



William Penn

Lecture 1918

*The Christian  
Demand  
For Social  
Reconstruction*

*Harry F. Ward*

William Penn Lecture 1918

**The Christian Demand  
For Social Reconstruction**

*Delivered at  
RACE STREET MEETING HOUSE  
Philadelphia*

by  
Harry F. Ward  
Boston University

Published by The Book Committee  
Religious Society of Friends  
Philadelphia and Vicinity  
302 Arch Street, Philadelphia

The William Penn Lectures are supported by the Young Friends Movement of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, which was organized on Fifth month thirteenth, 1916, at Race Street Meeting House in Philadelphia, for the purpose of closer fellowship; for the strengthening by such association and the interchange of experience, of loyalty to the ideals of the Society of Friends; and for the preparation by such common ideals for more effective work thru the Society of Friends for the growth of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The name of William Penn has been chosen because he was a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring “to live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed,” that these might become the laws and habits of the State.

Requests for permission to quote or to translate should be addressed to:

Pendle Hill Publications  
338 Plush Mill Road  
Wallingford, PA 19086-6023  
Email: [publications@pendlehill.org](mailto:publications@pendlehill.org)

Copyright © 2021 by Pendle Hill

ISBN:

ebook design by the [Quaker Heron Press](#)—2021

## **The Christian Demand for Social Reconstruction**

It was the noon hour in the big railroad shop. The men had finished their lunch and were listening intently to the preacher who was discussing the social aspect of Christianity. Suddenly he stopped and asked for questions. For a brief space there was silence. Then came a stir. The group opened and the men pushed one of their number to the front. "Here is your chance," they said to him. "You've been bothering us long enough with your questions. Now ask this man." And he did. The first question was theological. The matter being explained to his satisfaction, he said. "Now, I've got one more." It came like the sound of a rifle shot, incisive and insistent. "Was Jesus a rebel?" The purpose of the question was not historical. It had behind it a pungent interest for this present time. This was the process of that man's mind: Did not Jesus protest against the essential principles of the pagan order of life in which he found himself? Did he not propose another order of life based upon fundamentally different principles? Does not our present social order perpetuate many of the principles of the pagan Roman world? Are not the followers of Jesus then under compulsion to be rebels against the world as it is?

It is by this test that the wage-earners are bringing Christianity to judgment. They will determine its worth to the world by its capacity for social change. As they become increasingly intelligent, they find the world in large measure organized against them. They find the present social order arousing and then denying their aspirations for the

development of their children. They find it reversing their fundamental instinct for brotherhood by compelling them to compete with each other for the right to work, and in emergencies even to take the bread away from each other's families. Finally they find it throwing thirty millions of them into war, compelling them to do to each other the things they do not want to do. In this situation what they desire to know concerning Christianity is this: Does it make men content with the present order, or does it give them a desire to change the present organization of life?

Beyond the bounds of organized Christianity, there is an increasing consciousness concerning the social results of the teaching of Jesus. It is significant that the leaders of that wing of the working class movement which is in sharpest antagonism to the existing world order, increasingly claim him as their leader. As they become aware of the necessity of changing the nature as well as the form of social organization, they look in his direction. One of their journals recently declared that Jesus was the greatest champion of the revolutionary proletariat the world has ever seen. This is no technical attempt by proof texts to make Jesus the protagonist for particular dogmas or measures. It is, rather, an instinctive affinity of spirit and of aim. It is an appreciation of the fact that his demand for righteousness and justice and brotherhood must result in the making of a better world. There is no complete perception of the nature and consequences of His teaching, but there is a sense of their general drift and direction.

Are these men right concerning the revolutionary nature of the consciousness and intent of Jesus? Did not a hostile

world continually circumscribe and finally kill Him? Did He not increasingly recognize the sharp antagonism between His teaching concerning the democracy of God and the world order in which He found Himself, until He finally cried to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight." He threw no such judgment in the face of Pilate as He delivered against the High Priests, the established authorities of His own nation, but His basic principles effectually challenged and ultimately will destroy the fundamental principles upon which the empire of Rome was founded and developed. "Now is the prince of this world judged." And the sentence of that judgment will be carried out to the uttermost until all empires and dominions founded upon force and greed are finally destroyed.

The charge of rebellion against Rome lodged against Him was technically false. But it was fundamentally true in spirit. It was the result of an instinctive perception of the nature and consequences of His teaching. That same instinctive perception of danger has led to the suppression of His uncompromising followers in all periods of history, from the day when they were charged with turning the world upside down to the day in which the plutocratic autocrat who sometimes dominates the local church demands from the pulpit nothing but "the simple Gospel," and openly or circuitously secures the removal of the man who proclaims the full teaching of Jesus.

