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## Christianity and the Class Struggle



CHRISTIANITY  
AND THE  
CLASS STRUGGLE

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Dedicated to

W. H. J.

H. S.

H. Z.

few scattered expressions on our place in the social struggle; we have no body of social literature to which we can point; the few small organized labor groups are compelled to fight for their very existence.

It seems very strange indeed that many Christians, also of supposedly Reformed hue, who are all aglow for Missions and full of zeal for Christian Education and Christian Mercy, seem to realize absolutely nothing of the implications of their religion in the social realm. Perhaps it is too much to expect of the average Christian that he shall think his religion through in all directions. We leaders have not done much to guide them in that respect, either. At any rate, there is a gap there in our present setup, as anyone can see. And the world today is in a sorry mess, and the application of Christian principles to the social problems is sorely needed!

A number of our studious young people, impressed with the beauty and the urgency of our Calvinistic system of thought and its application along the whole line of human activity, have noticed this gap. They felt that this was a serious situation. They looked for guidance in making explicit and vocal the implications of our Faith for the social structure. They turned to the great Dr. Abraham Kuyper, that mighty exponent of Calvinism for our modern day, and found in him some very fundamental material. In 1891 Kuyper opened the First Christian Social Congress with an address on "The Christian Religion and the Social Question," in which he drew some broad lines for Christian action in the social sphere. This address is now offered to us in a good translation by the group of young people referred to above. They have not appended any thoughts of their own; they are just letting Kuyper speak to us today. And through Kuyper we are confronted with the thoughts of Scripture on this urgent question of today.

We cannot help thinking that we Calvinists in America, if we intend to make an earnest effort to apply our

## Thoughts on the Publication of this Volume

The question of how human beings are to live together in the proper use of the goods the Creator placed in this world, has always been and is today one of greatest importance. Men must eat and be clothed and protected against the elements and develop their lives. They must work and trade and co-operate. How this is to be done is a matter of perennial interest and constant struggle.

Experience indicates that men continually tend to divide into two camps, of a minority controlling most of the goods and of a majority having little or nothing, and depending on the first. Incessantly this leads to ill feeling, conflicts, upheavals, misery, and distress.

Christianity teaches that mankind is really one family, made from one blood and created in the image of God, that all should work together to satisfy common needs, in common obedience to the ordinances of Him who created all and controls all. This provides the only acceptable basis on which social problems can be really solved.

That is in essence also the social philosophy of us Calvinists in America.

In practical life we have thus far, generally speaking, done very little with it. We have scarcely gone beyond the talking stage and today we don't even talk about it very much. We thank God for a fairly strong church life; we are rapidly extending our system of Christian Education; our institutions of mercy have made long strides ahead; in the use of the press for Christian truth we have perhaps a good beginning. In the political sphere we are doing almost nothing; in the matter of social justice we are not doing much better. We have a



principles also in the social sphere, will have to start again from the bottom up. We are as yet pretty much at sea as to just how we are to proceed. We are baffled by many practical questions to which we have no answer. In seeking such answers Kuyper can help us. The thoughts expressed in this book were first set forth almost sixty years ago, but they are today as fundamental as they were at that time. Many of the practical questions which Kuyper faced are with us now.

To those who produced this volume goes our hearty appreciation for their interest in this vital matter and their willingness to give of their time and talent to make this available to us.

May it be widely read and earnestly studied. May the assimilation of it produce an urgent consciousness of our calling, our God-given duty, to apply the truth of God also in the social sphere. May it blossom forth in a strong movement to fling out the banner of our Lord also in that domain of life. For, also in the sphere of labor and industry, "of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things."

*"To Him be the glory forever. Amen."*

JOHN GRITTER  
Aylmer, Ontario  
Canada



## Preface

Abraham Kuyper, perhaps the greatest modern Calvinist, and a man who dominated the history of the Netherlands during his long career, has been too long buried in oblivion as far as the English-speaking peoples are concerned. Ernst Troeltsch, in his monumental *Social Thought of the Christian Churches*, makes Kuyper a key figure in modern Calvinistic thought; yet he is not even mentioned in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Kuyper was roughly contemporary with William Jennings Bryan, and indeed there are some superficial similarities. Kuyper, too, was a man with a golden tongue; Kuyper, too, was the "great commoner" in Dutch politics, the man of the "kleine luyden", the common people. But Kuyper was much more. As a theologian, his development of Calvin's doctrine of *gratia universalis* ("gemeene gratie", common grace) is of great importance. As a church leader, he led the great exodus from the largely formalized and modernized Dutch Reformed church to form the present Gereformeerde church in the Netherlands—perhaps the most vital body of orthodox Calvinists in the world today. As an educator, he led the fight for a school system free of state control, and founded the Free University in Amsterdam, still a stronghold of Calvinist thought. As a politician, he made Groen van Prinsterer's Antirevolutionary faction into a mass party, which in coalition with the Catholics broke the Liberal ascendancy, made Kuyper premier (1901-1905), and dominated Dutch politics until the Second World War. As a political theorist, he expanded and developed Calvinist political theory into an impressive system. As a social thinker, he worked all his life to better the lot of the common man, and attacked the Liberal bourgeoisie effectively and bitterly from the standpoint of a Calvinist corporatism—"sovereiniteit in eigen kring". The Catholic Von Ketteler is fairly well known; Kuyper, who did more along the lines of developing and applying a Christian social theory than Von Ketteler, should be better known.

To this end, this translation is directed. It is from *Het sociale Vraagstuk en de Christelijke Religie*, Amsterdam (Wormser), 1891. Kuyper's text has been kept in its entirety, but only the more important of his footnotes. The translation is literal rather than being a paraphrase of Kuyper's ideas. Kuyper's style has been kept as much as possible. Any translator must make a choice between elegance of diction and exactness of thought, though he tries to achieve both; and we have taken, when a choice was necessary, the latter. A brief bibliographical note: the only account of Kuyper's life and work worth noting in English is J. VanderKroef's account in *Church History* (December, 1948). The best biography in Dutch is that of Kasteel (Louvain, 1938).

DIRK JELLEMA



CHRISTIANITY  
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I

I think I shall be acting in accord with the wishes of you all if I immediately in this opening address conceive the task of this, our first Congress, as modestly as possible. Not for a moment should the idea take hold, either within or outside this gathering, that we intend to give in our own way an imitation of one of those impressive assemblies where specialists from every land of Europe gather to display the treasures of their knowledge or show off the glitter of their talent. It is an unfortunate result of state monopoly, which in our universities in this country continues to increase, that we as yet have not even produced specialists; none of us at this congress stands out as an expert in economics. And if my interpretation is correct, then you have girded yourselves not to cross swords here with the opposition in a public tourney, but rather to speak among ourselves as brothers united in the name of Jesus, and to discuss seriously this question: *what we as confessors of the Christ should do about the social needs of our time.*

Those in other lands who profess Jesus have also increasingly realized the necessity for such action. Re-

call the appearance of the Christian Workers Party in the circle around Count von Walderssee in Berlin; the Christian Socialists, who, inspired by Maurice and Kingsley, have united in one group under Rev. Headlam in London; the Christian Society for Social Economy of Switzerland, organized two years ago at Geneva. And, speaking now of Christianity in the broadest sense, recall what has been done towards a solution of the social question on the Catholic side by such able thinkers as Le Play and Von Ketteler, by a whole series of significant congresses in Germany, France and Belgium; and recently by Leo XIII in his encyclical.<sup>1</sup> So our own debut does not come too *early*, but too *late*, and we lag behind others when we could have preceded them. Is it not true that, even before a single voice had been heard among Christians outside the Netherlands, Bilderdijk, Da Costa and Groen van Prinsterer had already called our attention to the social need? Bilderdijk as early as 1825 addressed the lower classes:

You sigh and languish in poverty and decay

While luxury defiantly feasts on the *fruit of your own hands*

And in the face of this need, he pokes fun of the false theory of charity, when he introduces the traditional Liberalism as saying:

Yes, the land collapses from the poor

Why not deport them? Then we would be relieved of them

It is a bunch of rascals that we pity

Who does not find even *honest* poverty already too expensive?

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<sup>1</sup> It must be admitted to our shame, that the Roman Catholics are far ahead of us in their study of the social question. Indeed, very far ahead . . . The action of the Roman Catholics should spur us to show more dynamism . . . [The Encyclical of Leo XIII] gives the principles which are common to all Christians, and which we share with our Roman Catholic compatriots.

They hunger, it's true, *they find no work*  
But how can they be of any use, when there is no  
work for them?

By contrast Bilderdijk, laying his finger on the sore  
spot, calls Christians to penitence in the cutting begin-  
ning of his caustic *Muckrakings*:

Whenever a people is destined to perish in sin  
It's in *the church* that the soul-leprosy begins

Fifteen years later Da Costa, in his *Song of 1840*,  
lashed out just as relentlessly at the Plutocracy, the  
"rule of money" as he called it, and pictured for us the  
social need which was then approaching and now is here,  
in this contrast:

Here luxury, grown beyond itself, externally healthy  
And glittering with youth, but inwardly scorched  
And sap-destroying like a cancer, and, as it were,  
*Destroying the balance* between the classes . . . *There*  
Muttering at the work that gives no bread: yokes  
Thrown on the neck of the free, where the walls  
Burn with heat day and night, and an eternal smoke  
Blackens the cities, and the fumes suffocate the soul.

So prophesied Da Costa, not parroting Socialism, but  
Calling his Internationale at London in 1864 a quarter of  
a century before Karl Marx. And it was within half  
of the intervening time, in 1853, that Groen van  
Prinsterer frightened the dignified officials in the Bin-  
nenhof with his brusque declaration: "With reference  
to the socialist ideas, one should take note of the really  
*pitiful position* of the lower classes; and especially of  
the harm which the higher classes, through their *moral*  
*corruption* and *false science*, have brought about among  
the people." He declared that in socialism, "there is a  
measure of truth mingled with error, which gives it  
its power"; he recognized that "one should also attempt  
improvement of *material* conditions, the unjustness of  
which redoubles the power of the socialist error"; and

he called upon his fellow Christians to extinguish the fire when he wrote, "socialism finds its source in the French Revolution," and hence, even as the Revolution itself, "is conquerable only by Christianity."<sup>2</sup>

We have thus been placed in the rear guard. And that not only through the leaders given us by God, but as strongly by the Socialists themselves, who constantly appeal to Christ in support of their Utopias; who continually hold before us serious mottoes from the Holy Word; indeed, they have so strongly felt the bond between the Socialist need and the Christian religion that they have not hesitated to present Christ Himself as the great prophet of Socialism, and to cry out: "there can be no talk of a failure of the Christian liberation; there

