

A SOCIALIST SERMON.

SUBJECT: "Christ, The Light of The World."

(Reprinted from the "Worker," by special permission).

"What think ye of Christ?"

For two thousand years the world has been asking itself that question. It is one which no man of thought or feeling can evade.

It is heard in the myriad voices of the day. It haunts the myriad silences of the night. Go where you will, it presses for answer. It is with you in the home. It follows you to the uttermost bounds of Earth.

With the beauties of nature around you; in the midst of the meadows and streams and the happy flowers that Christ loved, or out in the solitary places where he communed with the Soul of Things and meditated his divine philosophy, or in the busy haunts of men, whom he came to save. That question will knock at your heart for answer.

In Holman Hunt's great picture, "The Light of the World," Christ is shown knocking at a closed door, overgrown with weeds and brambles. It represents, says the artist, "the mind that is shut fast against the Lord."

He might have given the allegory a wider sweep. He might have made it a closed church door, to symbolise that Christ is still excluded in his real presence even from the world that worships him in name.

Christ knocks, and the door has never opened to receive him. Yet deep down in the nature of humanity that gentle patient summons has awakened the slumbering soul, and filled it with sweet desires. And the beautiful face, looking up at the curtained windows of the world, has illumined with love the hearts of those who peer forth into the outer darkness.

There was a time when I wrestled with the question—Is Christ God or man, or both? I feel now that it is a vain interrogation, full of the diabolic subtlety that divides into warring sects those whom Christ came to bind in a universal brotherhood.

I am content to know now that in Christ shone transcendent all the divinity that is in human nature.

I care not whether he was of miraculous and supernatural birth, or born of the flesh in the miracle of human love. Every noble soul called into being by the union of affinities is an immaculate conception.

Whether Christ's spirit came from on high and existed from the beginning, or was the perfect fruit of an evolution dating back to the primordial slime, is a speculation with which we need not concern ourselves.

Enough that it was incarnate upon earth, and dwelt among men as man. Enough that Christ taught the purest wisdom and preached the divinest gospel that the race has known.

So far was his thought above the highest before him, so far is he in advance of any progress since achieved, that after the lapse of twenty centuries the world still listens to him amazed, as to a voice issuing from the clouds.

He revealed to humanity for the first time the God of Love who is the Heavenly Father of every creature that breathes. No longer the terrible God of the Mosaic dispensation—gloomy, fierce, vindictive; but the all merciful and all loving, filled with the tenderest compassion for human weakness. No longer a tribal Joss, dwelling in a tent, and inciting his chosen people to rapine and slaughter, but the Heavenly King, whose reign is of peace and goodwill, whose sceptre stretches in beneficence over every nation.

And Christ taught humanity moreover the innate divineness of its own nature. He found the human soul a metaphysical conception, manufactured as it were in the laboratories of philosophy, reducible to a syllogism, and he breathed into it the creative breath, so that what had been a mere figment of logic now palpitated with life immortal.

And he pulled down the great ones of the earth who ruled unrighteously, and he exalted the humble of fortune and the meek of heart.

All democrats love Christ. He is the Master Democrat, the first

to proclaim the supremacy of the People, and give it the sanction of the divine.

He was of the poor, and he loved the poor; his bitterest words were for the poor's enemies.

And to him the world owes the profound discovery, greater than those of all the sciences, that opulence is the unforgivable sin.

Only for the rich man is there no redemption. For him the gates of hell swing wide. "It is easier," he said, "for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."

Christ saw, with penetrating vision, what till his time had been beyond the ken of the farthest ranging intellect, that riches are the source of social ills, and the struggle for wealth the corrupter and destroyer of humankind.

He proclaimed the brotherhood of all races, universal fraternalism; a teaching so sublime, and so alien to the perochial patriotism till then possessing the loftiest minds, that it assumes the quality of a revelation.

Only a great Soul divinely inspired could have originated such a doctrine, and called it forth from the innermost essence of things, where it lay hid.

It is as a social revolutionist and a spiritual force that Christ appeals to me. He aimed at the abolition of the rich, and the setting of the poor upon the thrones of power.

He gathered to him in love the victims of the social system. He denounced with a terrible invective the plutocrat and the sweated, the oppressor of women and children.

"Woe unto you that are rich," he cried, "for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you, ye that are full now, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you, ye that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep."

Christ was an "extremist." Expediency might have saved him from Calvary, but the world would have lost its noblest example of devotion of principle.

He abated not one jot of a plank in his platform. He tolerated no compromise, he truckled to no prejudice, he loathed what some of our modern politicians extol as "prudent alliances." "He that is not with me is against me," he said; a rule of action that would never have won him a portfolio in a Coalition Ministry.

In religion he gave the most exalted expression to the yearning of the human for spiritual communion. Men were to worship by no formula, by no symbol, in no set place or manner, but "in spirit and truth."

Not at the feet of Christ can be laid the blame for the warring sects that hate one another in the name of him who loved all.

The priesthood of his day he denounced as "hypocrites," who "cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."

In religion he gave us purity, in the worship of the spirit, and the grand conception of God as the loving Father of the whole human race, who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and the unjust."

In sociology he gave us the cognate idea of the brotherhood of man, pregnant with vast potentialities of progress for the race.

In political economy he gave permanent form to the truth that the system of production for profit is the root of social evils, and the accumulation of wealth in private hands a sin against God and man.

And in the conduct of daily life he set for the emulation of the ages an example of noble aims, and high principles, and self-sacrificing labour; and a tenderness for human frailties and a passion for righteousness for its own sake that sweep through the unclean places of the earth like a purifying wind of heaven.

The Star in the East is still the light of the world, and they who follow it "in spirit and truth" are the Wise Men.

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC VANGUARD,

A SOCIALIST PROPAGANDIST SOCIETY,

Albert Chambers, Albert Street, BRISBANE.

Every Socialist should join and assist the Movement.

Membership Fee, 2s. 6d. per annum.

WHEN READ, PLEASE PASS ON.

"Worker" Typ., Brisbane.