The fear of kings and potentates, spiritual and temporal, in the presence of the teaching of Jesus is well grounded. It is one thing to chant the *Magnificat* in Latin. It is altogether another thing to give it to the common people in the

vernacular. When they understand that he has “put down the mighty from the seats and exalted them of low degree,” when they comprehend the leveling process of that teaching which makes the first last and the last first, then the yeast of democracy begins to ferment and to accomplish political and industrial change. Christianity is indeed a dangerous religion and the Gospel a perilous propaganda for ancient wrong and all its beneficiaries.

The vital point concerning the impact of the teaching of Jesus upon the social order is not the extent of His revolutionary consciousness, but the nature and result of His teaching. His central demand was a new life for the individual and for society – a life with different motives and aims than those which actuate the common run of humanity; a life sustained and directed by different forces than those which control the ordinary community and our present social organization. This is one of the distinctions of Christianity as against other religions. It calls men to be born again, and these new-born men to create a new social order. It proclaims a social ideal and points out a dynamic by which it may be achieved. It is neither content with the world nor bent upon escaping from it. It will neither flee the evil that is in the world nor compromise with it.

Recently a modern Buddhist said to a Christian preacher that his fundamental requirement of religion was that it should make him content with life. There may be many modern Christians who have no higher ideals. But this is not Christianity. Not long since the governor of one of our states narrowly escaped indictment by the hasty adjournment of both the legislature and the grand jury. A few days later he

was addressing a gathering of the denomination that claimed his adherence. With hands folded over the ample evidence of his material prosperity, he informed the audience that when he went to church on Sunday he liked to hear something that made him at peace with the world.

Of such a peace the Gospel is a chronic disturber. It fires men with constructive discontent. It requires men to refuse to worship the god of things as they are. It proclaims an ideal which glitters in the sky like the highest peak of some mountain range, ever calling men to new adventure and ever receding as they approach. It whispers to them the message that calls the pioneer in Kipling's verse:

Something lost behind the ranges,  
Something missing; go and find it.

The Gospel gives its followers no fixed formula, but a set of continually unfolding principles. When men start to apply them the place where they shall stop is never visible. The farther they go, the farther they have to go. "Then you are a Socialist," the objector said to the preacher, whose sermon he had not liked. "No, sir," was the reply; "I am more than that – I am a Christian."

Is there any other propaganda that goes farther, that requires more fundamental change, than the propaganda of the Gospel? As long as there remains any part of the social order which is not in harmony with those teachings, the people called Christians must ever be rebels. It is their bounden duty not to confirm, but to transform. It is not a very comfortable

occupation, but they must keep on turning the world upside down until it gets upon the right foundation.

One of the European philosophers of Syndicalism, that most revolutionary wing of the working class movement, declares that their goal of a general strike is but a myth, but that myths are the most powerful sources of social action. What he means is that it is an unattainable ideal, an object of faith, and that by such humanity is moved more deeply than by any other force. Where in history is there an ideal more powerful to accomplish social action than that proclaimed in the Gospel? It unites the religious mystic's fellowship of man with God with the humanitarian's fellowship of men with each other. It seeks "a new heaven and a new earth."

It is inevitable that along with an increased recognition of the demand of the Gospel for social reconstruction there should come an increased condemnation of organized Christianity for not voicing that demand. Chesterton says truly that "the characteristic demand of Christianity is for a new world." Yet the heaviest charge brought against Christianity by those who are endeavoring to make a new world is that it is an anesthetic, making people content with the world as it is, repressing their revolutionary instincts, giving them the hope of a comfortable hereafter, instead of a desire to make the present world more bearable. The charge must be admitted, in so far as a large part of the emphasis of organized Christianity is concerned. It has taught men in servility to be content with the station in which God has placed them. This was done in ignorant and somewhat blasphemous disregard of the facts in the case, and also with a shameful, if

unconscious, acceptance of the benefits to accrue to the church from the maintenance of the powers that be.

Unquestionably the teaching of a future reward to enable men to endure present ills has gone far beyond its legitimate sphere of securing calm and patient acquiescence in the unchangeable and has accomplished a supine surrender to removable wrong. Not infrequently Christianity has buttressed the established order for gain when the established order was rooted and grounded in iniquity. Whether this was a conscious compromise or a failure to see the real nature of the undertaking, the tragedy was the same, though the guilt were less. It is a tragedy not confined to religious organizations. It is a commonplace of history that a state founded on a new concept of freedom abuses its power once it becomes organized.