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<sup>2</sup> Groen warned the Chamber in 1850 (June 18): "It is the misfortune of our age that men isolate democracy. It will do us no good to give power to the middle classes. They too are a *new aristocracy* and a new privileged class, and it will only be a change." That for the rest Groen expected improvement only from a better *organization* of society is clear from the following: "Probably the worst evil is *pauperism*. Poverty, no work; the relation between the higher and lower classes destroyed; no relation recognized except that of work and pay; proletariat and capitalist. What will develop from this? That is uncertain; but it is not uncertain what this has developed from. It grew out of *freedom* and *equality* in the revolutionary sense. I shall give only one example. As soon as people took up this slogan, corporative organizations and guilds had to fall. Free competition was desired; no hindrance of individual artistic sense and industry; no hateful monopoly of persons or of organizations; then the development of individual industry and commerce would guarantee a better future. The future which men foresaw is here, and should it be called better? I am here in agreement with the leaders of the contemporary revolution. It is this freedom, this unchecked competition, this removal of as much as possible of the natural relation between foreman and workman, which is tearing away the social bonds; it is this which ends in tyranny of the rich and rule by the bankers; which takes away regular support from the craftsman, divides society into two hostile camps, calls into existence numberless crowds of poor, and prepares the way for the attack of the have-nots on the halves; and in the eyes of many, excuses and almost justifies this attack. It has brought Europe into a situation dreary and somber enough to cause many to call out in terror: is there no way to revive, in modified form, the corporative life which men with their revolutionary iconoclasm have so recklessly crushed?"



lies only two milleniums between the beginning and the conclusion of the work undertaken by Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

A liberal of the old school, Adolphe Naquet, is consequently uneasy lest it be precisely Socialism which prepares new triumphs for Christianity, and reproaches the Socialist exactly for furthering the cause of religion, despite his hatred for it. “*You do the work of religion,*” he exclaims, “when you put in the foreground exactly those problems in whose solution Christianity is so closely involved.” This is an unintentional but nevertheless meaningful tribute to the influence which Christianity can exercise on the solution of the social problem. It is an influence which comes out more beautifully in these rich words of Fichte: “Christianity conceals in its womb a much greater treasure of rejuvenation than you surmise. Until now it has exerted its power only on *the individual* and only indirectly on the state. But anyone who, as believer or as unbeliever, has been able to spy out its secret dynamic, must grant that Christianity can exert a wonderful *organizing* power on society also; and not till *this* power breaks through will the religion of the cross shine before the whole world in all the depths of its conception and in all the wealth of the blessings which it brings.”

Enough, and more than enough, has already been cited, my friends, to arouse within you the conviction that the direct relation between the social question and the Christian religion is simply *undeniable*. One even feels some shame that the voice of conscience has not thus far spoken more loudly within us, or at least that it did not stir us to earlier action. It becomes a matter of guilt and moves us to humiliation that when so crying a need became apparent, we did not long since act in the

<sup>3</sup> This constant appeal of the Socialists to Christ must neither be under-estimated nor valued too highly. A double motive is at work here. First, a means of propaganda, for men know how easily they win influence as long as they appeal to Scripture. Also, that of a mistaken conviction. Some Socialists are indeed impressed by the strong contrast between the way in which Christ saw the social need and the attitude towards that need adopted through long years by many Christians . . . .

name of Jesus. And it is in this spirit of self-criticism, and not at all in a tone of haughtiness that I understand your probable reproachful question whether such an obvious truth needs demonstration in a gathering such as this, and whether standing before the awful need of these times, a need which at every point is related to the very essence of *error* and *sin*, our eye should be allowed, or should be able, to turn away from the *Christus Consolator*, who assuredly also addresses to our violently disturbed century the persistent call of His divine compassion: *Come to me*, richest century that ever was, which is so deathly weary and heavy laden, and *I* shall give you rest.

On the *existence* of this relation I shall therefore waste no more words. Rather, recognition of this is indeed the presupposition of this congress. But what you do expect of me, and what I, depending on your charitable judgment, will at least *try* to furnish, is a laying bare of the fibres by which these two life-phenomena, the Christian religion and the social question, are intertwined. The conviction that such a relation exists is not enough. It must also take on form and shape for us. Only so can it speak to our consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

To that end I select as point of departure an antithesis which is plain to all of us. I mean the antithesis between *nature* as it exists independent of our will, and our

<sup>4</sup> The error which is frequently committed is this: that men associate the Christian religion only with the world of feeling. And undoubtedly even in this respect its significance for the social question is great, insofar as incredibly much depends on the state of feeling in rich and poor, rulers and subjects, and even in the public interpreters and spokesmen. He who can contribute even a little to improve the feeling does thereby an excellent work. But it is a mutilation of the Christian religion to confine its working to the area of emotional life. It professes not only Christ, but the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and therefore it has at the head of the Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth . . ." But in this there is also the explicit commitment that the Christian religion must also have and give a conviction regarding our relation to nature, authority, and fellow men; and also regarding human nature and its attributes. That is, a conviction regarding just those life-phenomena which together determine the social question.

human *art* which acts on this nature. For the whole social question is born of the relation between our human life and the material world which surrounds us. But now in that human life as well as in this material world, there is on the one hand a power which lies beyond our reach and which we commonly call *nature*, and on the other hand a power derived from a man's will which may be summarily designated as *art*. We with our own human nature are placed in a nature *around* us, not to leave that nature as it is, but with an urge and calling within us to work on nature through human art, to ennoble and perfect it. An example is the breeding of horses for the improvement of the strain; and so, too, the competent florist does not gather a bouquet of wild flowers, but he rather increases and refines the varieties through the mingling of seeds; so steam comes from water; and out of the dull stone the polished diamond; and so men lead the wild stream that breaks through the mountains into safer channels, to make its water serve for shipping and for irrigating their fields. Briefly, then, human art acts on every area of nature; not to destroy the life of nature, much less, mechanically to juxtapose another structure, but rather to unlock the power which lies concealed in nature; or, again, to regulate the wild power which springs from it. God so wills it. While yet in paradise man received the order "to preserve and cultivate" the material world. It was created — forgive me here the indispensable Germanism — to be "completely-perfected." Every creature, says our confession so beautifully, must serve man, so that man may serve his God. But from this it follows that this rule applies as inexorably to your own *human* life, both in its personal and its social aspects. It is renouncing your duty when you let your inner nature run its course unrestrained, and do not try to help ennoble it through the holy art of "watching, praying and struggling." It is shameful for fathers and mothers to let their children grow up naturally and not to improve on nature through the art of education. And so too, it is naught but primitive barbarism whenever

human society, without higher control, is left to the course of nature. And so political art, here taken in the higher sense, intervenes, so that out of this society a *community* may develop, and so that, further, this both in itself and in its relation to the material world, may be ennobled.

If in this process *no* mistake were made, if men did *not* fall into error, and egoism and crime did *not* meanwhile interfere, then this development of human society could always follow its course in peace, and uninterruptedly move forward to a progressively happier condition. But unfortunately the situation was not so simple. True, a certain instinct in almost every people has led to the recognition of a few indispensable bases for all human society, and in this area geniuses and heroic figures have from ancient times had many a happy intuition, but as soon as it came to more *developed* regulation for this so complex phenomenon which we call human society, action after action was misdirected, as much by those who in social life patterned usage and custom as by those who acted with magistral power; and in both instances the series of misdirected actions had a two-fold unchanging cause, error and sin. Error insofar as there was ignorance as to the essence of man and his social attributes, and ignorance equally as to the laws which govern on the one hand human association and on the other, the production, distribution and use of material goods; sin, insofar as greed and ambition disturbed or opposed the sound growth of human society, whether through force or through vicious custom and unjust law, and sometimes for centuries abetted a very *cancerous* development. And in time both this error and this sin joined forces to enthrone untruthful *principles*, which did violence to our human nature; and out of these false principles to build *systems* which licensed injustice and theoretically stamped as *normal* that which was actually opposed to the demands of life.

This reckless play with human society was carried on in all times and among all peoples; carried on by intellectuals and by the wealthy in private life; and soon, under their inspiration, carried on by the government in no less irresponsible fashion. For while it is perfectly true that the social question in the narrower sense comes up for debate only at scattered intervals, and that in consequence many are under the delusion that the intervention of the government in the social question is a novelty of our times, yet actually there has never been a government in any land of the world which did not in various ways dominate both the course of social life and its relations with material wealth. It did this through the various enactment of civil laws; through trade laws; and indirectly through its criminal law and penal code; and as far as concerns the relation to material wealth, more particularly through inheritance laws, through the system of taxation, through regulation of exports and imports, codes for purchase and rent, agrarian regulations, colonial rule, control of coinage, and much more. It has never been possible to speak of a wholly free and instinctive growth of society in any country with a high degree of national development. Human art has in many directions exploited the development of natural powers and relations. But although it must be gratefully admitted that this intervention of human direction has brought us, generally speaking, out of the condition of barbarism into a condition of orderly association; indeed, although it may and must be conceded that such a continuous development of society strengthens belief in a higher Providential rule, yet it cannot for a moment be doubted that this intervention, in many ways proceeding from *untrue* principles, has through all ages made *unsound* a state of affairs which could have been sound; has in many senses *poisoned* our mutual relationships; and has brought about nameless misery, whereas the goal of all

statesmanship should be the *happiness* and *honor* of a nation.<sup>5</sup>

The ineradicable inequality between men gave the stronger an advantage over the weaker, and as though an animal rather than a human society were involved, produced a world in which the fixed rule prevails that the stronger devours the weaker; and the stronger, almost without exception, have always known how to bend every usage and magistral ordinance so that the profit was theirs and the loss was for the weaker. Men did not literally eat each other like the cannibals, but the more powerful exploited the weaker by means of a weapon against which there was no defense. And whenever the magistrate did come forward as a servant of God to protect the weaker, the more powerful class of society soon knew how to exercise such an overpowering influence on the government that the governmental power which should have protected the weaker became an instrument against them. And this was not because the stronger class was more evil at heart than the weaker; for no sooner did a man from the lower class rise to the top than he in his turn took part just as harshly, and indeed more harshly, in the irreligious oppression of those who were members of his own former class. No, the cause lay in this, that men regarded humanity apart from its eternal destiny, did not honor it as created in the image of God, and did not reckon with the majesty of the Lord, who alone is

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<sup>5</sup> Only with this point of view does one understand the French Revolution simultaneously in its appalling necessity and in its deeply sinful character. Statesmanship had indeed gradually led the nations down impassable paths, and had done such violence to the nature of peoples that a reaction was inexorably necessary . . . . To that extent a terrible explosion was due at that time, and to that extent the French Revolution was indeed a righteous judgment of God on those who had misused the authority and power entrusted to them. But this in no way lessens the deeply sinful character of this French Revolution, insofar as, contrary to God's ordinances, it separated nature from history, and substituted the will of the *individual* for the will of the *Creator of nations*. It is this which stamps it as a movement opposed in principle to God and His Christ, which exactly for that reason while it brought a breathing spell, simultaneously brought the germ of a corruption which is now deadlier than the corruption the French revolted against in 1789.

able to hold in check, through His grace, a race sunk in sin. This unjust situation was already born in ancient times of which the Preacher so movingly complains (Ecc. 4:1): "So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of the oppressors there was power, *but they had no comforter.*"<sup>6</sup> It is a situation like that when Naboth was murdered so that Jezebel might add his acre to the royal park of Ahab; or, if you will, a state of affairs once and for all typified by our Lord in the parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus; and against which James hurls his apostolic ban when he writes:<sup>7</sup> "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

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<sup>6</sup> The fault of many a Bible reader and also of many a preacher is only that he reads or discusses such moving words as these without applying them directly to the reality of his own environment.

