I close.

It may be said, "In claiming, as you have done, a Christian parentage for that principle of equal freedom, which in so many ways we must all recognize as the mother idea of modern civilization, have you not entirely forgotten those evil chapters of ecclesiastical history in which, as Macaulay said, 'the Church was the servile handmaid of monarchy and the steady enemy of public liberty'?" No; I have not forgotten them. It is only that I have also not forgotten those two cautions with which I set out,—

First, to distinguish always between the Christianity of the Church and the Christianity of Christ.

And, secondly, to acknowledge frankly that those who have been the most steadfast opponents of ecclesiastical Christianity have often been the truest exponents of the spirit of Christ.

While, therefore, I am not prepared to deny that the triumph of liberty has at times seemed to have been effected

contrary to the Church and contrary to the clergy, I *am* prepared to deny that it has ever been effected contrary to Christ. There are those here present, I know, who are not prepared to recognize in Him, as I do, the world's Redeemer, the Son of the Living God, the Divine Educator of humanity, who is ever leading the world on to new destinies, who, by His Spirit, is ever revealing new elements of social progress, new conceptions of social duty. I cannot, therefore, appeal to you as holding that faith. But I would ask you honestly to say, whether any of those who claim your allegiance as champions of liberty, liberators of thought, tribunes of the people, social reformers, have a higher claim to those titles than He who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate. For this I think I know, that unless you can accept Him as your Leader in the secular work of the world that now is, you will never accept Him as your Guide to any world that is to come. You will never realize Christ as the Son of God until you have realized Him as the Son of man.

It is on this ground, then, that the appeal must be made. And I do not hesitate to say that the Church which will not make its appeal on this ground is distinctly disloyal to its Master and its mission.

The Church of the Present, if it would prove itself to be what it claims to be, the Church of Christ, must learn to work out the lofty and sublime idea of which the power of the Church in the Middle Ages was the grand but false expression, and to rescue the truth which the Church of the Past perverted, by declaring to man that divine purpose by which, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," all things shall be "gathered together in Christ," whether politics or morals, whether art or poetry or science, "whether things which are in heaven or things which are in earth." It is for her to claim the kingdoms of this world as the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ; not as in mediæval days by making secular laws give way to the Church, but by bringing all laws under the control of the Christian spirit. It is for her to teach men that they are best co-operating with Christ's design of converting into an earthly reality that vision of a kingdom of heaven which He has revealed in their hearts, when they make secular pursuits a spiritual occupation. In a word, it is for her to declare that in that divine plan for the perfecting of the full stature of humanity, the law of life for the society as

well as for the individual, is the law of liberty and of progress, and that so profound and so wide-spread is the confederacy of the powers of good, that no failure, and no series of failures, can ever leave uncertain the final supremacy of Christ over all human life.

And if this is the duty of the Church in face of those unsolved problems of society and of religion, to which, as I at least believe, Christianity still holds the key, what is your duty, working men of Northampton, who do not, so some people tells us, hold this faith. You may not perhaps grant me the right to tell you that, but this at least I think you will let me say to you: Have nothing to do with any theology which tells you of a God who has gifted His creatures with lofty faculties and powers, chiefly that they may be uncultivated and undeveloped. Have nothing to do with any religion which fails to explain to you your own lives, or to direct your own practice in this year 1882, however well it may have been adapted to the lives and practices of men living in the year 82. Have nothing to do with any Church which does not have some word to say about God's righteous government of this present world, as well as of the world to come. But at the same time, working men, do not conclude that a theology which recognises a righteous and fatherly Will as the ground of the universe must be false because there are theologians who appear to consider that the devil, and not God, rules the world. Do not conclude that a religion which professes a spirit of self-sacrifice as its central doctrine, and a spirit of liberty, brotherhood, and fellowship as its most prominent characteristics, is necessarily valueless, because the so-called religious world is too often self-righteous rather than loving, narrow and exclusive rather than all-embracing and liberal. Do not conclude that a Church, which in intention at least is a "Holy Commune," whose watchword is not "the accumulation of wealth through self-interest and competition, but human progress and well-being, through self-sacrifice and association," must be unfit for the present age, because there have been Churchmen who have loved rank and wealth, and have cared more for the value of their livings than the lives of their followers, or because the enemies of freedom and light have sometimes found the clergy ready to lend "sanction to their own bad causes, and to dress up obscurantism and servility in preachers' phrases and imaginary Bible precedents."