When a vital truth is confined in institutions it tends to become static. Instead of a propaganda it becomes a creed. Its followers are more interested in protecting than in extending it. Their main occupation is to preserve orthodoxy and to conserve their vested rights. Their duty becomes the observance of routine, the chanting of litanies, the mumbling of creeds. The result is the fastening of the dead hand of the past upon the present. When this becomes the major employment of a religious organization, when it has nothing better to do than to defend the present order, it is in deed and truth one of the greatest hindrances to progress. It deserves the curse of the oppressed, and it will surely meet the wrath of God.

One of the evidences of the real nature of Christianity is the fact that in such a situation it has never been content. When the church was bound, hand, foot and tongue, by the powers that be; when it was the oppressor of man and the denier of God, came always the prophet and the martyr, inspired by the living word. It is convincing evidence of the truth that sets men free, of the vitality of the Gospel. Like the germ of wheat buried in the mummy case, it is bound to sprout and bear fruit when the opportunity offers.

Men may bury Jesus deep in the formalities and conventions of institutions, they may wrap him tight in ancient dogmas, but He will not stay in the tomb. Ever He walks forth, convincing the world of sin and of judgment, proclaiming the power of a new life, challenging and demanding change. His gospel has in deed and truth been a fermenting yeast continually at work in the development of humanity, accomplishing change after change. It found a world in which slavery was apparently an unchangeable institution. Today chattel slavery at least is dead. It found a world in which women and children were subordinate and oftentimes degraded. It proclaimed their inherent worth; and wherever it goes it accomplishes their emancipation. It goes deeper and challenges the very central principles of the world order.

Ever has there been a conflict between Jesus and civilization, because civilization has rested upon might and greed, and slowly its foundation principles are being changed. That conflict now comes to a head. Today that change moves to completion. Under the judgment of the teaching of Jesus the nature of the present world order becomes increasingly apparent. It is a day when not a few men, but the nations,

must choose between Caesar and Jesus. It is incumbent upon the followers of Jesus to become fully aware of the nature of that choice. They must become conscious of the content of the challenge which He brings to the existing world order.

We are living in a day of revolution. We are witnessing the end of one era of human history and the opening of another. It is some years since the great Italian historian declared that all the forces which led to the breakdown of the Roman Empire were present in our modern civilization in accentuated form. It would appear that those forces had accomplished their work. Count Okuma, the oldest and wisest of the elder statesmen of Japan, watching the world war from the other side of the globe, declares it can be nothing less than the death of European civilization. It may be with him that the wish is father to the thought, but the newly formed English Labor Party agrees in this estimate so far as "to recognize in the present world catastrophe, if not the death in Europe of civilization itself, at any rate the culmination and collapse of a distinctive industrial civilization, which the worker will not seek to reconstruct.

"What this war is consuming is not merely the security, the homes, the livelihood and the lives of millions of innocent families, and an enormous proportion of all the accumulated wealth of the world, but also the very basis of the peculiar social order in which it has arisen. The individualist system of capitalist production, based on the private ownership and competitive administration of land and capital, with its reckless profiteering and wage-slavery, with its glorification of the unhampered struggle for the means of life, and its hypocritical pretense of the 'survival of the fittest,' with the

monstrous inequalities of circumstances which it produces, and the degradation, both moral and spiritual resulting therefrom, may, we hope, indeed have received a deathblow. With it must go the political system of ideas in which it naturally found expression. We of the Labor Party, whether in opposition or in due time called upon to form an administration, will certainly lend no hand to its revival. On the contrary, we shall do our utmost to see that it is buried with the millions whom it has done to death.”

Thus does capitalistic industrialism come to judgment at the conscience of the worker. And this new English Labor Party comprehends the workers of brain as well as the workers of hand. Organized Christianity can do no less than to confirm the judgment. Modern industrialism has the same aims as the pagan world of Rome. It has sought first power and wealth. It has in another sphere pursued the same methods of the militaristic empires of the past. It has massed men together in large armies in industrial production for profit only. As Rome exploited the world with its legions, so our modern finance has exploited the world with its armies of capital and labor, producing slavery and luxury. Now the world witnesses the failure and pays the price of this fundamental sin.

In order to understand the need and nature of the Christian demand for social reconstruction it is worthwhile to recall the judgment that has already been passed by many authorities upon our modern capitalistic industrialism, which is the controlling force of our civilization, using as much of militarism as it needs in order to fasten an imperialism upon the world wider and more powerful than any empire of old.

