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SOCIETY IN THE NEW SOUTH.

THE American Revolution made less social change in the South than in the North. Under conservative influences the South developed her social life with little alteration in form and spirit—allowing for the decay that always attends conservatism—down to the Civil War. The social revolution which was in fact accomplished contemporaneously with the political severance from Great Britain, in the North, was not effected in the South until Lee offered his sword to Grant, and Grant told him to keep it and beat it into a ploughshare. The change had indeed been inevitable, and ripening for four years, but it was at that moment universally recognized. Impossible, of course, except by the removal of slavery, it is not wholly accounted for by the removal of slavery; it results also from an economical and political revolution, and from a total alteration of the relations of the South to the rest of the world. The story of this social change will be one of the most marvellous the historian has to deal with.

Provincial is a comparative term. All England is provincial to the Londoner, all America to the Englishman. Perhaps New York looks upon Philadelphia as provincial; and if Chicago is forced to admit that Boston resembles ancient Athens, then Athens, by the Chicago standard, must have been a very provincial city. The root of provincialism is localism, or a condition of being on one side and apart from the general movement of contemporary life. In this sense, and compared with the North in its absolute openness to every wind from all parts of the globe, the South was provincial. Provincialism may have its decided advantages, and it may nurture many superior virtues and produce a social state that is as charming

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF PROPERTY.

THIS paper does not aim to be final, and has no expectation of being precise. Our concern is less with niceties of statement than it is with the attainment of some conception of property that, as Christians, we can utilize as a *working* conception.

Political economy is busy with matters of property. It is about this centre that the stirring questions of the day gather. What is ownership? How far does it reach? Is it relative or absolute? Can a man do what he will with his own? The question has a distant reach, but touches closely upon common matters of daily bread. It is like the blue in the air: a far-away thing it looks to be; but a part of that blue is in the bit of atmosphere that lies next to my eye.

We promise that this article shall be innocent of abstractions. Our problem is a near one and a practical one. We do not want to look too far off for our answers. Necessary truth grows on low branches. We fail sometimes of catching the fly on the window-pane, from looking past the sash, and taking the fly to be a far-away hawk in the tops of the trees.

We begin early to struggle with the problem of ownership. John has a pocketful of marbles. They are his own. John's father comes along and tells him to give part of them to Charles who has none. He gives them, and they are not his own. He loses some of his marbles by the operation, but gets an idea; gets an idea that ownership is not what he thought it was, which is what getting ideas, as a rule, reduces to—converting a period into an interrogation mark. It takes only a very small fact to puncture an idea and let out the vacuity that is floating around in it; and the boy claps his hands on his breeches pockets and makes off with what few agates he has left. Henceforth to own a thing means to keep it until father takes it away from him. The lesson opens in that way, and follows the same line to the *finis*. The conception of ownership continues steadily narrowing; the circle keeps shortening its diameter till it shrinks to a point; and the boy, now become an old man, watches the steady inroad of subtraction until he moves at

last into a little, narrow house without a till, clad in a simple suit that needs no pocket.

“The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.” This was the postulate that underlay all Jewish conceptions of property. Theories that used to obtain in Judea might not meet all the detailed requirements of our own times and civilization. Still our confidence in the structural principles of the Hebrew economy is such as to assure us that no system of social or political ethics out of consonance with them merits regard, or can permanently obtain. There is in ethics, as in physics, but one perpendicular. Plumb-lines are cosmic. Your little house will stand only as it is set in a true vertical with everlasting foundations. A valid administration of social and civil equity is a short line, but it is the little, hither end of the line which, in its infinite reach, makes out all the righteousness of God.

It is only of God, then, that ownership in its absolute sense is predicable. Everything else so designated can be approximation only, and imitation. God owns the world. After that it is only by accommodation of terms that I can say I own my house or my library. Unable to own things as against God, there is still opportunity for us to own them as against each other. Granted. But at the same time the absoluteness of divine ownership does break the back of all human ownership. We are not sure any more as to how much it actually means to own things as against each other; or whether it means anything. John owned his marbles as against Charles, but not as against his father; but that latter qualification took all the stiffening out of his ownership as against Charles. An idea that is absolute becomes nothing other than a caricature so soon as the attempt is made to work it under conditions. The features may some of them be preserved, but with the sacrifice of the identity.