<sup>7</sup> James 5:1-4. If words as strong as these were not found in the Bible, and if anyone should dare pen them now on his own initiative, people would brand him as a crypto-socialist. For those who hope for money and who would build on the power of money, the Holy Scripture is a despairing book. The Holy Spirit who speaks in Scripture finds much gold and silver to be dangerous rather than desirable, and deems an inheritance of millions not even distantly to be compared with the inheritance which awaits us as saints. This is the witness of the Lord in His Word, therefore I may not represent it otherwise; but then too, let no one reproach me for it, but let him realize that his criticism directly attacks the Bible itself.





## II

Is it then conceivable that the Christian religion, when it went out into the world, should take *no* stand against a state of affairs so wrong? For everyone knows how social conditions, similar to and even worse than those which keep contemporary Europe and America in a state of tension, at that time prophesied the approaching fall of the Roman Empire; and how a genuinely Asiatic despotism was responsible for a system of extortion in almost every province against which oratorical heroes like Cicero frequently protested in vain. *Then* too the balance between the classes was lost: there was defiant luxury next to crying need; immense accumulations of capital and beggarly poverty concealed in the slums of Rome; and, necessarily following, there was corruption in government; sensuality rather than morality setting the tone of public opinion; and the masses, carried away by need and passion, ready at any time for rebellion, murder and plunder.

Our pagan Rome, then, even as laughing Greece, sank away into the morass of human misery:<sup>8</sup> but before it sank, there had been a light in Bethlehem, there had been heard a dying cry from Golgotha, through which a new

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<sup>8</sup> One cannot pay enough attention to the parallel between the social life which preceded the fall of the Roman state and the social injustices in which we ourselves live. Naturally, the life-forms were different then; but the contrast was the same; and if the press had already existed at that time, and if the newspapers had survived, journalists could almost copy whole sections from them. The moral props of that society were molded and rotted, even as now. The Roman, the civilization excelling in refinement, finally collapsed; and so, too, our Western civilization will eventually succumb, unless the Christian religion, which is now a vital power, intervenes to redeem it. But intrinsically the danger is no less now than then. And if one says that it was the Migrations which gave the deathblow to the Roman state, the question arises whether the growing power of Russia, and partly of the Chinese who lie beyond Russia, should mean nothing to us.

hope was awakened for all peoples. A new hope, not in the sense in which men today wish to degrade the Christ of God to a *social reformer*; *Savior of the World* was his higher and much richer title. But nevertheless the “blessedness” which He brought to humanity had a promise “not alone for the *future* but also for the *present* life” (I Tim. 4:8); though always so that man’s *eternal* welfare remained primary, so that soul and body might not be corrupted in hell. The worm that never dies, the wailing and gnashing of teeth in a fire that would never be extinguished—these were the nightmares which Jesus saw when He looked at poor humanity, and which gave Him no rest. The joy to which he called had to be the *eternal* joy of His Kingdom. There never was found in our Savior the cruelty of the Socialist who, for a bettering of the lot in this short span of time of our *temporal* existence, wildly and recklessly would cut off every prospect of a glory *that shall be eternal*.<sup>9</sup> Nor was revolution ever preached by Jesus or His apostles. We are to be subject to every power which is set over us, and the poor Lazarus shall have his revenge, not while he is living from the crumbs which fall from the rich man’s table, but when the rich man suffers in eternal pain and the poor Lazarus is comforted.

And if you ask then what Jesus did to bring rescue in the social need of *those* days, here is the answer. Since he knew that such defiant abuses arose from the evil roots of error and sin, he placed the *truth* over against this error, and He broke the power of sin by shedding His blood for this sin and pouring out *His Holy Spirit*

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<sup>9</sup> This can be explained only by the fact that the scholarly and cultured people began first with the undermining of the faith in a life after death, and then went on to destroy it. *Doubt* is no beginning for faith, and to speak of a “hope of immortality” is the same as a denial of the faith in an eternal existence, at least for the great mass of people. And so I retain this qualification of *cruel*. For although the Socialists themselves do not believe in eternal life, neither can they prove the opposite. And is it not cruel—take now an eternity, to make it concrete, of a thousand years—is it not cruel to tempt anyone to seek a happiness of, say 70 years, and let him repent for it by 900 years of torment? And what is a thousand years in comparison with eternity?

unto His own. Since both rich and poor had fallen apart because they had lost their point of union in God, He called both together back to their *Father* Who is in Heaven.<sup>10</sup> Since He saw how the idolizing of money had killed the nobility in the human heart, He held up the *Service of Mammon* to His followers as an object for their deep contempt. Since He understood the curse that lies in money, also for the man of great possessions, He adjured him to cease his accumulating of capital, and to gather not treasure on earth, where the moth and rust corrupt and thieves break in and steal, while He rejected the rich young man since he could not resolve to sell *all* his goods and give to the poor. In Jesus' heart there dwelt no hatred against the rich, but rather a deep sympathy for their pitiable state; for the service of Mammon is exceedingly difficult, and indeed sooner would a camel go through the eye of a needle than a rich man enter the kingdom of Heaven. Only when possession of money leads to usury and harshness is Jesus angry, and in a moving parable the man who would not release his debtor is delivered to the torturers and branded as a wicked servant who knows no pity.<sup>11</sup>

And yet Jesus works not only through moral motivation. He preaches through His *personal life*. When rich and poor stand opposed to each other, He never takes His place with the wealthier, but always stands with the poorer. He is born in a stable; and while foxes have holes and birds have nests, the Son of Man has nowhere

<sup>10</sup> That this is actually contained in the name of the Father is clear from Mal. 2:10, where the prophet asks in the name of the Lord, "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" This is also clearly asserted in the Lord's Prayer. In every Lord's Prayer the poor prays *for the rich* that God may give him his bread for that day, and the rich prays it for the poor. Nowhere in this prayer is there a *my* or an *I*; but always *we* and *us* . . . .

<sup>11</sup> This strong speech of Jesus receives too little attention and much too little preaching. In this saying there is no reproach against the rich, but rather pity and compassion towards them. For them, the struggle to convert themselves is so much more difficult than for the poor. So far as his eternal welfare is concerned, it is an advantage that a man is *not* rich . . . .

to lay His head. His apostles are to give no consideration to the accumulation of money. They are to go out without purse and without food. And while there is one among them who carried the purse, that one is Judas, the terrible man, who, led astray precisely by avariciousness, sold his soul to the devil.<sup>11a</sup> Powerful is the trait of pity, which is imprinted on every page of the Gospel where Jesus comes in contact with the suffering and oppressed. He does not thrust aside the unlearned masses, but draws them to Him. He would extinguish no wick that even barely smoulders. Whatever is sick is cured by Him. He does not hold back His hand from the touch of leprous flesh. When the multitude hunger, even though as yet they do not hunger for the bread of life, He breaks the loaf into many pieces and gives them an abundance of precious fish. Thus in Jesus a living *life practice* joins itself to theory.

His theory is set forth along the lines of the prayer of the writer of Proverbs (30:8): "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient to me." From this prayer the apostle deduces this practical lesson for the avaricious man (I Tim. 6:10): "Nothing hast thou brought into the world and so at your dying thou canst also carry nothing away. If then thou but hast food and raiment thou shouldst therewith be content. But if thou wilt be rich, thou wilt fall into temptation and the snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition; for *the love of money is a root of all evil*; thou, oh man of God, flee

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<sup>11a</sup> To be treasurer is always dangerous. From money as such there proceeds an ignoble influence on our heart; hence it is so unhealthy for a people when banking techniques and the stock exchange become dominant; and hence it is precisely for the man of high finance that the chance to learn to bow humbly before his God is so remote. This was already realized by Bilderdijk when he wrote Da Costa, "That those who are by profession merchants and gamblers have no Christianity is self-explanatory."

these things.’<sup>12</sup> But His is a theory from which there follows, by contrast, for the poor man, that he should not grumble, nor let himself be led to bitterness, and not say in his anxiety, “what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithall shall we be clothed? For all these things the Gentiles seek.” And then follows what is so flatly turned about when our Socialists preach it: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.” A theory, then, which simultaneously for both sides, rich and poor, cuts the root of sin in our human heart.<sup>13</sup>

But He also follows up the *theory* with the heart-winning *practice* of devotedness, self-denial, even more of a divine pity which first drops every balsam on which it can lay hands into the wounds of suffering mankind, and then goes on to a voluntary slaughter for the need and the death of all, whether rich or poor, like the Lamb that is dumb before the shearer.

Such a presence, such a preaching, such a death, would already have exercised an influence for good in social relations. The overthrow of the idol of Mammon and the transplanting of the purpose of existence from earth to heaven must even by itself bring about a complete revo-

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<sup>12</sup> In our official translation this read: “Covetousness is a root of all evil. However, one may not today so read it, for, so read, one does not understand it and translates it erroneously. Nowadays covetousness is the sin of the miser, who hoards his gold and will not spend it. But in the seventeenth century, covetousness meant exactly what the Greek meant: the sinful *desire*, the *lust* for money. Today we would call this *greed* for money, or greediness. One must note this. There are today, alas, money wolves, among those who profess Christianity, who live luxuriously and then think: “I am certainly not covetous, and this *root of all evil* doesn’t apply to me.”

<sup>13</sup> Jesus flattered no one, neither rich nor poor, but put both in their place. Exactly on this account Jesus occupies so eminent a position. With our men of influence you generally find either scorn for the poor and flattery of the rich, or abuse for the rich and flattery for the poor. This is in conflict with the Christian religion. *Both* must be convicted of their sin. But this fact *remains*: that Scripture, when it corrects the poor, does so much more tenderly and gently; and in contrast, when it call the rich to account, uses much harsher words. And yet our poor also are falling away from their faith, if they build their hopes on all kinds of help from the state, and not singly on their Father who is in Heaven.

lution in the self-consciousness of the peoples. But Jesus did not stop with this. Jesus also *organized*. Did He not cause *His church* to go out among the nations; a church which was destined to triply influence the life of society? First, through the *ministry of the Word*, insofar as the Word constantly fought against greed for money, comforted the poor and oppressed, and in exchange for the suffering of the present time pointed to an endless glory. Then, second, through an organized *ministry of charity*, which in the name of the Lord, as being the single owner of all goods, demanded community of goods to this extent, that in the circle of believers no man or woman was to be permitted to suffer want or to be without the necessary apparel. And, third, by instituting the *equality of brotherhood* over against difference in rank and station, through abolishing all artificial demarcations between men, and by joining rich and poor in one holy food at the Lord's Supper, in symbol of the unity which bound them together not only as "children of men," but, more importantly, as those who have collapsed under the same guilt and have been saved by the same sacrifice in Christ.<sup>14</sup>

And indeed it is a fact that, as a direct consequence of the appearance of the Christ and of the extension of His church among the nations, society becomes markedly *different* from what it was in the pagan dispensation. The Roman society of that time was strikingly like what Jesus once called a "whited sepulchre which on the outside is beautiful, but inside full of dead bones," and that whited sepulchre crashed into ruins. And without wishing to say that the new social order which arose as though spontaneously from these ruins corresponded in any sense at all to the ideal cherished by Jesus, we may

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<sup>14</sup> . . . It is noteworthy how this organization was instituted so as not only to seek the eternal welfare of its followers, but also very definitely to remove social injustices. Exactly because of its divine simplicity, this organization brought forth a double fruit. From this it already follows that the Church forsakes its principle when it is only concerned with heaven and does not relieve earthly need, and it also follows that our diaconates will have to function very differently if they would truly honor Christ.

nevertheless gratefully acknowledge that *more tolerable* social conditions were born. Earthly welfare no longer weighed heaviest in public estimation; eternal well-being also had weight. Slavery was broken at its root, and underwent a moral criticism which demolished it as an institution. Men began to be concerned about the care of the poor and of orphans. The accumulation of too much capital was checked by the opposition to usury. Higher and lower classes approached each other on a footing of freer association. And while the contrast of surplus and scarcity was not erased, the antithesis between overweening luxury and pinching poverty was not so sharp. Man had not yet arrived at an ideal state, but at least he was started on a better path; and had not the Church gone astray from her simplicity and her *heavenly* ideal, the influence of the Christian religion on the state and on social relationships soon would have become *dominant*.