Industrialism is the modern way of getting the work of the world done, of getting the people fed, and clothed and housed, and supplied with education, comforts and luxury. The judgment against it is to be found in the books of many authorities reposing safely upon our college shelves, in the reports of many commissions resting securely in governmental archives, in the data of many surveys gathered by numerous welfare agencies, in the prophetic utterances of many modern seers, and in the passionate outpouring in the labor press of those who have been condemned to economic serfdom. It is not our civilization as a whole which is decadent, but it is capitalistic industrialism, from whose control civilization must free itself if it would live.

Capitalistic industrialism has come to judgment on two counts: Because of its practical inefficiency and its moral delinquency. The world war has shown us with startling clearness that in a great emergency our method of production and distribution is unable to supply the necessities of life in sufficient quantity. The workers who have long borne the pains and penalties of its inefficiency and sins in their bodies have long known its inability and unwillingness to supply their fundamental needs. Under the tutelage of science modern industrialism has learned to produce food in sufficient quantities to feed all the hungry sons of men, and yet millions live in undernourishment and die in misery. We have long known all the essentials of a rational diet, but we have not yet given bread to all the hungry children. With continuous undernourishment in our great cities, the food has rotted in our fields and our orchards. With large sections of our population inadequately clothed and improperly housed,

there have yet been multitudes of workers continuously unable to secure employment. With a nation demanding the maximum of economic production for war purposes, right in the neighborhood of some of its munitions plants and shipbuilding yards, men have been out of work.

While all the nations and races of mankind have become increasingly interdependent upon each other, conscious of their need of mutual service, our modern industrialism has separated them by artificial barriers and has mobilized them for economic warfare. It has placed in antagonism the producer and the consumer, the employer and the wage-earner, the investor and the toiler, and even the fellow-workmen of different groups and different nations. It has carried on the process of production and distribution with increasing friction, developing it in hatred until it threatens the world with an unending series of conflicts.

The results of capitalistic industrialism to human life have been still more serious than its practical inefficiency. One of its by-products is an increasing junk pile of broken, fractional and undeveloped lives. Faster than the increased number and efficiency of philanthropic and welfare agencies produced by the spirit of Christianity has been the increase of human misery, piled up mountain high in the scrap heap of our modern industrial cities, and in the scattered huts of rural populations in certain tenant farming regions. With all the advantages of modern knowledge and of tremendously increased wealth, our modern cities still repeat all the vices, inequalities and wretchedness of the capitals of ancient empires.

The squalor of their slums, the rottenness of their mansions, are a reproduction of the conditions against which the Hebrew prophets thundered and the Roman moralists preached. The destructive nature of modern industrialism is seen at its worst in family life. Alike in the cottage of the artisan and the palace of the millionaire love is too often defeated and purity destroyed. The fundamental virtues and ideals of life, which always must fight for their existence, are here menaced by powerful and relentless foes.

It is modern industrialism which has organized vice for profit on a more extensive scale than humanity has ever seen before. It has increased the degradation of humanity because it pays. The great movements for purity and righteousness, for the education and development of humanity, which are the redeeming features and the hope of our civilization, are not produced by industrialism and only partly supported by it. They develop out of other motives and ideals, and are, in the final analysis, sustained by other forces. They have in them the power and promise of a new order of living, but it will be a battle to the death between them and the controlling forces of our civilization. Their hope must lie in the large undeveloped reserves of common people, still vigorous and uncorrupted by profit, power and luxury. It is these more primitive elements in our civilization which are now coming to power. If they succumb to the false principles and ideals of industrialism, then indeed is modern civilization doomed.

It is on moral and spiritual grounds that modern industrialism comes to final judgment. The British Labor Party speaks with truth concerning "the monstrous inequality of circumstances which it produces and the degradation and

brutalization, both moral and spiritual, resulting therefrom.” The practical inefficiency of industrialism roots in its moral delinquency, in its spiritual inadequacy. It has left people hungry when it knew how to produce the food that would satisfy them, because, being dominated by profit, it lacks the will to serve to the uttermost. Knowing the method that would reduce friction and prevent warfare, both between the classes and the nations, it has failed to organize the necessary industrial and political machinery, because, being saturated with the spirit of power, it has not desired a co-operative world.

As many of our recent philosophers have pointed out, modern civilization lacks neither the knowledge nor the ability to create a better order of life; but it is deficient in the desire and the will. Because it assumed that some men have right to more of life than others, because one of its fundamental premises was the right of the strong to special privilege, it has developed and sustained a ruling class; and it has lacked any adequate attempt to apply the results of science to the welfare of all the people. It has maintained a double standard of morals, not only in the realm of sex, but also in the sphere of government and industry. In the governing world and in the working world it has refused to accept the standards which it recognizes as imperative between individuals. What is wrong in the family is right in business. What is iniquitous between men is right between governments. Consequently, our present order has placed an unbearable burden upon the conscience of men who would seek justice and love mercy and attempt to walk humbly before God.

