

Copy of answer to Bishop

Vincent's letter.

My dear Bishop:

Accept my thanks for your hearty letter in regard to "Murvale Eastman." I have long been impressed with the idea that the divorce of Christianity from social, public, political action, which resulted from the fear of clerical control, was a mistake both for Church and State and one of the purposes of the book was to mark out the lines of their harmonious relation and just and safe inte-action. The Church should not be the controller but the inspirer. I was also impressed with a notion that these indefinite yearnings for misty millennial conditions, like "Looking Backward," which have gotten so wide a hold upon our people through the writings especially of Henry George and the wide-spread Labor movement, was harmful to the Church not less than threatening to the State.

"Murvale Eastman" was planned and partly written before Robert Elsmere came out, but that work strengthened my conviction. Its true socio-religious significance--which you will allow me to express surprise that no minister has ever distinctly formulated--is that the reason the Church is not entirely in accord with the prevailing impulse for human betterment, is because it clings to the theory of the supernal nature of Christ. This is not only illogical but absurd. It seemed to me that there must be a common ground for Christian Socio-political activity in which the question of faith should not arise.

Of course this does not and cannot include Romanism in which control is not only a resultant of faith but an absolute condition

of it. It offers, however, a common meeting-ground for all Protestant sects and for the heirs of Protestant thought although unbelievers and so provides a simple method for unifying and solidifying good influences and healing tendencies without awakening strife.

A singular circumstance confirmatory of this view, is that in the mail with your letter came a review of the book in the "Twentieth Century," which is, you know, the organ of the "Belleyites," attacking it as an attempt to harmonize Religion and humanity, and containing this remarkable statement: "The author attempts to make it appear that the true Christian Religion is admirably adapted to solve the present strife between laborers and monopolists. I do not agree either with his religion or his Socialism. I am quite sure that the labor-problem will never be solved until the last vestige of religion disappears."

There it is in plain words. The labor-problem--the ills of our present condition--are made to serve as a cover and excuse for godlessness. The way to combat this tendency is not to denounce the labor movement--one might as well butt his head against Gibraltar as deny its evils--but to win and weld it to Christian thought and philosophy--to Christian purpose. All send regards:

Sincerely yours,

Albion W. Tourgee.