Can the Church Be Radical?

Debate held at the Lexington Theatre
Sunday Afternoon, February 12, 1922

Affirmative
JOHN HAYNES HOLMES
Minister of the Community Church

Negative
SCOTT NEARING
Lecturer in The Rand School

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Rabbi Judah L. Magnes was introduced as the chairman of the debate by Harry W. Laidler, secretary of the League for Industrial Democracy.

DR. MAGNES: It is very gratifying, ladies and gentlemen, to find that on so inclement an afternoon this large audience has come here, interested in the topic of this debate. The church is an old, important, historical institution, and its attitude toward society and toward a possible reconstruction of our social order is of the utmost importance.

The speakers of this afternoon have agreed upon certain limitations in reference to this debate. In the first place they regard the church as that social organization of religion, known to all of us, without further definition. It is not their purpose to discuss all of the functions of the church. They will not discuss its theological bases, nor will they debate on the question of the individual's relations to the divine, or the historic mission of the church, or the mystery of the universe inherent in the dogmas of all religions. They have agreed to limit their debate to the social function of the church, and they ask the question, "Can the church be radical in relation to the social problems that convulse mankind today?"

They have agreed as to the definition of the word "radical" as it is found in the New Standard Dictionary, as having to do with or proceeding from the root, source, origin or foundation. Hence, carried to the fullest limit, thoroughgoing, unsparing, extreme. A radical difference is one that springs from the root and is thus constitutional, essential, fundamental, organic, original. A radical change is one that does not stop at the surface, but reaches down to the very root, and is entire, thorough, total.

Their debate will concern itself primarily with the industrial conflict, the struggle between capital and labor, and they will endeavor to give an answer to the question as to whether or not the church can take the lead in securing economic and political and spiritual freedom for the masses of the workers of the world. They are to approach the problem
from a radical point of view and ask the question, "Is it possible, along the lines of thoroughgoing democracy, for the church to be free to give a thoroughgoing answer to this problem?"

The following time has been accorded each of the speakers: Dr. Holmes, in opening will have 35 minutes. Dr. Nearing, in opening, will also have 35 minutes. The affirmative in rebuttal will then have 25 minutes, the negative in rebuttal 30 minutes; then the affirmative in its final rebuttal five minutes, making a total of 130 minutes or two hours and 10 minutes.

I am sure, ladies and gentlemen, that you will be of aid to the chairman in helping him maintain strict impartiality. And I am convinced also that this debate will prove worthy of some of the great controversies that have taken place in days of crises. If ever men needed to think clearly, to think to the roots of things and understand what was at the bottom of their lives, that time is today.

I have much pleasure in introducing to you the first speaker on the affirmative of the question, "Can the Church Be Radical?" Dr. John Haynes Holmes.
Can the Church Be Radical?

YES

John Haynes Holmes

NO

Scott Nearing

DR. HOLMES: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Nearing, Ladies and Gentlemen: As I was leaving my church this morning, one of my parishioners came up to me and stated the fact that she was to be present here this afternoon, and she pointed out that she was going to be in an exceedingly embarrassing situation. She said, “You know, I am very fond of you, but also I am very fond of Mr. Nearing. And I shall be torn between my affection and regard for the two speakers, and I don’t know just how to feel or what to do.”

Now, I want to say very definitely at the outset of this debate that if there are people in this audience this afternoon who have affection and regard for my friendly enemy, Mr. Nearing, and I feel that every person here is to be included in that group, I want to be included in that group also. I have long had great regard for Mr. Nearing, ever since he got into trouble at the University of Pennsylvania, and my regard has kept on growing during the years as he has got into trouble in one place after another since then.

I feel that we can say in the most serious way in the world that here we have a man, who, as a great scholar, is doing what is so rare for scholars to do in this or any other age, placing his store of information and knowledge at the disposal of the people for their emancipation from the burdens that they carry and the evils with which they are confronted all of the time. That sort of service is the very highest form of public service, and it is because I know Mr. Nearing is coming here this afternoon in the spirit of the splendid life that he has been living during all of these years that I count it a great privilege and honor to stand upon this platform and have this opportunity to debate with him upon the question, “Can the Church Be Radical?” I feel therefore that if my parishioner was under some sense of embarrassment, I perhaps am under a somewhat greater sense
of embarrassment this afternoon, for I not only have the affection and regard which she has for Mr. Nearing, but I am also in the exceedingly difficult position of being obliged to debate with him for a couple of hours—or was it for two hours and ten minutes.