The strongest evidence of the unrighteousness of modern industrialism is the deep sense of sin which pervades and overpowers the finer spirits of our day. The youth of our churches and colleges finds itself increasingly in protest against the world organization. It is continually confronted with the choice of compromise or separation from established customs and institutions. The present world war has brought this ethical struggle to a climax. Its deepest horror is not physical destruction, but the mutilation of the spiritual body of humanity. The common people the world over, as well as the seers, are apprehending this fact, and are asking what are the deep-seated sins within the body politic which have occasioned the body of this death.

Herein lies hope. A new conscience is forming, and crying, not in the wilderness, but in the soldier's camp and the city streets. Here is evidence of a vital force, present in the midst of the decaying elements of modern industrialism. What is its nature and its origin? It is significant that it appears nowhere outside of the boundaries of the Christian religion. In the face of the evil of life, even concentrated into such climacteric as the present world calamity, the other religions stand impotent with no hope or promise. They have nothing to offer humanity but fatalistic surrender or an escape into the hereafter.

But wherever Christianity appears mankind begins at once to challenge the evil of life and to endeavor to find a way to remove it. In the present situation that challenge means a battle to the death. The choice before civilization is sharp. Either it lapses into decay, or it goes over into a renewed life. This war has released the suppressed, instinctive barbarisms

of humanity. If they are now organized and made to serve the ruling classes, whose only goal is power and profit, it means universal militarism, with the exhaustion of the modern world in one continued series of struggles.

The alternative, as the British Labor Party has correctly stated, is to build “a new social order, based not on fighting, but fraternity.” Here speaks the new conscience which Christianity has created. It challenges not simply the results, but the premises of the present social order. Nothing less is adequate. It is no time for mere external changes. The breakdown of the present world machinery is far beyond any tinkering remedy. It is a time for deep and vital transformation.

Just as Christianity confronted the Roman world with a new conscience, so now it confronts our modern industrial imperialism, demanding fundamental changes in the nature as well as the organization of society. It is a day of great longing and expectation throughout mankind, even as it was in the time when Jesus was born. Increasingly men are conscious of the end of a period of human history and the beginning of another. Convinced of the necessity of change, they are looking for leadership and direction. It is a time for Christianity to mass its forces of education and make clear its demands upon the organized life of man.

There are two fundamental elements in the Christian demand for social reconstruction. They were set forth by Jesus on the two occasions upon which He distinguished the community life that would develop out of His teaching from the organized society in which He found himself.

The first of these comparisons occurred near the beginning of His ministry. It concerns the goal of life, both individual and social. It is a question of the end which humanity is to seek. The nations of this world, Jesus pointed out, are concerned mainly with the acquisition of things. Their main object is to lay up treasures upon earth. His disciples, He declared, were to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and “all these things” – that is, the economic necessities of life – “shall be added unto you.” It is fair to assume that if Jesus were living today He would talk about the democracy of God, or, perhaps, following out His own conception of God as a father, He would speak of the family of God. In the days when He lived monarchy was the only form of governmental organization. Hence He had to think and speak somewhat in those terms.

But His meaning was that which has developed in our concept of democracy, which is a direct result of His teaching. Under the term “Kingdom of God” He was speaking about the fellowship of men with each other and with God, in all righteousness and justice, and so, finally, in brotherhood and peace. As the goal of living, both individual and social, he was setting the things of the spirit above the things of the flesh. It is a fundamental question of priority. The civilization of this world says, “Seek first after wealth, for wealth means security and comfort and power, and in the search, honesty being the best policy, the moral virtues shall develop.” Jesus says, “Seek first the things of the spirit, discover justice and brotherhood, and then in that search a sufficiency of material things will develop as a by-product.”

One of the essentials of social recuperation and reconstruction after the war is the increase of economic productivity. It becomes increasingly clear that this cannot be secured on the basis of seeking first material wealth. If the world is to find a way to continue to live, it will have to adopt the fundamental teaching of Jesus and organize its life in co-operative fellowship to remove the friction and to secure the harmony by which alone the maximum of production can be developed.

The reason that Jesus places such emphasis upon this matter of aim and goal is because the end of any society determines its nature – a society whose main end and goal is the acquisition of material wealth, which seeks also power and dominion throughout the earth. Such a society inevitably divides itself into classes, some of which have more than they need, and others less. The more wealth it produces, the more poverty it has. The dominant ambition of its strong men is to get wealth and power, and to maintain their families in idleness and luxury. It teaches its ruling classes an ideal of life in which they shall do no productive labor, but shall manage the government of the community. Their one task is to control others. They live in more leisure than they have earned by due service. They seek to give this leisure to their children even in larger measure. So they produce parasites who live off the body politic, sucking its life blood, contributing nothing to its development, who toil not and spin not, and yet their gorgeousness exceeds that of Solomon. The sight of their magnificence, spread brazenly before the poor, develops bitterness and class hatred.