The underlying postulate of Judaism, that the earth was in an absolute sense the Lord’s, worked determinatively in all the dealings of the Jews with other people. Without originary title to Palestine they conceived that it became theirs by his arbitrary bestowment. God owned it, and made them his heirs. Whether there was any narrowness in their view of the case or not, it gave an assurance and an intensity to their operations that made them irresistible, and carried everything before them. The mere fact that they were settlers in Palestine constituted Hittites, Hivites, and Jebusites aggressors; and to drive them out or exterminate them was, con-

sistently with their view of the case, a simple assertion of vested rights.

It is easy to appreciate this sentiment ; easy also, perhaps, to feel some measure of sympathy with it. The remnants of that idea still lurk in the mind of every man that calls God Father. In the filial relation is involved a proprietary claim. For a father to disinherit his child is against nature, and that is because the child is in a way joint-owner of his father's property, even before he has been distinctly pronounced his father's heir. I call God Father. The livelier my sense of filial relation to him, the stronger and more effective will be the hold upon me which this same idea will have, that there is nothing which he owns which I also have not at least some small property in. Ownership goes with the blood ; " If children, then heirs, heirs of God," Paul writes. " All things are yours ; " " Whether things present or things to come : all are yours."

It is worth noticing with what immediate and practical effect this sentiment will operate on a small field. Suppose that I am hungry and can obtain nothing to eat, and have no means of earning it. What am I to do? Starve? I cannot of course state what my reader would do ; but I can vouch for myself that I should not perish of inanition so long as I had the power to beg bread or to steal it. The loaf on my neighbor's shelf is, in a sense, not mine ; but at the same time, in a sense it is mine, because it belongs in a truer sense to God than it does to my neighbor, and I call God Father. Solomon was contemplating just such a case when he wrote : " Men do not despise a thief if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry." Of course the law is not going to forgive him. There are times, nevertheless, when the eighth commandment, like the sixth, is more honored in the breach than in the observance. Christ in the twelfth of Matthew distinctly enunciates the doctrine of " blameless " transgression. The law is for the sake of man, and not man for the sake of the law.

When once the idea of God's fatherhood is admitted there enters, under its patronage, the correlative conception of man's brotherhood. In deepening the sense of our filial relation to God the Gospel has developed the sense of our fraternal relation to one another. To actualize and universalize the idea of the brotherhood of man is the supreme triumph of the Gospel. The end toward which the Christian scheme looks is not the salvation of men but the redemption of society. It is society that constitutes the true integer

and not the individual man. Society is the unit and every man a fraction. A large half of every individual subsists in his social relations. Almost the first thing that God's Word tells us about man is that it is a mistake for him to be alone; and the last consummating prospect that the same Word holds out before us is of regenerated society. "A City come down from God." That is the longest, largest hope that even inspiration can conceive; a condition in which the ideal of unity is fulfilled through the mutual membership which each man has in every other man.

By predetermination of nature, therefore, society is an organism; which is to say that, when viewed in proprietary relations, society is a great joint-stock company. The organism precedes the organ, and society antedates the individual, logically even if not historically. The family is previous to the child; the child helps make the family but is born into the family. Family is first, and in it individual rights are determined by corporate rights. The child's prerogatives reach it through the family. It suffers and enjoys through the family; acts and is acted upon through the family; and owns through the family; and its individual ownership, so far as it exercises any, is mainly only the corporate ownership, inherent in the family, localized at a single point. So that whatever special claims to property, as in the instance of the marbles, are put forth by a single member, they are to be arbitrated by the corporate interests of the family, and allowed or denied according as shall best subserve the family's associate advantage. And in this domestic confederation, the youngest member as certainly as the oldest, the dullest as surely as the brightest, has true membership, and full, clear title to confederate prerogatives and immunities.

Now in all of this there is laid for us a platform upon which we can build variously and with assurance. Ownership in the absolute sense of the term pertains only to God. Derivative propriety rights are vested in mankind *as such*. Individual ownership has no validity but such as is conceded to it by God and mankind, and admits only of such exercise as shall not contradict the will of the one or prejudice the weal of the other.