Now, you are here in order to hear this debate and see what we are going to say upon the question, and it is absolutely necessary, as Mr. Nearing and I fully realize, that you should get your money's worth this afternoon. And so I want to say that I am going into this fight as vigorously as I know how, and I know that Mr. Nearing is going to do exactly the same thing. I like to start off with what I am going to say on questions of this kind with a text. It gives a good starting point and meets the spirit of the occasion, and, therefore, I want to say that my text this afternoon is the text taken from the last act of the Shakesperean tragedy, "Macbeth": "Lay on, Macduff, and damned be he who first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

One of my parishioners recently came to see me. She said that she had the problem before her of disposing of her property after she died. I was immediately interested.

She said that she had gone to a lawyer and explained the situation to him. She said to the lawyer, "I want to give a share of my money after I am dead to a radical school." "A radical school? Madam, that can be arranged." "Secondly, I want to give my money to a radical newspaper." "A radical newspaper? That can be arranged." "Thirdly, I want to give my money to a radical institution for orphan children." "A radical institution for orphan children? Madam, that can be arranged." "Lastly, I want to give my money to a radical church." "A radical church? Madam, no such church exists."

Now, it is the question as to whether a radical church exists at the present time that I take it we are meant to discuss this afternoon, and in a way I find it most amazing that I should be standing here and put to the task of defending the church from the standpoint of its radicalism. All of my life I have been in the position not of defending the church upon this question, but in the position of attacking it and denouncing it. I know perfectly well that there are friends of mine in this city and in other cities who would stand simply horror-stricken if they could really know that I am to stand here on this platform this after-
noon and argue, after all of the things that I have said and
tried to do during my life's work, that the church can
actually be radical from the standpoint of its attitude on
the social question.

And yet, after all, when we come to analyze the subject
before us, my position is not quite as anomalous as it may
seem to be at the very beginning. During all these years
that I have been in the church I have been belaboring
its infidelity to the great causes of human emancipation.
And I have been thus belaboring and denouncing the church
from this point of view because of the fact that deep down
within my soul I feel the profound conviction that the church
can be radical upon this question as upon any other ques-
tion, and because I feel, somehow or other, that it is de-
cidedly worth while to justify this conviction and to try to
prove by actual works that the church can be made to do
exactly this thing.

In other words, the very fact that I am in the church
and that a good many men like myself are in the church
today is a demonstration of the faith that we have within
our hearts that the church after all can be radical. The
church perhaps was not radical yesterday upon the so-
cial question. The church perhaps is not radical today.
But there are some of us who believe, and believe so
thoroughly that we are willing to stake our lives upon it,
that the church can be made, can be taught, can be led to
be radical tomorrow. It is this faith that actuates the
thought and the lives of literally hundreds of men and
women on every side at the present day, for there are none
of us who know so well as those who are inside the church
today that there are people in the church who are dedi-
cated to this great proposition that the church shall be
made the free servant of all the desires of man.

Therefore do I point out that the very fact that we stand
in the church, that we labor for it, the very fact that we
denounce its sins and expose its evils, is a demonstration
that we have some faith that this thing can be done. We
do not complain and cry out to high heaven because a stretch
of granite does not produce wheat and corn, for we know
that the thing cannot possibly be done. We do not agonize
and cry out because grapes do not grow from thorns and figs
from thistles. We know that that thing is not possible. But
we do know that any social institution, be it the church, or
the college, or the state or anything else—we do know, or at
least we feel, that any social institution that has within itself
men and women, young men and young women, has within itself at least the possibility of seeing the truth, serving the truth, to the accomplishment of the farthest ideas and the highest ideals of humankind.

Therefore, may I say at the very outset that all the sense of anomaly that I felt in the beginning has disappeared from my mind. I realize in arguing here this afternoon for the affirmative side of the question that the church can be radical, that I am only expressing in argument that kind of faith that I have been trying to express in my years of service in the church, during the last ten or dozen years that have passed.