Recently a workingman said: "I hate every man who pays more than 50 cents for his meals. That much I would allow him, because I can sometimes reach to that myself; and the sooner we workingmen learn to hate all those who spend more than that the quicker will we find a way out for ourselves." It is inevitable, if there are to be "haves" and "have-nots," that the "have-nots" will come to hate the "haves."

There is no end to such a class-divided society except mutual conflict and destruction. This hatred and bitterness and conflict can be modified by many welfare measures, but neither philanthropy nor arbitration will avail to do more than modify its bitterness and ferocity. The only adequate remedy is that proposed by Jesus, to change the fundamental goal and aim of life. As long as society is organized to seek simply the things of this world, it will be a continual struggle to see who can get the most.

This struggle is now organized between the nations. It develops what has come to be called "economic imperialism." This is the strife between the wealthy nations to secure the larger opportunities of wealth by the control of the undeveloped resources of the earth and the cheap labor of the backward peoples. This was one of the chief causes leading to the present world war, and is perhaps the greatest obstacle to its settlement.

An English college man who went to the front and fought with Kitchener's first army came home to write his "Second Thoughts" about the war. He read the diplomatic history of Europe for the last ten years, and finally said something like

this: “If you ask me to draw a picture of the great powers of Europe, I will paint you a group of businessmen, all having more money than they need, but still seeking after more, and, so, falling to fighting each other about it. I will paint the central figure blacker than the rest; a little more brutal and resourceful and unscrupulous, but there is no innocence here, and less guilt than might be supposed – only a vast ignorance concerning the nature of true wealth and of what life really is. The great powers have been seeking to lay up treasures upon earth, and it is the altar of this vast mistake that is now running foul and red with the blood of innocent millions.”

Bertrand Russell, in “Why Men Fight,” says the same thing in more philosophic fashion. He points out that one of the fundamental reasons that nation fight is because of the enlargement of the possessive instincts as against the creative instincts. The possessive instincts lead men to seek things which they do not want to share with others, and they fall to fighting about them, while the creative instincts lead them to produce things which they willingly share with others, such as truth and beauty and love. The analysis is correct. Modern society has put the possessive above the creative instincts. It was Jesus’ proposal to put the creative instinct first and to subordinate the possessive instinct to it. He emphasizes still more sharply this difference when he declared that his disciples could not possibly serve God and Mammon.

Yet unquestionably the ruling deity of capitalistic industrialism is Mammon. In so far as there is any conscious aim or goal evident, this is the production of goods and the piling up of capital. It is like the rich man in the Gospel,

whose one aim was to increase wealth, to pull down barns and storehouses and add more goods. The commonly acknowledged characteristic of our civilization is its wealth-seeking. "Money mad" it has been called. Millions of people are simply seeking to get more and still more, in order that they may not have to work or may be able to control others.

It must be clearly understood that a Christian civilization would have a different goal. As the British Labor Party has said, society, like the individual, does not live by bread alone, does not exist only for perpetual wealth production. A Christian society will have for its end the increase of spiritual values, the development of humanity to its highest capacity. Its members will have the ambition not to live in idleness supported by the labor of others, but to live in productive service to the community. Its goal is a society composed of co-operative producers, all contributing in righteousness and justice to the common life, and, so, all reaching their highest possible development.

It is the Christian teaching that in such a community God dwells, and that men living together in all helpfulness as one great family, have in deed and truth fellowship one with another and with Him, the Father of them all. Such a society will grow increasingly in fellowship and in productive capacity, for, as death comes from seeking merely things, so does life come from seeking spiritual values. In such a community there will be no parasites, contributing nothing to the common welfare, and no exploiters, taking more than they justly deserve. Sharing gladly and naturally the things of the spirit which are its chief end and aim, such a fraternal community will devote its surplus wealth to the common

development. Thus, working and sharing together, it will grow into unity, until it also becomes one with the Father who is the great Master Workman of the universe.