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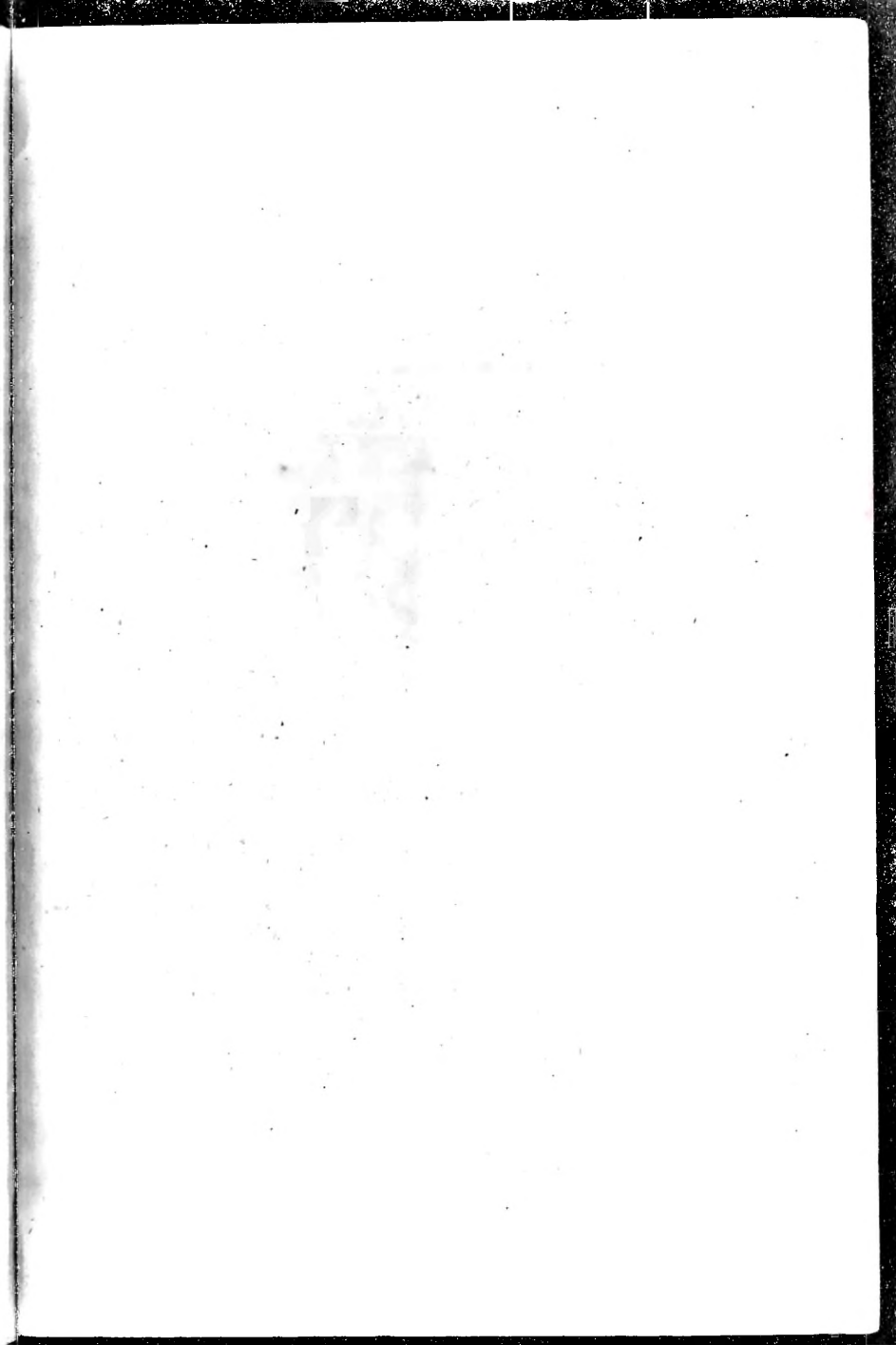
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