Coming now a little more closely to the discussion of the question, "Can the Church Be Radical?" I want to point out in a kind of supplementary way to what the chairman had to say this afternoon, that in addition to our understanding of what the word "radical" means, it may be well for us to come to a very definite understanding of what the word "can" means. In other words, I want to emphasize the fact at the very outset that my friend, Mr. Nearing, and I are discussing the question, "Can the Church be Radical?" Not the question, "Was the Church Radical Yesterday?" not the question, "Is the Church Radical Today?" but the question, "Can the Church Be Radical, by any gift of leadership or by any consecration of its members, tomorrow?" We are dealing, in other words, not with any regard to the past, but we are dealing frankly with the prospects of the future. Nay, I would point out that we are dealing with a narrower and more definite question than that. We are dealing not with the prospects of the future at all. Rather are we dealing simply with the possibility of the future, for the word "can" expresses simply the question of possibility or impossibility, and not in any sense of the word probability or improbability.

My friend Mr. Nearing here will undoubtedly take considerable time this afternoon to tell the long, the melancholy and the tragic story of the church in the past, especially in its attitude towards the social question. I have a dreadful kind of fear that he may lug out something that I have said in one of my sermons or in one of my books, and thereby absolutely convict me out of my own mouth upon this question, for the things that I have said about the delinquencies of the church in the past I hate, to think of at this particular moment. But I strive to defend myself upon this particular proposition by pointing
out again that all that can be said about the record of the churches in the past I admit before it is said. All that can be said about the probability of the church in the future I admit before it is said. I simply refuse to debate the question as to what the church did yesterday or did not do. I refuse to debate the question as to what the church may do or may not do tomorrow. I choose to stick to the proposition as it has been worded. We are dealing here, in other words, with possibilities, and I want to say that when we come to deal with possibilities from the negative point of view, we have got an exceedingly difficult proposition upon our hands.

The difficulty of Mr. Nearing's position, the position into which most unfortunately he has been forced, and which I recognize he has in the spirit of true sacrifice accepted for the sake of your enjoyment and instruction this afternoon, the difficulty of his position is this, that the man who sustains the negative of the question, "Can the Church Be Radical?" has got to prove what is known as a universal negative. He has got to prove that nowhere, in any age, under any circumstances of any kind, can the church be radical. All I have got to do is to prove what is called a particular affirmative. I simply have to go out into the world today, find one or two particular instances where the church is radical or shows tendencies of being radical, and behold I have proved the case that I am here to prove.

In order to show exactly what I mean by speaking of particular affirmative, I want to emphasize this word "possibility" as contrasted with "probability." The very moment that I point to this instance and say, "This proves the church is radical," or to that instance over there and say, "That proves that the church can be radical," Mr. Nearing makes a notation on his paper and then he is going to get up when he has a chance and is going to say, "That may all be true, but one swallow doesn't make a summer." I say that because I want to be the first one to say it. From that statement that "One swallow doesn't make a summer" he draws the conclusion that one radical church does not make the church radical, and that is perfectly true. One radical church does not make the church radical, but it does demonstrate the possibility that the church can be radical, and that is all that I care about this afternoon. I stress this point a good deal, because it is so vital to the side that I am defending.
I want to give you some illustrations. Let us suppose that we have the question before us, "Can a woman have 16 children?" Now, Mr. Nearing would immediately get up, and from the vast sources of his sociological information he would point out the fact that the average number of children that the average married woman has is something like three and a fraction, and he would declare that that proved his case. Now, in answer to him, all I have got to do is to go out and find a woman who has 16 children. We might have the question, "Can a cow have a two-headed calf?" That would be an easy proposition for anybody on the negative side, apparently. You can demonstrate from the biological point of view that a cow cannot have a two-headed calf, but all I have got to do is to reproduce the achievement of P. T. Barnum who found a cow that had a two-headed calf, and the question is demonstrated.

And so I might go on illustrating what I mean by the difference between "probability" on the one hand, and "possibility" on the other. And I want to take all the advantage I possibly can of the position. I am going to need it before Mr. Nearing gets through. I want to take advantage of all that this position gives to me, and point out that I am discussing this afternoon the question, "Can the church as a matter of scientific possibility be radical?"