The second element in the Christian demand for reconstruction is contained in the final distinction made by Jesus between a Christian and a pagan community life along toward the close of His career, when the shadow of the cross lay so plain upon His pathway that the disciples could see it. Yet even this vision did not stop them quarreling between themselves concerning place and power, and it became necessary for Jesus to repeat a lesson which He had long vainly tried to get them to understand. In order to make it plainer, He emphasized the difference in the organizing principle of the pagan community and of the Christian fellowship. "Ye shall not be as the Gentiles," He said, "whose lord and rulers have dominion over them, but whoever would be greatest among you, let him be the servant of all."

The organizing principle of pagan society is the right of the strong to rule. They become lords, kings, emperors and plutocrats. They seek and acquire power to hold others in subjection. Therefore, the society in which this principle obtains is held together by force. All world empires have been thus organized and cemented. Jesus declares that His followers are to recognize the duty of the strong to serve; that the organizing principle of their community life is to be service; that its bond is to be love. He means love as no vague sentiment or impractical ideal. He requires it to be tested and manifested in practical service. In the Christian community there are no masters, neither priest nor king,

neither wealthy nor wise, seeking to control others. There is an equality of service. All are servants of each other and of the common good. There are no rulers, but leaders; and the leaders are those who are chosen and approved because of the extent of their service. This is in deed and truth democracy. It is held together not by the threat of armies, but by the matchless might of the spirit of love.

It must be clearly understood that the two fundamental demands of Christianity for reconstruction are absolutely interdependent. The spirit and the end of society belong together. Its organizing principle and its goal must harmonize. If society seeks possession, then it must have force to protect the possessor. If it seeks power, it must have armies as the tool of the aggressor. Autocracy must build its state around militarism, and plutocracy must organize industry around its hired and armed guards to suppress the protesting or revolting workers.

The natures of the militaristic state and of capitalistic industrialism are identical. They seek special power and privilege for the few, and that necessarily means the control of the many by the few. Mars and Mammon belong together. If we would overthrow one, the other also must be destroyed, for they are inseparably joined. Both of them are the relentless, uncompromising foes of Christianity and democracy.

The vital issue of this present conflict, in so far as the interests of the inarticulate masses the world over are concerned, in so far, also, as the vital interests of Christianity are concerned, is that it shall result in the overthrow of

militarism and of capitalistic industrialism. Unless the nations can organize their economic life on some other basis than that of warfare, militarism will be continued and extended, blood and iron will continue to rule the world, and Christianity will struggle for its existence as a rebellious protest against the powers that be. In such a case, its manifest duty is to convince the world of the necessity of organizing love as the ruling principle of society, and of the impossibility of extending this principle unless society will seek for its aim the things of the spirit and not the things of the flesh.

This is a supreme opportunity for the Christian teaching. Millions of men are finally convinced of the failure and futility of force as a social and international bond. Long since it was abandoned in the democratic and Christian countries as the bond to hold the family together. The autocratic powers of the husband and father have long been taken from him. But still that principle lingers in the world of work and of government. It is used there to sustain the special privileges of the few. It leads in the one case to strikes and civil war, and in the other to a world conflict. There is no other end to a society which is organized to seek after things and to protect the gains of the successful by organized force.

Such a society has in it the seeds of death. Multitudes of soldiers in the armies are seeing this fact. They are demanding the organization of a new world. They are discussing Socialism and Christianity, because both of these propose a new order of living. If organized Christianity fails to assume leadership in the demand for an international

organization based on co-operation rather than on competition, making the strong nations the servants instead of the exploiters of the weak; if it fails to demand the organization of the community life for the development of mankind instead of the mere amassing of wealth, its day of usefulness is done. The fundamental principle of Jesus, that the end of social living is personality, not things, and that the organizing principle of society is service and not mastery, will come to expression in some other form.

In this world crisis it is essential to remember that the reconstruction which Christianity demands is more than a mechanical undertaking. To organize a new world is something more than to build a new house. It needs that new motive and spirit upon which Jesus insisted. Christianity brings to the world not simply reconstruction, but regeneration. It must also be remembered that life is a continuing process. No new social order can suddenly appear ready made from the heavens. It must be a development out of the present situation. It can be nothing more than the elimination of some of the evils and the further development of some of the good now contained in the present order.

Christianity seeks a revolutionary goal, but it proceeds by the evolutionary method, step by step. For twenty centuries it has been spreading through our western civilization the great teaching that men and not things is the goal of living; that love and not force is the organizing principle of society. These teachings have controlled many individual lives. They have been partially expressed in many social movements. They have never yet become the dominant principle of government and industry. The great change which is now to

be made is to put them into their rightful place as the controlling principles of social organization.