But, first of all, the Christianization of Europe went too quickly, and the folk-groups which had to be assimilated were altogether too massive. And the conversion of Constantine was for the Church the signal to wed itself with the power of the world, thereby cutting the nerve of her strength, and from then on there was in consequence an infiltration again of the *world* into the church. Instead of disciples who went out without purse or food, richly endowed princes of the church, housed in magnificent palaces; and as the heirs of the Galilean fisherman at the head of the Church, a series of popes displayed a royal pomp, and in a Julius II or a Leo X seemed more bent on paganizing Christianity than on Christianizing the life of the world.<sup>15</sup> So the salt lost its

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<sup>15</sup> In this connection it certainly may not be forgotten that the voluntary poverty of the monastics attempted to continue the original tradition; and to that extent this vow remains a well-intentioned protest against the secularization of the church. But, ignoring the question of whether these vows were actually permissible, the historical fact is unquestionable that the monasteries of that age progressively fictionalized the "vow of poverty" and also that their existence, even had they remained more true to their ideal, can never make amends for the immeasurable damage which the church itself

savour; and social corruption regained its ancient strength; a corruption which was checked, but not conquered, in the lands of the Reformation; and in that portion of Europe remaining Catholic, speedily spread in such fashion that finally royal absolutism and aristocratic pride evoked the unbearable social tension which issued in the French Revolution, revolution, therefore, which broke out on Catholic territory.

inflicted on social relationships by its seeking of worldly splendor. As long as the church was persecuted, it flourished, and it ennobled social relations. When it came into a position of honor under Constantine, it paid for it with its moral influence; and consequently could only end up throwing the weight of its power on that side of the balance exactly opposite that where Jesus placed it.



### III

This revolution, against which every one who professes Christ and thinks things through consistently *must* turn himself, produced its evil *not* so much in this, that it threw the Bourbons from the throne, *nor* in this, that it made the middle class superior in power to both the nobility and the churchmen, but rather through the complete change it produced on the sense and the philosophy of life of the nations. In the Christian religion lay the principle that the subjection of all to God creates the tie which joins authority and freedom — the French Revolution casts out the majesty of the Lord and tries to build up an artificial authority based on the free will of the individual; a thing much like a scaffold nailed together from loose planks and beams, which cracks and then falls at the first gale. The Christian religion taught us to understand life on earth as a subordinate part of an eternal existence — the French Revolution denied and opposed everything which fell outside the horizon of this earthly life. The Christian religion spoke of a lost paradise, a state of purity from which we fell, and for that reason called us to humility and conversion — the French Revolution saw in the state of nature the criterion of the normally human, incited us to pride, and put, in place of conversion, *liberalization* of man's spirit. Moreover, the Christian religion has, as fruit of divine pity, brought into the world the pity of a love springing from God — the French Revolution placed over against that the egoism of the passionate struggle for possession. And, to touch on the basic point, which lies at the heart of the social question, the Christian religion sought personal human dignity in the social relations of an organically associated society — the French Revolution destroyed that organic tissue, broke these social bonds, and finally, in its work of atomistic trifling, had nothing

left but the monotonous self-seeking individual, asserting his own self-sufficiency.<sup>16</sup>

Here, then, the die was cast. It could not happen otherwise than that out of this wrenching loose of everything that held our human life together in human dignity, there must of iron necessity be born first a deep-seated *social need*, then a widespread *Social-Democratic* movement, and finally for every people and nation a nettling *social problem*. I do not deny that the application of steam to machinery, the more rapid transportation between countries and the rapid increase in population contributed to the worsening of social relations;<sup>17</sup> but what I firmly hold to is this, that neither the social question which now holds two continents in feverish tension, nor the Social Democracy which now threatens the public order in Europe and America, would ever have assumed even distantly such ominous dimensions if the French Revolution had not brought about such a complete change in the consciousness of the nations, the classes, and the individual.<sup>18</sup>

In the first place, then, the French Revolution could not but become the cause of a deep-seated *social need*.

<sup>16</sup> This is the pivot on which the whole social question turns. The French Revolution, and so, too, present-day Liberalism, is anti-social, and the social need which now disturbs Europe is the evil fruit of the individualism which was enthroned with the French Revolution . . .

<sup>17</sup> It is just as one-sided to want to explain the social injustices almost exclusively by the machine and steam power as it is to shut one's eyes to these influences. Too much stress is commonly laid on the machine. If the moral life of society and personal faith had not been so defiantly undermined by the French Revolution, the class struggle would never have taken on such formidable proportions. The machine and steam power give us simply an antinomy. On the one hand, steam tools improved the lot of the worker and relieved him from drudgery, but on the other hand, the endless division of labor dulls the spirit, the machine lowers the value of hand labor, and the machine which can do the work of a hundred men sets ninety-nine breadless on the streets.

<sup>18</sup> This difference comes to strongest expression in the entirely different outlooks on life which one finds in the great cities and in rural areas; and exactly this explains why the lower rural classes, even though their condition is often more wretched than that of the lower urban classes, actually live much more happily and complain much less . . .

This followed from the double and intrinsic characteristic; first, to represent possession of *money* as the highest good, and second, in the struggle for money, to set every man against every other. It was not as if the hunt for money had an official place in its program, nor that its more inspired interpreters did not coax more noble tones from their harps, but the theory, the system, had to come to fruition in a kneeling before Mammon, simply because it cut off the horizon of an *eternal life*, impelled men to seek happiness on earth, and thus in *earthly* things, and thus created a sphere of lower drives, in which money was the standard of value, and everything was sacrificed for money. Now add the loosening of all social organization, followed by the proclamation of the mercantile gospel of "laissez faire," and you understand how the *struggle for life* was announced by the *struggle for money*, so that the law of the animal world, dog eat dog, became the basic law for every social relationship. The thirst and the chase for money, the holy apostle taught us, is the *root of all evil*; and as soon as this angry demon was unchained, at the turn of the century, no deliberation was sharp enough, no cunning sly enough, no deceit shameful enough in order, through superiority in knowledge, position, and basic capital, to acquire money and ever more money at the expense of the socially weaker.

This condition would have existed even if the opportunities at the beginning of this struggle had been *equal* for both parties; it became so in much worse degree now that the opportunities were so manifestly *unequal*. On the side of the *bourgeoisie*, there was experience and insight, ability and association, available money and available influence. On the other side was the rural population and the working class, bereft of all means of help, and forced to accept any condition, no matter how unjust,

through the constant necessity for food.<sup>19</sup> Even without prophetic gifts, the result of this struggle could readily be foreseen. It could not end otherwise than in the absorption of all calculable value by the larger and smaller capitalists, leaving for the lower strata of society only as much as appeared strictly necessary to maintain these instruments for nourishing capital — for in this system, that is all the workers are held to be. And so a social condition found previously only among the Jews — “at the one end of the social scale, millionaires; at the other, ant-poor drudges” — has gradually come to be that of all Europe, and that now without the palliatives of family ties and pity for the poverty-stricken fellow-believer which had a mollifying effect among our Jewish fellow-citizens.<sup>20</sup> And so in all of Europe a well-to-do bourgeoisie rules over an impoverished working class, which must steadily increase the wealth of the ruling class, and which is doomed, when it can be of no more use, to sink into the morass of the proletariat.

The social need is also worsened by the fact that the luxurious bourgeoisie makes a display of its luxury which creates a *false want* in the poorer classes, and through the undermining of that contentment which can be happy even with little, insofar as there was less for

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<sup>19</sup> This fact simply cannot be denied. Inevitably, capital absorbs more and more capital, until it meets a power of resistance which it cannot break. That resistance is, in the present context, the impossibility of the worker remaining alive. And, whatever one may say, Lasalle is perfectly correct in saying that this brazen law of iron necessity is the curse of our society. Yet this law is a spontaneous consequence of *laissez faire*, of absolutely free competition. Capital absorbs more capital in this way not because of any evil purpose, but simply because it does not meet with any other power of resistance short of the “to be or not to be” of the worker, the instrument of capital-nourishment.

<sup>20</sup> I willingly recognize the earnest efforts which Liberalism has made for the improvement of the lower class. But what did it offer them? Reading, writing and arithmetic! And what did it take away from them? Faith, the courage to live, moral dynamic. And what did it withhold from them? Trade schools and a share in capital.

the poor man to enjoy, fanned into flames his feverish seeking after pleasure.<sup>21</sup>

With equally strict necessity, that same system gave birth, in the second place, to Social Democracy, with its open proclamation of a coming revolution. The French Revolution had written on its blood-red banner not only "freedom" but also "equality and fraternity," and it was certainly not least the French farmers and the French workers who in the wars of the French Republic rushed to the battlefields, singing the Marseillaise, for the achievement of these precious ideals. But, alas, the "equality" of which men had dreamed turned out to be an even more shocking *inequality*; and instead of the promised "fraternity," they received a revised version of the fable of the wolf and the lamb. Would there not necessarily arise in the suffering class of society this very natural question: "With what right do men force on us this desperate poverty? We were taught that we were as good as anyone else; and also that the numerical minority must subject itself to the majority. Well, are we not the majority; the great majority; the overwhelming *masses*? And it is then not a violation of the principles of the French Revolution, and a scoffing at the holy slogan for which so much costly blood flowed at Paris, that a new aristocracy, an aristocracy of much lower calibre, an *aristocracy of money*, sets itself up, to lay down the law to us, to put its foot on our neck, and thus again to restore that same evil that was once overthrown by the almost unbelievable exertions of the Voltaires and Rousseaus and the heroes of the Bastille? Because of the very theory of the French Revolution, give us, us too, the voice in affairs which we have coming to us; then we will out-vote you, and supply a

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<sup>21</sup> In this respect, our store displays do more evil than people think. One stimulates thereby in various ways covetousness, and creates needs which if not eventually satisfied leave behind a feeling of bitter discontent. So also the excessive luxury of our schools did harm to a class which at home can never live on such a footing. Happiness is not an *absolute* but a *relative* concept. He who awakens needs which he is not able to satisfy lays a great responsibility on himself and commits an act of unmerciful cruelty.

wholly new social order, which will give the death blow to privilege forever, and then finally, finally, have for ourselves what your beautiful theory promised us but which you never granted us.”