Now, coming to this question of the universal negative as contrasted with the particular affirmative, I want to say in all seriousness and earnestness that it seems to me that it is not at all difficult to demonstrate this afternoon or any afternoon that it is entirely possible for the church to be radical. The evidence may not be abundant, but the evidence is adequate to justify the assertion upon the basis of the facts of experience that, Yes, the church can be radical.

What is the test that we shall apply to the question as to whether the church can be radical? What kind of a question shall we ask in order to get the evidence that we want? Shall we test the church by the leaders that it produces, and the leaders, may I also say, that it sustains? Then I say to you that the church has done its share in making its contribution to public leadership along radical lines in our age and the age before the war. Let me name a few of the radical leaders in the church: First of all, that man whom I so greatly love and admire, no longer living, Dr. Washington Gladden, of Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Gladden would not qualify today, if he were living, as a radical leader of religion; but when Dr. Gladden came to his initial fame in this country as the pastor
of his church he was a radical leader in that day, for he was one of the first men in this country who dared openly as a minister of religion to espouse the cause of labor against capital, and down to the last moment of his life he was engaged in interpreting the interests of labor to a hostile world.

Or, again, take a man whom I loved and admired so much during his life, Dr. Walter Rauschenbush, of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Rochester. Dr. Nearing has more than once expressed his admiration and love for this great leader. His great book, "Christianity and the Social Crisis," is an exposition from the first page to the last of the principles of the Socialist party in this country. I want to remind you that Dr. Rauschenbush remained to the end of his life an honored member of the faculty of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rochester.

Again, as another illustration, I need no more than mention the honored name of Dr. Harry F. Ward of the Union Theological Seminary of this city. I have here an interview that was published in the New York World a few weeks ago in which he talked about the radicalism of Jesus Christ. He said, "The world is going madly in the wrong direction, and the only thing to do is to turn about and head the other way." "Jesus," he said, "preached the Kingdom of God as opposed to the Kingdom of Property; in other words, the organization of human life around the creative principles instead of around the idea of possession." Again, speaking of his partisanship toward labor, he said, "I am on the side of labor as against the side of property and privilege. How do you suppose that a person who takes the philosophy of Jesus seriously could hold any other position?"

Again, as another illustration of leadership, I cite the book which I found being sold in the lobby when I arrived this afternoon. Here is a book called, "Communism and Christianism," written by a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Right Reverend William Montgomery Brown, D. D., Fifth Bishop of Arkansas Resigned; Member of the House of Bishops Protestant Episcopal Church; sometime Archdeacon of Ohio and special lecturer at Baxley Hall, the Theological Seminary of Kenyon College.

These are illustrations that, tested by the power of leadership, prove that the church can be radical.

Again, shall we test the church by the newspapers or journals or the weekly magazines it produces? May I name here three magazines which can be described as evidence that the church can be radical in the journalistic field? One illustration is
Unity, founded by Dr. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, edited today by Francis Nielson, and Mr. Nielson, by the way, is the editor, as you know, of the Freeman, a journal which is trying to be radical from the standpoint of labor and capital. Secondly, may I name as an illustration of a newspaper and journal, the New York Christian Work. I want to read a passage or two from a clipping of an editorial published in the New York Christian Work a few weeks ago: “The world is challenging us for a leader to justify the claims we have made. The Bishops at Lambeth have pointed the way. They show us that there is nothing sacred in the present order of things; on the contrary, the whole system is incompatible with the laws of Christ, the laws of love, justice and sacrifice. It stands condemned and must sooner or later be swept away.” Thirdly, as an illustration of radicalism in this particular field, I cite you that well-known paper, the Christian Century. The other day there appeared in the New Republic an advertisement of the Christian Century, and the advertisement had a number of letters from famous people who testified to the fact that this paper was the real thing from the standpoint of its attitude on the social question and other matters. Among the famous people that I find testifying to the splendid character of this paper is a man by the name of Scott Nearing, sociologist. Scott Nearing says about this publication: “The earnest message of the Christian Century should gain a hearing wherever men read, think and love truth.”