The delicate question, then, that is agitating men's minds is, to determine the respective provinces of social and of individual rights in property; and the problem is complicated by the fact that men are personally interested in its solution. It is approached from two sides and with opposite interests. The man who has little or no

property is interested to reduce the area of individual proprietary rights to a minimum. The man who has property is just as interested to push that area to a maximum. Each of the two classes is likely to maintain his own theory for the reason that there is money in it. There has been published recently the case of a conspicuous communist who abandoned communism the day he received an inheritance. Like a man whom I heard say recently that he never believed in tariff until he became a manufacturer. Should he ever abandon manufactures, it is safe to expect that he will become a free-trader again. With such people, theories of political economy are like different classes of stock to a broker, who buys in where he is looking for the largest cash dividend.

Christianity comes to our relief so far as this, that it regularly puts society before the individual, and never the individual before society. The Christian is conscious that he is debtor, not that he is creditor. Paul nowhere tells us that Greeks and Barbarians are debtors to him. The individual is always an accident, and to be treated as such; to be bruised even, if the blood that issues from the bruises, like the blood of the Lord, shall conduce to the healing of the world.

Taking, therefore, our cue from Christianity, which is the whole aim and *animus* of this paper, it is certainly clear that the proprietary rights of the individual are to be arbitrated from the stand-point of the State, and not the rights of the State from the stand-point of the individual. The expression "individual rights" is to that degree misleading. The individual is to be thankful for whatever *concessions* the State in wise pursuance of its own weal may see fit to allow him. "Individual rights" is rather to be treated as a euphemistic way of designating the area of option remaining over after the State has occupied all the ground she deems essential to her highest collective weal.

There is no disguising the fact that there is in this an approach to the fundamental doctrine of communism. To the individual *as such* communism denies proprietary rights. Nor do we see how anything less can be denied him except as the term "rights" is taken in an accommodated sense. And, indeed, the strength of communism lies not so much in the number of its advocates or in the unscrupulousness of their measures, as in a certain amount of validity involved in its doctrinal basis.

Yet in all this it forms no part of our thought or aim to narrow

the margin of individual option, or to abridge individual autonomy. It is a question how far, for example, it is wise for the father to take away John's marbles and give them to Charles. By pushing that policy beyond a certain point, he will withdraw from John and Charles both the stimulus to independent acquisition. And so, while benefiting the family in one way by the equalization of property, damage it in another by so paralyzing the instinct of property that pretty soon there will be no property *to* equalize.

An illustration in point is the early Church at Jerusalem. Consistently with the *animus* of the Gospel this Church was distinctly communistic. The principle was asserted, and, by a majority of its members, applied, in its full scope and intent, that a truer and finer type of ownership was predicable of the community than of any individual that happened to be in the community. As St. Luke relates in his history: "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." Yet the Christliness of a principle is no certain safeguard against unwisdom in its application. The Christians at Jerusalem not only vetoed, so far forth, proprietary rights, but obliterated proprietary distinctions, and by that act discouraged everything like independent acquisition. Those that had been poor no longer needed to work, and those that had been rich were henceforth without the necessary stimulus to work. The first effect of communism, *as thus applied*, was, of course, to enrich the community, and its second effect just as logically and inevitably was to impoverish the community; and one of the burdens that always loaded down poor, itinerant St. Paul was taking up collections "for the poor saints at Jerusalem." Instant relief was purchased at the expense of subsequent distress, as is usual. The blame was chargeable not to the communistic principle itself, but to the ill-considered policy by which it was worked. It is good sense to affirm proprietary distinctions at the same time that it is good piety to deny proprietary rights.