Seriously, I cannot see that a person who is not an opponent but a supporter of the theory of the French Revolution can bring anything to bear on logically good grounds against this demand of Social Democracy. From that standpoint, I at least must agree with the Social Democrat. Once the false theory is granted, Social Democracy and it alone is consistent.<sup>22</sup> Nor do I see how Social Democracy can be condemned in the name of the French Revolution, as men try and do, by saying that herein at least it is in error, in that it openly preaches *revolution* and explains that, if necessary, it would not hold back from violence. Did the dignified gentlemen of the Girondins preach no violence? Did men treat Louis XVI as they did because of a principle that the social order might *not* be broken? Did the spiritual forefathers of our Liberals and Conservatives shrink from violence in the September murders? But the raising of these questions is lost in absurdity when the dull chant of the guillotine still awakens tragically disturbing echoes in our ears, and when we note how the recent centennial of the storming of the Bastille was celebrated by all of Liberal Europe as a most laudable and heroic feat. How can those who have themselves not hesitated to wade through streams of blood to reach their goal turn others over to the contempt of human feeling because they too, in a tight corner, would again erect the guillotine?

Naturally I myself shudder as I utter these words, and everything that the Christian religion teaches us is in horrified opposition to such words; but, comparing the

<sup>22</sup> It is not enough to say that the Social Democratic movement issues from Liberal theory; it must also be stressed that the Liberal makes a stop which is wholly arbitrary on a road that in accord with his own system has to be pursued. He is not therefore only related in spirit to the Social Democrat, but as over against the Social Democrat he is in the wrong, because of his arbitrariness, egoism and inconsistency.

Social Democrat to the Liberal, I neither can nor may say that he is in the wrong. It is using a double standard, it is hypocrisy and self-deception, for those who themselves were born of the Revolution, yes, from regicide, to count it mortal sin in their own spiritual children when they too dare *speak* of "forceful means."<sup>23</sup>

Next I come to a more attractive subject; for out of the results of the French Revolution there was also born a *third thing*, this time by *reaction*; I do not now mean the *social need* nor *Social Democracy*, but the *social question*. Not as if the social question now presents itself for the first time. Rather, it was the order of the day in ancient history, as much on the Euphrates as on the Tiber, as much in Sparta as in Athens; it rose again when the feudal system found acceptance, and after some centuries passed away; and, to give an example from our own Dutch history, it appeared twice in Java, when the Culture-System was introduced and then given up. Obviously whenever one uses the term *social question* one means thereby, in the most general sense, that serious doubt has arisen about the *soundness of the social structure in which we live*, that in consequence public opinion is divided as to the type of foundation on which a more appropriate and more liveable social order may be built.<sup>24</sup> In itself, therefore, the mere positing of the ques-

<sup>23</sup> It is indeed strange how many of the ordinary citizens in our land at one and the same time reject this advocacy of force on the part of the Social Democrats and yet praise the French Revolution so highly. It surely won't do to say that the September murders were merely *excesses*; for without *revolution* there would have been no Revolution in 1789. Every Liberal, even though one does not hold the excesses against him, thus actually takes responsibility for this revolutionary fruit of force. It amounts to this, that force is considered lawful when used to the advantage of the Liberals, but is detested the moment it tends to undermine their own power . . . .

<sup>24</sup> One should keep these essential marks of the social question well in mind. It is not implied that the structure must be *wholly* destroyed and an entirely new order set up in place of the old society. Rather, the right of history always remains valid, and there is no possibility of *complete* demolishing. Even though one imagines that he does it, he does not do it. History's influence is too powerful. But, on the other hand, one cannot say either that everything is finished if one only puts on a few dabs of paint and replaces a shingle here and there . . . .

tion in no way implies that it must be solved in the *socialistic* sense. The solution at which one arrives can also be a totally different one. Only this one thing is necessary if a social question is to exist for you: that you realize the *untenability* of the present situation, and that you realize this untenability to be one not of incidental causes, but one involving the very *basis* of our social association. For one who does *not* acknowledge this and who thinks that the evil can be exorcised through an increase in piety, through friendlier treatment or kinder charity, there exists possibly a religious question and possibly a philanthropic question, but not a *social* question.<sup>25</sup> This does not exist for you until you exercise an *architectonic* critique of human society itself and hence desire and think possible a different arrangement of the social structure.

As far as concerns this untenability of the social situation, born as this was of the individualism of the French Revolution, I think there can be little difference of opinion among Christians. As long as you still feel a human heart beat in you and the ideal of our holy Gospel inspire you, every better aspiration in you must execrate the actual state of affairs. Obviously, if there is no change, it will become increasingly *less* a heaven and increasingly more a hell on earth. Our society is losing touch with Christ; it lies bowed down in the dust before Mammon, and from the relentless goad of the most brutal egoism the very foundations of the earth stagger, as the Psalmist would complain (Ps. 82:5, 11:3). Every tie-beam and anchor of the social structure is disturbed; disorganization brings demoralization; and in the increasing wantonness of some contrasted with the steadily growing want of others, one detects something

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<sup>25</sup> We do not say here that the religious and philanthropic aspects of the problem are not important, but only state that one who sees no further and senses no more than this is not even in contact with the social question.



of the decomposition of a corpse rather than of the fresh bloom and muscular strength of sound health.<sup>26</sup>

No, it need *not* remain so; it *can* become better. And improvement undoubtedly lies — I do not shrink from the word — along the *socialistic* path, provided only you do not mean by socialistic the program of Social Democracy; but merely express this idea, in itself so beautiful, that our national society is, as Da Costa said, “not a heap of souls on a piece of ground,” but rather a God-willed *community*, a living, human organism. Not a mechanism put together from separate parts; not a mosaic, as Beets says, inlaid with pieces like a floor; but a *body* with members, subject to the law of life; that we are members of each other, and thus the eye cannot get along without the foot, nor the foot without the eye. It is this human, this scientific, this Christian truth, which by the French Revolution was most deeply misjudged, most stoutly denied, and most grievously assailed; and it is profoundly against the individualism of the French Revolution, born *from this denial*, that the whole movement of society in our times is turned.<sup>27</sup>

So, then, you err, if you think that present day socialism has its source in the confused Utopias of fanatics, or was born in the brains of hungering hotheads. Marlo, who in three thick volumes first proposed “organization of labor,” was an outstandingly able *professor*.

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<sup>26</sup> Rouge does not cure the dullness of your skin, but aggravates the sickliness of your complexion. And so it is also with our society. It lives in more refined forms; it clothes itself more stylishly but not more beautifully; it pretends to be glowing with youth. But he who is not a stranger in the boudoir of our social life, and sometimes sees this matron in her negligee, knows all too well how faded and her real appearance is.

<sup>27</sup> The beautiful word *social* should not be considered the private preserve of Social Democracy. Preeminently entitled to the term is Christianity. The beautiful picture which the holy apostle Paul gives us of the social character of the church (I Cor. 12:12-27, Eph. 4:16) is, making the necessary allowances, applicable also to our human society. Rightly viewed, it must even be professed that in the church of Christ the original organism of humanity, now purified, lives again.

Rodbertus, who before Karl Marx, pleaded for the social question itself, had been *Minister of the King of Prussia* in 1848. Karl Marx himself, the founder of the Internationale, belonged to the highest class, and married into a ministerial family.<sup>28</sup> Lasalle moved in the circles of "le haute monde." Henry George was an American of the best class. And Schaeffle, who goes so far as to make land, tools, and capital collective, was Minister of the Emperor of Austria in 1871. One could hardly restrain a Homeric laugh when one until very recently heard talk, in our own circles also, of Socialism as of something peculiar to the riff-raff. One would almost ask whether people read, whether people keep up to date. Or whether Quack spoke to the deaf when he introduced in such enthralling words the whole Socialist family to our cultured public. Indeed, whether people never even heard how already Plato, the greatest philosopher of Greece, wrote about and recommended a plan for a completely socialistic arrangement of the state. And even if such far-reaching ignorance would have been excusable twenty years ago, now, at any rate, it has certainly become obscurantistic politics. Now that the Socialist movement has already given shape to four different scientific schools; spontaneously and simultaneously in every land of Europe startled the contented bourgeoisie out of their rest; finds advocates in a whole series of universities; makes the presses groan under a constant stream of studies; it has gradually acquired such depth and extension, such increased significance, that a Bismark joined the movement, a Leo XIII sent out an encyclical about it, and even the emperor of Germany began his reign with a congress in the capital of Prussia to prepare for the *international* solution of the social

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<sup>28</sup> Marx was, like Marlo and Rodbertus, a man of outstanding learning and high scholarly sense. His critique of the Hegelian philosophy of law was masterful. His *Das Kapital* was primarily a scholarly study.

question.<sup>29</sup> No, truly, ostrich-politics is of no avail here; and it does no good when men scoff at *justice for all*, declare Domela Nieuwenhuis socially outcast, and let the stupid crowd sing of all the "socialists in a herring barrel." Socialism is in the air. The social wind, which can at any moment change to a storm, bulges the sails of the political ship. And it may safely be said that the social question has become *the* question, the burning *life-question*, of the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, in the whole of this century, so prodigally rich in problems, no single problem has arisen which so deeply grips the life of the nations and agitates public opinion with such violence.<sup>30</sup>

The common characteristic of all the forms and degrees in which this imposing movement expressed itself, is in the rising of the community-feeling, feeling for social justice and for the organic nature of society, against the one-sidedly developed individualistic form which the French Revolution and its corresponding economic school of laissez-faire had impressed on society. And this to such an extent that the battle over the right to private property and against capitalism is merely a *consequence* of this zealotry for the *social* principle,

<sup>29</sup> . . . . The social question can only be solved internationally, but before the several states see this and dare act with the energy which is needed, more *particularism* will have to be overcome than perhaps can be without a general combustion in all Europe. We are rather now moving in the direction that each state socially again thinks only of itself, and economically each state begins to live at war with the others, and at most seeks salvation as a narrow combination with a few allies.

<sup>30</sup> Nothing is more foolish than to see in the social question only a passing storm or a fleeting cloud. It is perfectly true that the Socialists are mutually divided, and that they do not as yet have leaders who are disinterested and eminent enough to call world-wide action into existence. Their congresses are mostly dramas of tumult, their press overflows with invective. But you are surely mistaken if you for that reason hold the social question to be a *temporary* inconvenience. On the contrary, precisely this fact, that the Socialists, in spite of their many differences, have made such giant strides forward indicates the vigorous impetus which propagates Social Democracy. Don't forget that the Internationale was instituted as recently as 1864 and shortly thereafter fell in ruins; that the new association is still faulty in many respects; and that nevertheless after this quarter century the social movement has already set all Europe agog. . . .

inasmuch as it is precisely in the absolute right of property that the individual finds his strongest bulwark; and the immeasurable fortunes which were heaped up produced, just because of this individualism, an unconquerable obstacle which hinders society from doing justice to its own sociological character.<sup>31</sup>

So far, then, the socialist movement in all its variations is united. But as soon as the question is raised, what must be done away with and what must replace it, there are as many opinions as there are people. Obviously, if one does not believe in a God whose eternal ordinances must be obeyed, nor yet, in the life of the nation, holds to that historical development which never permits its intrinsic law of life to be violated with impunity; if one sees in all the structures of our present society only the product of arbitrary human will; then in consequence he considers himself justified in overthrowing everything which stands, and does not shrink from the giant's task of building anew on the vacant plot.