Again, shall we test the church not by its leaders, or by its papers, but by its platform, its pronunciamentos, the things that it says upon the social questions of our time? Those of you who are interested in the utterances of the church today on the social question, I recommend that you get a copy of Prof. Harry F. Ward’s book, entitled “The New Social Order.” I recommend that you then turn to the chapter which is headed “The Churches,” and you will find there a catalogue of the utterances of the churches upon the social problems of labor and capital in our time. I will read a few of the scattered sentences taken from these various platforms. Here is a statement from the established Church of England: “The Christian message to the world is to be prepared to make the sacrifices involved in acting frankly and fully upon the principles of brotherhood and of the equal value of every single human life.” And again: “The proper attitude for the church is, not to consider what kind of teaching is popular or unpopular, but to teach what is right, irrespective of consequences.” And again: “The call which is sounding in this day of world-judgment is that we should not only hold the faith, but re-order
our life, social as well as personal, in accordance with its prin-
ciples."

Here do I find a statement taken from the platform of the
Quaker social faith of the Society of Friends or Quakers of this
country: "Its faults are not the accidental or occasional mal-
adjustments of a social order, the general spirit and tendency of
which can be accepted as satisfactory by Christians. They
are the expressions of certain deficiencies deeply rooted in the
nature of that order itself." And again: "We recognize, indeed,
that the large changes which are necessary must be carried out
gradually, in a spirit of tolerance and of mutual charity and
forbearance. But we think that it is precisely the general eco-
nomic organization of society which is, in some respects, de-
fective; that the efforts of Christians should be directed not
merely to attacking particular evils as they arise, but to dis-
covering and removing the roots from which they spring."

Again, the statement of the bishops of the Methodist Episco-
pal Church of this country, "It is increasingly manifest that
there must be progress away from selfish competition to un-
selfish co-operation in that struggle for daily bread." And
again: "Democratic progress means the enlargement and en-
richment of the life of the masses of mankind through the self-
directive activity of men themselves." The Canadian Method-
ists a little while ago declared that "The present economic
system stands revealed as one of the roots of war." And again:
"The ethics of Jesus demand nothing less than the transfer of
the whole economic life from the basis of competition and profit
to one of co-operation and service." And again, the Quakers,
the London Friends of England, declare: "In the ideal state of
society we believe that all property, with the exception of such
things as are necessary for personal and household use, should
be owned communally. This conclusion is based on the follow-
ing principles, which we hold to be true: (1) The chief pur-
pose of life is the creation of spiritual values. (2) This pur-
pose is interfered with, both in their own lives and in those
of others, when men's efforts are directed to the acquisition,
protection and extension of private property. (3) This purpose
is furthered when men's efforts are directed to the service of
the common weal."

And so they go on page after page up to page 351, where the
author draws the conclusions which are justified by the facts,
so far as these facts go, that the churches are finding their
way to an understanding of the social problem, and are justify-
ing the statement that they can be radical in their work in
this field.
Or again, shall we test the churches not by their leaders or by their papers or by their platforms, but by the actual churches themselves? During the last two or three years I have had the privilege of visiting various cities and towns of this country, and the thing that has impressed me on these little journeys is this, that there is hardly a city or town where I go today where I am not shown what is known as the radical church of the town, the church that is standing out on the social question, espousing the cause of labor and asking for a reconstruction of the social order.

In Boston there is the Community Church. In Cleveland there is the Congregational Church, headed by the Rev. David Rhys Williams, brother of Albert Rhys Williams, the author of "Through the Russian Revolution." In Cincinnati there is the Independent Church, headed for years by Herbert S. Bigelow. In Minneapolis there is the Unitarian Church, headed by my radical friend, Dr. Dietrich. In Denver, Colo., there is the Grace Methodist Church, headed by Dr. Lackland, who espoused the cause of the striking streetcar workers so effectively some years ago that he had the honor of being sued for slander by the Governor of the state. In Los Angeles there is a radical church, headed by Mr. Blight. In Seattle there is the Congregational Church, headed by Dr. Sidney Strong, who in all the labor troubles in the far Western cities has stood by the cause of labor and the emancipation of the working class. In Los Gatos, Cal., we have the Baptist Church, headed by my friend and Dr. Nearing's friend, the Rev. Robert Whitaker. In New York City we have the Labor Temple on 14th street and Second avenue. These are only a few of the substantial evidences of the fact that here and there all over the country you find radical churches standing out in the great body of churches, pioneers, leading the way, showing the way where the great body of the church is going to be tomorrow; and I say to you that upon the basis of that evidence, and that of its leaders, its papers and its platforms, we have a justification of the assertion that the church today can be radical.