It would be unjust, however, to dismiss this matter of communism without one more word. It is not difficult to assent to the communistic principle, and in all matters of property to subordinate the individual to the State. Still, the fact remains that the average "Communist" has not one picayune's worth of interest in the State as such. Communism is a wholesome name which he prostitutes to cloak a dirty ambition. Both in his thought and purpose it is the State that is secondary to him, and not he to the State. All his

talk about the corporate rights of society is so much ruse to divert attention from his tricky and rascally attempt to make the general weal pay taxes to his own individual advantage. From beginning to end it is with him a matter of public pap. The whole case can be put in a nutshell by saying that A has one loaf of bread and B has two loaves. B, therefore, is not a communist, but A is, and A argues for the corporate ownership of the three loaves for the reason that three divided between two is no longer one, but one and a half. That extra half loaf is the genesis of communism. Communism is only the elegant augur with which he proposes to tap the public barrel. It is a grand, economic idea worked in the interests of his own pocket. A poor man steals from a rich man, and is shut up for it. Communism is a device which the poor thief has invented for saving himself the inconvenience of incarceration by making the State accessory to the burglary.

After having in these terms paid our respects to the communist, we shall certainly be acquitted of any revolutionary sympathies, with whatever emphasis we may assert our faith in the doctrine that ownership is vested in the body politic, and that individual possession can in propriety reach no further than to the point of trusteeship in the general interest.

All that is argued for here is contained in the expression so uncalculatingly used by us when we say, for example, that we are members of community, and that we *belong* to society. And that is exactly it: we do *belong* to society. It is very often surprising what an amount of unconscious truth there is in our commonest and most unstudied expressions, and how much sounder oftentimes our words are than our philosophy and our practice. For a slave to belong to a master means that he is subject to the will of that master. For a man to belong to a corporation carries with it the idea that in all that relates to that corporation his individual choice and interest are no longer to control him, but that he is submitted to the collective choice and interest of the corporation; is so far forth the property of the corporation: belongs to the corporation. A man says he "belongs to a church," without half realizing usually the full scope of his own admission. To belong to a church means that in all that relates to the interests and aims of his church he is no longer his own. Without doubt there is a great deal of "belonging to the church" that really denotes to the member himself nothing more than opportunity of access to the spiritual treasury of the church—

to all intents a kind of ecclesiastical communist, cherishing his connection for the chance it gives him of holding his hand on the spigot of churchly conferment. Still, the term by which he designates his relation is valid, and ought itself to teach him a wholesome lesson and hold him in that condition of subordination to the corporate purposes and interests of the church which his own language so justly, though unconsciously, implies and confesses. The same kind of admission is tacitly made by any man who speaks of himself as belonging to a certain community, or to society, or to mankind. Nothing more is needed than that he should take the gauge of his own language and be in practice what he is in speech. He does belong to the community ; and that means that it behooves him to bridle himself with the general aims of community and saddle himself with its general interests.

And now all of this affords material which might be drawn out almost indefinitely in the form of close and practical application. It is something to be considered by such as think themselves to have been wronged by civil or municipal action, that has diverted their private property to public uses. Let them make a minute of the fact that it was public property before it was private property. Their private claims are grounded in public sufferance. Our land, our time, yes, even our bodies are part of the assets of community. The power of draft in time of war is an acknowledgment that the State holds the deed of the heart's blood of its citizens. If we own land, which the State would convert to its own uses, part of the grace that we shall need in the emergency will keep us from being soured by what we have lost, and the rest will be necessary to make us thankful for so much, in the shape of indemnity, as the State or city, in wise pursuance of the common interest, may see fit to allow us. Much that is wise, and otherwise, has, for example, been said about the elevated roads in New York city. Whether their construction and management has at all points been marked by discretion and equity is a matter about which each man will have his own opinion. That does not concern us here. It is quite possible that if every man, who was made to suffer by their construction, had been indemnified according to his own estimate of damage the roads never would and never could have been built. More pertinent, however, to our case is the fact, that if at the outset not more than one man in a thousand believed in the roads, probably now not more than one in a thousand could be found who does not believe in

them. The issue has demonstrated their necessity. Results show that they were bound to come. If a few men were consciously interested to build them, a million men were unconsciously interested to have them built. We are not at all entering into the question whether sufferers have or have not been duly indemnified. Men have suffered individually, but community has been benefited generally. Population has been increased, and collective wealth and comfort enhanced. It is in the very nature of things that the general weal should be promoted at the cost of a good deal of particular weal. It has always been so and will be. It is a necessity. Some men can be chariot wheels; some men have to be paving stones. It is expedient sometimes that the few should suffer for the many. Caiaphas judged so; and the judgment is still current. It is one of the perquisites (or embarrassments) of property that it puts its possessor in a position to sacrifice for the general advantage. No man is going to get along, and do his share, without having a little genius for martyrdom.