Of those who think along these lines, the most radical is the *Nihilist*, who, seeing how our human life is totally interdependent, holds no salvation possible as long as anything remains of a civilization which has died, and thus wants to begin by destroying *everything*, literally everything. His ideal is to go back to the time after the deluge. For him the center of gravity lies in the *nothing*. Already less radical is the *Anarchist*, who scoffs at that intellectual picture — as though the virus should cling also to houses and tools! — and looks for the poison only in the government and in every function and power

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<sup>31</sup> It is naturally not denied here that greed and envy play a very great role in the social question. As persons, the members of the class that now complains are no better than the men of the class that is satisfied. He who was poor and becomes rich usually turns away from Socialism; and there are, on the other hand, no more dangerous Socialists than the people who have lost their fortunes. But evil passion cannot call a lasting world movement into life; and the power of Socialism is not due to its covetous desire, but rather to the moral demand of the sociological life. This demand speaks to the conscience; here lies the life blood; on this demand religion places its seal; and the question of private property only comes hobbling in the rear of this unavoidably righteous demand.

which derives from the government. For him the demolition will have gone far enough if only every *government* is done away with. No more *state*; only a *society*. Then the golden age will come of itself. Still less radical are the *Social-Democrats*, who would keep both state and society, but a state which will be only an organ of society and the housekeeper of society, which ought so to arrange society that the *many* families will dissolve themselves into the *single* family of the state, and that in this single family every citizen shall share and share alike. It is true that among these men, you also find variations. Men of action with no scruples, preaching plundering and uproar, along side men like Liebknecht, who seek salvation in parliamentary triumphs. There is Schaeffle, who would collectivize land, tools, and *capital*, alongside the ordinary collectivist, who would have the state own only the land and the tools. But in the end all these ways amount to this: The single state swallowing up every individual and caring for every individual equally.

Appreciably different from these Social Democrats are the *State Socialists*, who, although they may also include variant forms, exactly reverse the above position and place the authority of the state very far *above* society, but then also ascribe to this authority the task of leading the movement of society in a *patriarchal* manner. This is a school which has found enthusiastic interpreters in Rudolph Meyer, Wagner and partly in Laveleye and many others, and has finally found its desired statesman in Bismarck. The power of the *Historical school* lies less in a practical program than in scientific research directed against the illusion that the present situation and the present legal relationships have an *absolute* character. It thus prepares public opinion for modification of the existing state of affairs and tries to search out the law for such modification. Add to this that also in the *less doctrinaire* of the Liberals there is more and more an apparent inclination to be on the one hand more *conservative* — that is, to make the concessions necessary to conserve the present situation — and on the other

hand more *radical*, by strengthening the political influence of the lower class so as to arrive at an *improvement* of the lot of this class; and at the same time benefiting the *propertied* class by curtailing any lower class privilege which is harmful to the propertied class. And to complete this brief summary, I must finally add the cynical *Pessimists*, who do see that something is smouldering in the structure of modern civilization and even concede that there is fire and that unless it is checked, the flame of an all-destroying revolution will soon break out; but they contend that to extinguish it is simply impossible, and hence prophesy with stoic calm that our civilization, like the Oriental and then the Graeco-Roman civilizations, is destined to go under into Nirvana.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The same pantheism which wipes out all differences in the moral realm, which dares place Nero next to Jesus as an equally interesting temporal phenomenon, leads also in the sociological area to the dullest and most cynical fatalism. The situation is wretched, but there is no way to improve it. We glide along the decline until we sink in the depths. All this is our destiny. On the rubbish of our civilization we may perhaps begin a new building. Perhaps? But these Pessimists know nothing of the Christian eternal dynamic which lies hidden in the heart of the Christian nations, and which now can therefore rise above that which spelled ruin for Babylon, Athens and Rome.

#### IV

Unless I am in error, this hasty sketch has already brought me to my objective, and has already revealed the fibres by which the Christian religion must be woven together with the social question. In the last part of my speech there remains only to take up these fibres one by one, and have you see what direction they have to give to our *study* and what direction to our *action*. However, we must first remove a possible objection which, if left standing, would probably nullify the force of my argument; namely, how I can call Social-Democracy a *fruit* of the French Revolution and at the same time assert that it is *opposed* and hostile to the principle of the French Revolution. This apparent contradiction results from the fact that the individualistic character of the French Revolution is only a *derived* principle. It is not the root principle, from which it borrows its dynamic. For the French Revolution, the root-principle is its God-provoking “ni Dieu, ni maitre,” or, if you will, humanity emancipated from God and his established order. From this principle there develops not one line but two. First, the line along which you make up your mind to break down the established order of things, letting nothing remain but the individual with his own free will and imaginary supremacy. But alongside of this there develops also the other line, at the end of which you are tempted to push aside not only God and His order, but also now deifying yourself, to go sit on God’s throne, as the prophet said, and create a new order of things out of your own brain. This last, now, is what Social Democracy does. But in doing this, it is so far from letting go of the individualistic starting point, that it rather would found the social structure it wants to erect, by way of

universal suffrage, on the sovereignty of the people, and thus on the *individual will*.<sup>33</sup>

But this is only in passing. For the question which now demands our attention is this: *what attitude those who profess the Christian religion should assume towards this socialist movement.*

And it is very certain that the disorganization of our social life and the resultant need must arouse also our deep *pity*. We may not, as the priest and the Levite, pass by the exhausted traveler who lies bleeding from his wounds, but we must, as the *merciful Samaritan*, be deeply moved by a holy pity. Because there exists suffering, because there exists a crying need. Not yet so much in the circles of our regular tradespeople, but undeniably in the proletariat that stands behind them; and just as much in some rural areas. *Think of Friesland*. And then I too say with Bilderdijk, God has not willed that one should drudge hard and yet have *no bread* for himself and for his family. And still less has God willed that any man with hands to work and a will to work should suffer hunger or be reduced to the beggar's staff just *because* there is no work.<sup>34</sup> If we have "food and cloth-

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<sup>33</sup> It is the ancient problem of the One and the Many which recurs here. The *starting point* of the Social Democrats as well as of the Liberals is individualistic, in the individual person, and thus in Pelagian free will. In so far the dynamic of the French Revolution works very decidedly also in the Social Democrats, this is clear from the continually recurring demand that the mature male individuals shall rule the affairs of state and society by majority vote. They do not even *understand* our demand that the starting point should be in the *family*.

<sup>34</sup> Bilderdijk expresses himself very strongly. He says: "There is nothing else to do than to restore the citizen-state to its former scope. If there is ground, let men cultivate it. Where there is shipping or fishery, let men expand them. If these three are not enough, provide industrial work, and see that everyone can find work, and that through this work he can find bread for his wife and children. Work should be the aim; let there be free and compulsory factories, free and compulsory farms. Let honor be attached to the free and shame to the compulsory labor; let no one who says he is available lack work, and let no beggary be tolerated. Land, seafaring, fishery, industry; these will support the workers, and no more



ing” then it is true the holy apostle demands that we should be therewith content. But it neither can nor may ever be excused in us that, while our Father in heaven wills with divine kindness that an abundance of food comes forth from the ground, through *our* guilt this rich bounty should be divided so *unequally* that while one is surfeited with bread, another goes with empty stomach to his pallet, and sometimes must even go without a pallet. And if there are still some who, God forgive them, will defend such injustices by an appeal to the words of Jesus, “*the poor you have always with you,*” then in respect for God’s holy Word I must register my protest against such an abuse of the Scriptures; and request him who so judges to first trace through this same Bible how the condition of the poor man in Israel was almost luxurious, compared to the misery in which our proletariat lies sunk.<sup>35</sup>

And if you then ask me whether still *more* ought to be given, I answer without hesitation, *most certainly*; but

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<sup>35</sup> The words of John 12:8, “the poor you have always with you,” give no *rule*, but only state a *fact*; and therefore do not state that it *should* be so, but at most that such will be the case. Then, secondly, it will not do to conclude from a concrete statement about that period that Jesus at the same time is giving a prophecy about *later* ages. In the third place, one completely overlooks the reproach that hides in these words. The Greek actually means not “. . . with you,” but “In life as you are patterning it, you will always have the poor.” This was said to *Judas and his like*, men who carry the purse and use it like Judas. After this commentary, my “God forgive them” will be clearer.

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is needed; whoever aims at profit therein is driven by a wrong spirit.” . . .

“Only, all is tainted because men have made money, instead of a mere means in a society, the first object, purpose and end. As long as men do this, the misery endures and increases more and more; and this is the great plague that has gone out over Europe; and only those who have the seal of God on their forehead and rest in His providence are immune, and do not pray or work for money, but despise it. These few do indeed suffer, but God feeds them.” . . .

“All nations of Europe serve this Mammon, and their only recovery lies in overthrowing the false system. There is nothing more to say. No bread for those who are willing to work is in conflict with the basic law of all work: ‘In the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread.’ ”

I hasten to add that a charity which knows how to give only *money* and not also *itself* is not yet the Christian love. Then alone will you be justified when you also offer your time, your ability and the sympathy of your inventiveness to help end such injustices for all time, and when you let nothing hidden in the treasure house of your Christian religion remain un-utilized against the cancer which is destroying the dynamic of our society in such disturbing ways. For, indeed, the material need is terrifying; the oppression is great; and you do not honor God's Word if, such being the case, you ever forget how both the Christ, and also just as much His apostles after Him as the prophets before Him, invariably took sides *against* those who were powerful and living in luxury, and *for* the suffering and oppressed.

But even greater and more appalling is the *spiritual need* of our generation. When, in the midst of our social misery, I behold the *demoralization* which comes up behind this need, and hear a raucous voice which, instead of calling on the Father in heaven for salvation, curses God, mocks His Word, insults the Cross of Golgotha, tramples on whatever witness was still in the conscience, all in order, as though in frenzy, to inflame everything wild and animal which hides in the human heart; then I stand before an abyss of *spiritual* misery which almost arouses my human pity more than the most biting poverty.

For also out of this *spiritual* misery comes a cry of accusation against us as Christians. Or were not almost all of these who now so rage once baptized? And after their baptism, what have we sacrificed for these thousands so that instead of the caricature of the Christian religion against which they now utter their curse they might have some understanding, even the least, of the real love of God which is in Christ Jesus? What has been done by us, Christians in the Netherlands, while increasingly the poison of the French Revolution unnoticed ravages the veins of the social body — what have we done to stop this poisoning of the social life-blood?

What have we on our side done, when the evil became evident on the outside and the social sickness took on an epidemic character, to bring medicine and balsam for its cure? Not till now are we making our first weak attempt, in a social congress, to examine the death-need of society, when our Christian thinkers should have been laboring already for twenty or thirty years with something of the earnestness and scholarly sense of a Marlo or a Schaeffle to plumb the depths of this desperate situation.<sup>36</sup>

There is so much damage to be made good! Simply note the problems that are of central importance.