This brings me to the concluding statement that I want to make in my opening address. I think I have about five minutes more. I know that you are not altogether satisfied by this affirmation of mine, because you will say, "Well, this church is radical, or this newspaper dares to say this thing, or this leader stands out, because he happens to be in fortunate circumstances, but what about the great church itself? You will have to admit that the church in general is not radical and that there is no probability and perhaps no possibility of its being radical tomorrow."
Now, in answer to that question, and in conclusion, I want to say this, and I want to make what Mr. Nearing and what some of you will regard as a startling admission. I want to point out that the church has never been radical on the social question down to our own time. I say that in anticipation of what I feel perhaps Mr. Nearing is going to say, that the church today is in the clutches of capitalism, and as long as capitalism has the church by the throat, then there is no possibility of the church being radical until capitalism has been destroyed. I want to undermine that proposition, if it is going to be made, by pointing out that the church was not radical long before capitalism was heard of. And the deduction to be drawn from that fact is this, that not capitalism, not the money system, not social conditions of any kind explain the failure of the church to be radical on the social question, but other conditions which take us back into the field of ecclesiasticism, of theology, of ascetism, of clericalism. These are the fortuitous, accidental, tragic circumstances which have played their part in the church and made the church, altogether independent of the social conditions of our time, very largely the thing that it is today.

In discussing this question in his book, "Christianity and the Social Crisis," Dr. Walter Rauschenbush names these conditions in the church which have led the church astray on the social question, as first the tyranny of the empire, that it was not possible for the church in the early days to attack the empire; secondly, the thought dominant in the mind of Paul and dominant down into the very heart of the Middle Ages, that Jesus of Nazareth was going to return, and that until that day came it was not worth while attempting to do anything here upon the earth; in other words, running away from the world in order to save the soul. Then there is ceremonialism, the belief that the sacrament can do the job; again, dogmatism, the reliance upon the creed, the interpretation of life in terms of theology; again, ecclesiasticism, the idea that there are churchly virtues, and that if you are good from the standpoint of the church, it does not make any difference whether you are good from the standpoint of the world; again, clericalism, the monarchical form of church government, the ruling of the church from the top down instead of from the bottom up; and, lastly, the lack, down to our own time, of any scientific comprehension that there is a social problem and any scientific understanding of what that problem is.

Now, after analyzing all these historical conditions which made the church what it is centuries before capitalism appeared, Dr. Rauschenbush proceeds to point out the centrally important fact that in the coming of our modern age these con-
ditions are not only disappearing, but that they have already completely disappeared from a great part of church life of the present day. We do not find today any particular evidence of other-worldliness except in certain groups of fanatical people who believe in the millennium, and who give themselves up to ascetism. This has all disappeared excepting in the Catholic Church. The young people of today are altogether indifferent to sacramentarianism. The creeds have lost their power over the minds of the coming generation. The church governed from the top down has disappeared very largely in the Protestant world, and today we have vast numbers of churches democratically organized, with which the people can do anything that they want to do, when they make up their mind to do it. And lastly, for the first time in modern life, in the minds of men and women today, there is coming a scientific comprehension of the fact that there is a social problem, and an understanding of the fact that at the heart of the social problem is the teaching of religion, of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and a clear vision of the fact that the application of that great teaching means the revolutionary reconstruction of the social order in the midst of which we are.

I say, therefore, that great changes are taking place at the heart of the thoughts of men, which have made the church what it is today. It was the old medieval which built the Catholic churches on the foundations of ecclesiasticism; secondly, it was the reformation which built the Protestant churches on the foundation of theology. Now the churches have stood upon those foundations and have been immovable because the foundations were there. But you and I are living in an age which is eating away these foundations. The church has got to find a new foundation, and I stake my life on the prophecy that the foundations are being builded today by the minds and hands of men and women who have no more use for clericalism, ecclesiasticism, millenniumism, theology, and all the rest, than they have for witchcraft. Those foundations, builded by these young men and young women, are going to be the foundations of the Kingdom of God, the brotherhood of man, the commonwealth of human society.