This means a change in the thinking of men concerning the dynamic of the social order. This generation has been taught to look upon social living as strife and conflict. It talks glibly about the survival of the fittest. The phrase represents the popular understanding of evolutionary development, but the dominant teaching of science is that the development of life, both animal and human, is very much more a process of co-operation than of conflict. Not strife, but mutual aid, is the law of development. In the animal world those individuals survive which belong to the most cooperative groups; and those groups which can best cooperate are the survivors in the struggle against nature to get food.

In human development the cooperative principle is still more essential. Darwin pointed out that the law of reciprocity expressed in the Sermon on the Mount is really the principle of moral gravitation, absolutely essential to the development of society; that those nations survive and develop which are able to organize to the highest degree this fundamental moral law, and to control their life by it. Thus Christianity has the definite support of science in its great teaching that love is the organizing principle of society.

Its task, then, is to make humanity fully aware of the process by which society has developed, so that the mutual aid of the biologist shall become the conscious good-will of organized humanity; so that all the functions of human living shall be developed by cooperation, and more of them be crippled or destroyed by internecine conflict. Yet this new order of life

cometh not by observation alone. While Christianity increases intelligence and lays under tribute all of human knowledge, its chief function is to develop the spirit of men. It requires its individual adherents to organize their personal lives around the principle of service, and for the absolute seeking of spiritual values rather than material goods. Only such persons can effectively demand the requisite changes in political and social organization. The people who have learned to be cooperative producers, to live fraternal lives, are the people who will be able presently to organize a fraternal world which will inevitably become a God-filled world.

## About the Author

Harry Frederick Ward Jr. (1873–1966) was an English-born American Methodist minister and political activist who identified himself with the movement for Christian socialism, best remembered as first national chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) from its creation in 1920 until his resignation in protest of the organization's decision to bar communists in 1940.

Ward was active in a variety of left-wing causes besides the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). He was one of the founders of the Methodist Federation for Social Action and served as its general secretary from 1911 to 1944. He supported eugenics, claiming that they and Christianity were compatible as both pursued the “challenge of removing the causes that produce the weak.” In 1933, he formed “New America, an organization committed to economic reform” with an inclination toward Socialism. From 1934 to 1940, he was the chairman of the American League Against War and Fascism. He frequently spoke at events held by the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship and received an honor from its women's division in 1941.

In 1927, during a Columbia University symposium, Ward stated that Capitalism is a state of mind and a religion, of which most of the world is skeptical and that only in the United States does it flourish. In 1933, he signed an open letter that asked the US Immigration service to admit religious and political refugees from Nazi German. In 1937, Ward spoke out against anti-semitism in Poland. In 1938, he

spoke out against “mass mechanized warfare” and separately criticized Nazism.

In March 1940, the ACLU, under pressure to demonstrate its anti-communism, barred communists from holding office in the organization. Formally, the ACLU barred “anyone who is a member of any political organization which supports totalitarian dictatorships in any country.” Ward resigned in protest.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_F.\\_Ward](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_F._Ward)

## About the Lectures

The William Penn Lectures started as a ministry of the Young Friends' Movement of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In the beginning of the last century, "Young Friends" was the community of young adults from both the Hicksite and the Orthodox Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, which reunited in 1955. The Young Friends Movement began the lecture series "for the purpose of closer fellowship; for the strengthening by such association and the interchange of experience, of loyalty to the ideals of the Society of Friends; and for the preparation by such common ideals for more effective work through the Society of Friends for the growth of the Kingdom of God on Earth." The name of William Penn was chosen because the Young Friends Movement found Penn to be "a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring 'To live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed; and that these might become the laws and habits of the State.'"

The first run of William Penn Lectures were given between 1916 and 1966, and are warmly remembered by Friends who attended them as occasions to look forward to for fellowship with our community, inspiration, and a challenge to live into our faith. The lectures were published by the Book Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has granted Pendle Hill and Quaker Heron Press permission to reproduce the lectures as free ebooks.

Although it was [announced](#) in 1960 that the series would be discontinued several lectures were published in the early '60s. It appears that the lectures given between 1923 and 1931 were never published. If we come upon manuscripts of these lectures, we hope to publish them in future.

In 2010, the Young Adult Friends of PYM revived the series, officially launching the second run of the William Penn Lectures in 2011. [The series was renamed](#) the *Seeking Faithfulness* series in 2016, as part of the Young Adult Friends of PYM's concern for dismantling racism within the yearly meeting and the wider society. It no longer felt rightly ordered to have a major event named after a slaveholder. The [Seeking Faithfulness](#) series is hosted by the Young Adult Friends for the benefit of the whole yearly meeting community, and invites a Friend to challenge us all to explore new ways to practice our Quaker faith. The Seeking Faithfulness series seeks to nourish our spiritual lives and call us to faithful witness in our communities and throughout the world.