Of primary significance is the problem of the *majesty of our God*, for, though we will come presently to concrete measures, we must first take up the general ideas which lend form and color to all our conception of life. We are neither plant nor animal; our rank and title is to be *human*; and, since we are human, we live above all as *conscious beings*, and our feeling of happiness or unhappiness is in consequence in many respects dominated by our representations, our general concepts. Therefore the first article of any social program which will bring salvation must remain: "*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.*" This article is today being erased. Men will no longer recognize any God in statesmanship. Not as though men did not find the poetry of religion charming: but because whoever says *I believe in God* thereby also acknowledges that there is an ordering of nature by God, and an ordinance of God over our conscience; a higher will, to which we as creatures have to submit ourselves. Today, everything must be a free creation of human art. The social structure must be planned only according to whim and caprice. And therefore, God must go, so that with no natural bond to restrain them, men can turn every moral ordinance into its opposite and undermine every funda-

<sup>36</sup> Too much stress cannot be laid on this. There must also be on our side *study* and *work*. We will get further with the social question neither by sentimental talk nor by shallow generalities. This was the fault of the earlier Communists and of such Utopia-seekers as Fourier and Proudhon. It is precisely in study and thorough research that the very serious power of Socialism lies.

mental of human association. Does there not lie here the lesson for us, that we as Christians must place, precisely in the social question, the strongest possible stress on the majesty of God's authority and the absolute claim of His ordinances, in order that, with all our condemnation of the mouldering structure in which today we live together socially, we may yet never help erect any structure but such a one as continues to rest on the foundations laid by God?

Just as definitely, we must choose, in the second place, which side we as Christians will take in the controversy between State and Society. He who would, like the Social Democrats, allow the state to be absorbed by *society* thereby denies the implanted authority which must strive to maintain *His* majesty and *His* justice. And whoever, on the contrary, would, like the State Socialists, allow society to be absorbed in the state, bears incense for the deification of the state; the state in place of God, and the free society ordained by God now destroyed for the sake of deifying the state. Against both of these, we as Christians must hold that State and Society each has its own sphere, or, if you will, its own sovereignty; and that the social question *cannot* be solved rightly unless you recognize this *duality*, and so honor Authority as clearing the way for the free initiative of Society.

In the third place, if the question is raised whether our human society is an *aggregate of individuals* or an *organic body*, all those who are Christians *must* place themselves on the side of the social movement and against Liberalism, for, as you know, God's Word teaches us that we are all of one blood and all joined in a single Covenant through God. And no less because both the solidarity of our guilt and the mystery of the Atonement on Golgotha, as completely incompatible with such individualism, vie with each other pointing to the *interconnected wholeness* of our human society.

If then the Pantheist, and on his inspiration the *Pessimist*, would further tell us that the course of history, fatal and miserable though it is, cannot be broken; that

an iron fate rules the course of our human life; and that we must first wade through this stream of misery in order, perhaps, if it so happens, to emerge in some later century in happier circumstances: then it is our duty that we as Christians, with God's Word in hand, oppose this false theory of destiny as much as this false system of guilty passivity; that we, through the power of our confession of God's providence, which also operates in the social sphere to separate good from evil, and further girded with the sword and with trowel in hand, simultaneously fight that which is found unbearable and build up that which is obviously good. Or if, fighting in direct opposition to this passive pessimism, the furious zealot seeks to set fire to the building and through wild revolution obtain the bare ground upon which the new structure will presently arise; then it is just as definitely our calling as Christians, with the apostolic word on our lips, to warn against all violation of authority, bravely oppose every deed of violence or lawlessness, and make resound loudly and clearly the demand that the thread of our historic growth be altered only through gradual change and in a lawful way.<sup>37</sup>

If, in the fourth place, the social question raises the problem of *property*; and if the one contends that every concept of property is absolute, and the other proposes to turn over all individual property to collective ownership: then the man who lives by God's Word will here interpose the one true theory that God gave in His ordinances, and in His name witness that absolute property can be spoken of only by God; that all our property is only *loaned*; that our management is only *stewardship*; and thus that on the one hand only the Lord God can

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<sup>37</sup> Revolution and History stand only partly opposed to each other. For History knows, besides the regular process, the *disturbance* of this process through violence. Against Revolution as principle and as fact, there is defense only in the apostolic word: Be subject to every power that is set over you. And then also, according to the Calvinistic interpretation, this passivity finds its limit only in the demand of God's Word . . . Our fathers therefore constantly emphasized that the revolt against Spain was no *revolt of the masses* but a lawful protection of an oppressed people by the inferior magistrates.

relieve us of the responsibility for that management, and on the other hand, that you have under God no other right of rule than in union with the organic association of mankind, and thus also with the organic association of its possessions. What the Social Democrat calls "community of goods" never existed either in Israel or in the first Christian community; rather, such an absolute community of goods is excluded everywhere in Scripture; but Scripture also excludes just as completely every illusion of a property right by which you would dispose of it absolutely, as if you were God, without reckoning with the needs of others.

If further, not only by the Collectivist but also by the advocates of nationalization of land, a separate issue has been made of the ownership of *land*; then it is proper that also here we as Christians should neither arrogantly ridicule such ideas nor, as though God's Word gives us no guidance here, shrug our shoulders at such a knotty problem. Such an attitude is condemned in the first place by our conscience. When we hear how, in Scotland, three-fourths of the land is in the hands of fourteen persons, and how recently one of these fourteen, who bought an area in which forty-eight families lived, simply drove off the nearly three hundred persons who lived there in order to extend his game preserve — then a voice in our innermost self says that such disposal of the land, on which bread for the hungry must be grown, is already condemned *in principle*, and that the identification of ownership of land with individualistic ownership *must* run counter to God's ordinances. In the Lord's lawgiving for Israel there will be found a whole set of special regulations for the ownership of land. The fruitful acre is given by God to *all the people*, so that every tribe in Israel might dwell on it and live from it; and every agrarian regulation which does *not* reckon with this positive ordinance ruins "land and people."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> . . . . It does not follow from this that our salvation lies in nationalization of the land. . . but whoever superciliously mocks all such plans and ideas and brands them as socialistic is guilty of superficiality and unbelief. Agrarian regulation is always most difficult. . . Compare Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*.

Oh, it is so profoundly untrue that God's Word lets us hear only appeals for the salvation of our souls. No, very definitely also for our national existence and for our social life together, God's Word gives us fixed ordinances; it marks out lines that are very clearly visible; and it is unfaithfulness in us Christians if we, noting this fact, impiously permit our theory and practice to be determined by ruling opinion or conventional law, consulting our own comfort.<sup>39</sup>

For on almost every point in the social question, God's Word gives us the most positive direction. Think only of the *family*, whose immediate destruction is being advocated; of *marriage*, which some men would transpose into free love; of the *family tie* between generations, which men would dissolve by removing every right of inheritance; and not least of *birth*, which men would put under law and rule. For to begin with, did not Bilderdijk, still unacquainted with Malthus, denounce, on the basis of God's Word, all such agitation as "an ungodly thing, in opposition to God's positive ordinances, a murder of the unborn?" However, just for that reason we must never, as long as we value God's Word, oppose *colonization*. God's earth offers, if only it is cultivated, food enough for more than double the millions who now inhabit it; and what else is it than human *folly* to remain so piled up in a few small places on this planet that men must crawl away into cellars and slums, while at the same time there are other places a hundred times greater than our native land, waiting the plow and the sickle, or on which thousands of flocks of the most valuable cattle wander without an owner? The divine ordinance says not only "be fruitful" but also "replenish the earth," and not overcrowd the small area within your narrow boundaries. For indeed the institution of marriage, which is damaged by such cramped geography, must

<sup>39</sup> The Bible gives us not only *ideas* but also definite *rules*, and Christians who say they bow down before God's Word, but go along with the men of the French Revolution in their social and political ideas, are not integrated men; they lead an ambiguous life; and they manifestly do not fully realize the power of the Scriptures and the Word.

always be held in high honor by Christians; God punishes us with every curse of sensuality and prostitution when we oppose His regulation in this matter. And by that same Word of God, the *family* is pictured for us and enjoined on us as that wonderful creation through which the rich tapestry of our organic human life must spin itself out. And here also we need not hesitate. We do not have to organize society, we have only to develop the germ of organization which God Himself has created in our human nature. And therefore, away with false individualism, and an anathema on every attempt to break up the *family*. At least in our Dutch state, which has now for three centuries felt in flowering family life the tensile spring of its power, the loosening of this basic foundation may never, at least with our permission, be allowed.

And it is no different with work. The divine ordinance, "in the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread," stands out specifically with respect to that physical labor which is always a primary component of the social question. And next to it stands also this: "The worker is worthy of his hire"; you shall not defraud him of his wage, much less withhold it. (See Luke 10:7, James 5:4, Deut. 24:5.) The Lord says specifically through Moses (Deut. 24:14): "Thou *shalt not* oppress a hired servant that is poor," nor hold back his wage (Lev. 19:13). You shall in the laborer honor a fellow man, of one blood with you, so that debasing him to a mere instrument will be alienating your own brother (Mal. 2:10). The worker must be able to live as one created in the image of God. He must be able to fulfill his calling as man and as father. The worker has a soul to lose, and so he, as well as you, must be able to serve his God. Hence a Sabbath is given to him; especially to him, whose work tends to pull him down to a material level. And God created also this worker as a frail creature; that is, as one whose strength can be broken through sickness and accident, and decreases through age; and he must also, when he can no longer toil in the sweat of his brow, be able to



eat the bread of the labor of his days of *vigor*. So speaks God in His Word; and your worker reads that too; he must and may read it; and when he reads it, does not God's Word itself give him the right — true, not to grumble, much less to rebel, but at any rate — to *complain* and to *indict* a social arrangement which makes him so painfully go without that which the ordinance of a divine mercy had destined for him? And although this suffering does not oppress most of us *personally*, must it not then oppress us for the sake of our brothers? Have we then ever the right to cease from offering, with God's Word in hand, an annihilating critique of such an unhealthy society? Indeed, have you the right to take your ease as long as this society remains — even though there be state intervention — not again repatterned according to God's Word? To mistreat the workmen as a "piece of machinery" is and remains a violation of his human dignity. Even worse, it is a sin going squarely against the sixth commandment, thou shalt not kill, and this includes killing the worker socially.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, as a last concrete point, a brief word about this *state intervention*. God the Lord unmistakably instituted the basic rule for the duty of government. Government exists to arrange His justice on earth, and to uphold that justice. To take over the tasks of society

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<sup>40</sup> Work too is an ordinance of God, one which is primarily governed by the question of *how* we should view the *worker*. And then the answer reads: as a human being, created in the image of God, destined for an eternal life; and here called to stand as man and father in society, and to share with us the vicissitudes of sickness and health, youth, maturity and old age. Cardinal Newman and Pope Leo XIII correctly agree with this . . . We shall not be satisfied with the structure of society until it offers all human beings an existence worthy of man. Until then, the structure must remain the object of our *criticism*. Only, one should not seek salvation in *monetary* help from the State. That is always offensive to human feelings and also weakens our national strength. The help that the State must give is *better legislation*. Even the various kinds of Socialists see this only partly. In the field of labor, too, everything is tainted by the prevalence of atomistic ideas. Work per hour, work per man; when actually two organic relationships dominate labor; first, that of the work to be produced (consider agriculture and industry), and second, that of the life of the worker (youth, maturity and old age; sickness and health).