Again, the sense of brotherhood will prevent men from feeding on each other and making capital out of their necessities. Money-making is always a transaction between two parties, and, when conducted in consonance with the Christian conception of property, each party will make account of the other's interest as well as his own. It seems to be considered that business is the art of getting whatever you can without any consideration of equivalents. Making money has taken the place of earning money. This matter is one that has no end to it. The question on the street is not one of value; but rather how much can I get for a thing if I am the seller, or how little can I get along with and pay for the same commodity if I am buyer. Values used to regulate prices; prices at present appear to determine values. And so the stock-brokers study "quotations" and watch the "tickers."

Nor need we go to Wall street for our illustrations. Suppose that I want an article at my grocer's. It happens that he is the only one from whom I can obtain it, and that it is something I cannot get along without. The thing is worth, say, ten cents; but if he appreciates the circumstances he will quite likely charge me fifteen. That is, he will charge me the worth of the article and tax me fifty per cent. extra for the exigency. He loves me, and all that sort of thing; he "brothers" me in the house of the Lord. It is not good form to gag and pinion me and deplete me burglariously; but if

exigencies are snug enough to throttle me, and circumstances sufficiently expert to turn my pockets, he will appropriate the contents with a "thank you," call it trade, and invite me to come again. The element of reciprocal interest and reciprocal obligation comes into no kind of account with him. He will twist the screw upon me to the full limit of his courage. He has no conscience and no heart. I stand before him in the same posture that an oil-well does to the company that is working it; with no other possible purpose to subserve but to be pumped—pumped dry. His is the true genius of a sucker, that will fasten itself to your arm and love you for the heart's blood it can drain from you. If his dealings with you are not precisely those of a cannibal, it is mostly only accident of birth-place. His methods are those of an old-fashioned Fijian, or wild man of Borneo, only treated to a "wash" of civilization; so that his brutality is somewhat more refined and his ferocity more polite and ornamental.

This might appear severe language to use of a man that has only beguiled me of five cents. But that amount just as well as a larger is sufficient to show the *animus* of the man; and that instance just as well as one more conspicuous suffices to betray the current genius of trade. The prime consideration is not what is a thing worth, but how much can you get for it, and how can you so manage prices and manipulate values as to promote your own varying advantage as buyer or seller. It is quite the habit to cite "corners" as illustration of the burglarious and cannibal impulses of trade. But in point of *animus* the majestic rascality of a great "corner" differs not one iota from the five-cent venality of my grocer. *That* was a "corner" in the green. The germ of the whole business was there, and needing only the advantages of more capital, more genius, and more experience, to nurture it to the grade of the most superb effects of mercantile atrocity ever consummated by blood-thirsty Fijian, living or obsolete.

This same sort of treason against community—for selfishness always reduces to that—stimulates manufacturing corporations to sell their wares at a figure that yields dividends which themselves demonstrate the corporators to be so many unconscioned vultures pecking at the lacerated heart of community. Gas manufacturers, for example, do not grade their rates according to the cost of production, but according to the patience and endurance of patrons. As stated on the witness stand in February of this year, the Man-

hattan Gas Co. declared a dividend of 35 per cent. in 1875, and the dividend has averaged 21 per cent. for the past ten years. As much is charged for gas as the company has the courage to charge for it, and the worth of the commodity composes no part of the case. This is only an example. Another instance like it is that brought out by a recent investigation in Ohio, where it appears that the American Bell Telephone Co. were receiving an annual rental of over \$200,000 for instruments which never cost the company over \$40,000; which is an annual dividend of 500 per cent. ! The same holds with regard to telegraph monopolies. The cost of sending a message is not determined by the amount of business done or profits accruing. Rates come down only as they are forced down by an outraged public. It is not a matter of *quid pro quo*. Business means getting a maximum in return for a minimum. Men of large Christian pretension, who want to be counted on the side of Jesus Christ who did nothing but make himself poorer for others' sakes, will spend six solid days of every week in making others poorer for their own sakes. They are void of the Christian *sense of community*. They traffic with men's necessities and wring dividends out of their emergencies; and torture the community that feeds them, like the Abyssinian, who is said to provide himself with steaks from the very ox which carries him.