and of the family therefore lies outside its jurisdiction. With those it is not to meddle. But as soon as there develops collision from the contact of the different spheres of life, so that one sphere trespasses on or violates the domain which by divine ordinance belongs to the other, then it is the God-given duty of government to validate *justice* as over against *arbitrariness*, and to *restrain* by the justice of God over both the physical superiority of the stronger. What it may therefore do in no case is to grant such assurance of justice to one sphere and withhold it from another. A code for *commerce* — I adhere to what I said in 1875 to the States-General — calls also for a code for *labor*. The government should help labor obtain justice, and also for labor there must be created the possibility of independently organizing and defending its rights. And as regards the other type of state intervention, which consists of the distribution of money, not of justice, under whatever form and pretext, it is certain that such intervention is not excluded in Israel's lawgiving, but it is there held to a minimum. Therefore I say that, unless you would enervate the position of the laboring class and destroy its natural dynamic, always limit the material assistance of the state to an absolute minimum. The continuing welfare of people and of nation, and so too of labor, lies only in powerful *individual initiative*.<sup>41</sup>

So then, there is no need of further argument to show that the outlook on human life which is furnished by the Christian religion establishes, even for all the subdivisions of the social question, an *unwavering starting point* from which the solution of each problem must be at-

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<sup>41</sup> The Antirevolutionary party must also see to it that it does not permit itself to be drawn along by State-Socialism. Even though we stand directly opposed to the individualism of the Liberal party, yet we wholeheartedly subscribe to the warning given by Goshen, which Leon Say translates thus: "If we have learned anything from history, we should be able to say that the self-assurance of the individual and the respect of the state for natural liberty are necessary conditions for statehood, the prosperity of society, and the greatness of a people." Along these lines the whole Antirevolutionary program is set up. It would indeed be safest to unite all our strength in the organization of labor and labor contracts.

tempted. The principles by which we are under obligation to test the existing situation and the existing juridical relations lie clearly expressed in the Word of God. And we fall short in the holy duty which rests on us as Christian citizens, if we shirk the serious task of reconstructing in accord with His plan that which is manifestly in conflict with the ordinance of God.

Even so, one has not yet said enough; for though we pursued this path of justice to the very end, if we limited ourselves to our legal measures for improving conditions, we should still never attain the goal which God has in view. *Legislation* as such will not cure our sick society; the medicine must also reach the *heart* of rich and poor. Sin is so terrifically powerful that, mocking all your dikes and sluices, your legal regulations, it will ever flood anew the field of human life with the waters of its passion and its egotism. And so I return to my earlier point of departure: because we are *conscious* beings, almost everything depends on the standard of values which our *consciousness* sets up. If this present life is *all*, then I can understand that a man would desire to enjoy it before he dies, and would find the mystery of suffering wholly insoluble. And therefore, you who profess our Lord Jesus Christ, it is your duty to place in the foreground, with a gripping earnestness and a soul-penetrating emphasis, on every occasion, for rich and poor alike, *the life eternal*. Only he who reckons with an eternal life knows the real value of this earthly life. And so too, if external possession, if material good, if sensual pleasure, is the whole of what is intended for man, then I can understand the materialist, and do not see how I could properly reprimand the Epicurean. And therefore you, Children of the Kingdom, it is your duty to seize every occasion and means to impress on rich and poor that *the peace of God* is a much richer and holier treasure, and that the *spiritual* welfare of man is of much higher worth. On the social question too, what is really at issue is only how *contentedness and happiness* may prevail; and this certainly depends not simply

on the amount of your possessions, but first of all on the *need* that is aroused within you and on the *kind* of need that calls for satisfaction. And though the Socialist may continue repeating the old slander that this is a dismissal of the poor with "pie in the sky," the facts contradict the slander. Whoever is not a stranger to our Christian families even of the lowest classes, knows what the fear of our God can accomplish even with a meager portion of worldly goods; he will have observed how the little which outside would be wasted on alcoholism and sin receives in the case of the Christian laborer a double blessing; he can testify how even in such a poor household the dignity of man comes to its own in husband and wife and children, all three; and he will have thanked God for the generous allotment of happy life and joy of heart which is theirs despite their limited means. These do not ask, these do not beg, these who are the backbone of the laboring class. Rather, they themselves on occasion give generously to those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Therefore, such is my profoundest conviction, every prophet who sets himself up among the people and undermines these fundamental elements of the folk-consciousness is guilty of cruel and pitiless behavior. And similarly in the pulpit the modernistic tendency to sow the seed of doubt about our eternal destiny must for the same reason be branded as cruel. No less cruel was our public school which dragged the children of our people down from this lofty standpoint; and by contrast it is impossible to overestimate what our Christian school has done for the suffering of our people, even had it done no more than to return to thousands and thousands of families this single dependable criterion for human life, human good, and human enjoyment.

But then, also among the more fortunately situated, all our life must be one unbroken preachment of these holy principles; and you who have received more may not wantonly spite these principles by flinging in their face your immoderate attachment to earthly goods, by,

in spite of your profession, giving the impression that enjoyment of luxury means more to you than anything else; or, much worse, that you with grudging heart disperse in the name of the Lord that which you have received from Him as your landlord. For then the less fortunate has no *faith* in your preaching, and he is right; for all man's inner sense of truth rebels against such a theory of happiness hereafter as would serve only to keep Lazarus at a distance here on earth. For yourselves and for the poor, there cannot be two *different* faiths; and the question on which the whole social problem really pivots is only whether you recognize in the less fortunate, even in the poorest, not merely a creature, a person in wretched circumstances, but one of your own flesh and blood and, for the sake of Christ, *your brother*. It is exactly this *noble* sentiment which, sad to say, has been weakened and dulled in such a provoking manner by the materialism of this century. For, indeed, you know them too, those men of wealth, who have become alarmed at the threat of Social Democracy and now, from fear of this threat, grasp at all sorts of social amelioration, which none of them thought about before. But at least in this circle of Confessors of the Lord, I pray you let a *more perfect* love drive out all such fear. There is no place here for those who would march in the ranks with us because they fear that their money box is in danger. For this is holy ground, and he who would walk on it must first loosen the sandals of his egotism. The only sound here permitted is the whisper in our ear of the stirring and eloquent appeal of the *merciful Samaritan*. There is suffering round about you, and they who suffer are your brothers, sharers of your nature, of your own flesh and your own blood. *You* might have been in their place and they in *your* more pleasant position. And under these circumstances the Gospel speaks to you of a Redeemer of mankind who, although He was rich, became poor for your sake, that He might make you rich. The Gospel leads men to kneel in adoration before a Child born to us; but born in a stable, laid in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. It

points you to God's Son, but who became the *Son of Man*, and went through the country, from out of wealthy Judea to the poorer Galilee, in order to address himself in that despised Galilee to those who were in need or were oppressed by sorrow. Indeed, it tells you of this singular Savior that before He left this earth, He stooped before His disciples in the garb of a slave; He washed their feet one by one; and then stood and said, "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (John 13:15.)

The beauty of a love springing up from God in you displays its radiance not in this, that you allow the poor Lazarus to quiet his hunger with the crumbs that fall from your overburdened table, for all such benefaction is more like an insult to the manly heart which beats also in the bosom of the poor man; but rather in this, that just as you, rich and poor, sit together at the Communion table, so likewise you feel for the poor man as for a member of the body, and so too, for your servant or maid as for a child of man, which is all that you, too, are. To the poor man, a loyal handshake is often sweeter than a bountiful largess. A friendly word, not spoken haughtily, is the mildest balsam for one who weeps at his wounds. Divine pity, sympathy, a suffering *with us and for us*, that was the mystery of Golgotha. You too, from fellow-feeling, *must suffer with your suffering brothers*. Only then will the holy music of comfort sound in your speech, and then, driven by this sympathy of fellow-suffering, you will also spontaneously join to your speech the *deed*.

For these *deeds* of love are also indispensable. Obviously, the poor man cannot wait till the repairing of our social structure will have been completed. It is almost certain that he will not live long enough to see that happy day. But nevertheless, he must *live*, he must feed his hungry mouth, and the mouths of his hungry family, and therefore vigorous help is necessary. However strongly I am inclined to boast of the openhandedness of which many of you are capable, by God's grace, yet

the holy art of "giving for Jesus' sake" ought to be much more strongly developed among us Christians. Never forget that state relief for the poor remains *always* a blot on the honor of your Savior.<sup>42</sup>

So, have sympathy for the suffering of the oppressed and suppressed. In nothing so strongly as in this holy *suffering together* can you be "followers of God as beloved children." In that *holy dynamic of pity* lurks the whole secret of that heavenly power which you as Christians can exercise. And when this awakens in you the impulse to make possible for the poorer man — also through advice, through leadership, through your own initiative — advance against the stream of social suffering, then you will not be at a loss for helpers, but will find all who are Christian, not merely in *name* but also in *reality*, vying for the high honor of assisting in this service of mercy in Christ's name, this service of your suffering brothers.

Men and brothers, may it be this high and holy dynamic which governs our meeting in this congress. Let none of us boast of the good work to which we here gird ourselves; but let there far rather be unspoken self-accusation that we have not met before; and may we find in the happy fact, that men representing labor here meet and take counsel with fellow Christians from the higher classes, a peaceful symbol, and in that symbol find the inviting prophecy that Christian confidence will soon be perfectly restored among us.

And if you ask me finally whether I really *dare build any hope* on this congress, hope that we shall at least come *somewhat* closer to the solution of the burning question of the day, do not forget that the social need is a *world problem*, in eminent sense one of *international* character, and one which can therefore never be really settled, at least not within the narrow confines of our small nation. What the future will bring in this respect

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<sup>42</sup> It is perfectly true that if no help is forthcoming from elsewhere the State *must help*. We may let no one starve from hunger, so long as bread lies molding in so many cupboards. And also, when the state intervenes, it must do so *quickly and sufficiently* . . . .

depends on a number of factors which do not lie within our power. It could also be that our long-provoked God in His just judgment has destined very anxious days for us, if not immediately, then in the near future. These are *hidden* things which also at this congress we leave to the Lord our God. But while we await whatever may come, there remains for us His *revealed* injunction, to do also at this congress whatever our hands find to do, and do it with *all our might*. May God the Lord add His benediction to that end. And furthermore, something to which we are all obviously committed is that if rescue is yet to appear for our violently disturbed society, our fast-dying century must recognize Christ as *its Savior*. And therefore I close with a prayer, a prayer that I know lives in the heart of each of you, that even though this rescue should be delayed, and even though the stream of unrighteousness would have to rise still higher, that it may never be possible to say of the Christians of the Netherlands that through our fault, that through the lukewarmness of our Christian faith, whether in higher or lower classes, the rescue of our society was hindered, and the blessing of the God of our fathers was forfeited.

Ik heb gezegd