Indifference to values, and ambition to get the most for the least, determine rates paid to the wage-worker. If a man, for instance, can be found who will drive a horse-car sixteen hours a day for a dollar and a half, he will be employed at that rate, and the money that is being made by the company, and the actual worth of the employé to the company, does not enter as an item into the account. Prices are left to be arbitrated by the law of supply and demand, and the rich man fattens on the poor man's necessities. So also in the higher lines of employment. A town or city will be likely to hire its teachers, for instance, on the same basis. The question is not what are those teachers worth to their pupils and to community, or how much do they need in order to be kept in health and heart, but what is the lowest market price for that kind of commodity? What is the smallest figure at which they can be obtained? And still further; because there are women in abundance to be found who will fill for \$750, positions in school-work that would have to pay \$1,000 if done by the other sex, the women will be hired, at the lower figure; worth just as much as the men, but

forced to smaller pay by the relentless logic of numbers. So that we may say that in that instance \$250 is the tax which the gallantry of our civilization exacts from women on the ground of their femininity.

I want to add only one more illustration along a little different line. Our ladies explore the stores and shops and are constitutional bargain hunters. There are many articles—often the production of sewing-women—which come within the range of their pursuit and needs, that are obtainable at ruinously low prices. In view of such purchases it is not uncommon to hear the lady buyer declare that she does not see how it is possible for the goods to be made and sold for any such money. That is an unconscious confession that she has paid for the goods less than they are worth; and if she understands at all the state of the case it is furthermore a confession that she has allowed herself to make capital out of the extremity of the poor sewing-women, who are paid hardly enough for their work to keep their wretched souls inside of their half-starved bodies. And not only that, but if they will think a little further, they will be reminded that possibly some of the garments of their own wardrobe, purchased so economically as to allow of larger indulgence in other elegancies of attire, were made by hands so scantily remunerated that the sewing-woman's own body had to be put in the market to eke out the miserable pittance; so that perhaps the lady reader of this very page sails up and down the avenues decked in velvet and fur that were paid for in part by her own money and in balance by the hire of the brothel.

The purpose of all this wide variety of illustration has only been to open up the matter in a plain and practical way to the reader's intelligent Christian regard. It is easier and more congenial to confine our attention to some few conspicuous examples of monetary oppression; but the fact is, that society in all its classes and in both its sexes is pervaded by the disposition to treat other's interest as impertinent, to ignore the general weal, to deny the organic rights of men and women considered as members of community, to obtain our own aggrandizement on any terms of expense to others, whether in shape of money, comfort, life, virtue even, and to buckle everything down in attitude of menial contribution to our own individual behest. And the only way out of all this pettiness and friction and miserable competition and grinding despotism lies in the direction of a sense of mutual membership in each other, developed by the

love-impulse planted and nurtured in us by the living Gospel of God, as it is in Christ Jesus. Mere civilization will not compose among men their differences and discrepancies of interest. So long, for instance, as the capitalist and the wage-worker are only coming to a clearer understanding of their prerogatives *as against each other*, they will get no farther than to guard their competitive rights with new and stronger sanctions, and the line of demarcation between antagonistic camps be made only broader and more distinct. With no other light than that of civilization to walk in, any compromise that may be negotiated between the two will hold only so long as neither party judges it to be for its own interest to abandon it. The solvent of all these rival interests is found only in the attainment of one organic interest that shall be felt to hold every separate radius of aim and ambition in its own living central grasp. And that means the prevalence among men, in their property relations, of conceptions that are distinctively Christian; that genius of brotherhood that weaves all into one web of sympathy and concern, and sets each "looking not only on his own things, but also on the things of others."

C. H. PARKHURST.