The leaders, the churches, the platforms, the papers which I cited today—these are but the first evidence of what is taking place in the religious world at this moment, and I say to you that if we but be faithful to our task and realize that the reconstruction of the social order must be done by the power of
the spirit and realize what the church can and must do for the salvation of the world, we can seize this instrument, re-
mold it to our purpose, rededicate it to our vision, and thereby demonstrate that the church can be radical for the love of God and the emancipation of humankind.

The CHAIRMAN: For the negative for 35 minutes, Dr. Scott Nearing.

DR. NEARING: Anybody who can close as many avenues of approach in 35 minutes as Mr. Holmes has done should have been a debater and not a preacher. But there are one or two admissions that he made in the opening enthusiasm of his speech which I think are quite damaging. In the first place, let me say a word about this universal negative. I don't know much about the technique of dialectics, but Mr. Holmes told you that he could prove that a woman could have sixteen children by finding a woman who had sixteen children, and that he could prove that a cow could have a two-headed calf by finding P. T. Barnum's two-headed calf. But unfortunately, this topic is not "Can Nature Be Radical?" but "Can the Church Be Radical?" And on looking up the definition of church in the New Standard Dictionary I find that the word church means, "The Christian community and its ecclesiastical organization," so that universal negative might apply with reason to sixteen children and two-headed calves, but not to this subject.

Now, there is another point that Mr. Holmes made, which seemed to me rather unfortunate from his point of view. He said that we are not dealing with the church in the past, and not dealing with the church of the present. He said we are dealing simply with the possibility of the future. Then, to bolster up his argument, he cited to you three church leaders, two of whom are dead. He also cited to you a number of pronouncements from Harry Ward's book, utterances of what the church said. Now, we have analyzed most of the words in this topic, but there is one we have not talked about and that is, Can the church speak radically? Without any question, although the latest utterance from the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America on the subject of disarmament began with the statement that "We believe in a sweeping reduction in armaments"—that is, they are willing to slaughter their fellow humans with eight-inch, not with sixteen-inch guns—so that all of their pronouncements are not radical.

But, even though all of their pronouncements are radical, what happens in the case of a strike? What happens in the
case of any labor crisis? Is the church radical—what does it do? Not what does it say? Now, I am willing to accept my opponents's case as he states it, with those two or three little and rather minor modifications, and argue with him on his position. Can the church—Can the Church Be Radical in the Future? Can the Church Be Radical? I conceive the problem a little differently from the way in which he conceives it, although I will accept his argument on its basis. As I see the issue, it is as follows: There are in the world millions of men and women who want to be radical; that is, who have gone through the experience of poverty, and exploitation, and war, and who are convinced that the present system cannot be painted, or soldered, or tinkered into an effective working scheme. They believe that the thing has got to be changed throughout, has got to be revolutionized, that there must be radical, root, complete, thoroughgoing modifications in the present social order. I say there are millions of men and women who have been led to that faith and who believe and who desire radical modifications in the world. These people are looking for something to tie to. They would like to belong to an organization. They would like to pay dues somewhere. They would like to pass out circulars for something. They would like to shout for some machine which would save the world for them. That, of course, is typically American; perhaps I might go further and say typically human, just as a child likes to go to the confectioner's and get a penny's worth of candy. It is much easier to do that than to make the candy. So people like to put in five dollars' worth of radicalism. They want something to function radically. And my opponent says that if you drop your five dollars in the collection basket of the church, that in the future you will get five dollars' worth of radicalism, or maybe more, out of it.

That is the issue, do you see? For these eager, seeking, yearning millions who have been convinced by bitter experience that the present machine is not a satisfactory workable machine, for those millions here is the open question: "Can the Church Be Radical?" Mr. Holmes says "Yes," and I want to examine the question for 30 minutes. We are agreed that the church is not radical. We are agreed that the church—the church—is not radical. We are agreed that the church has not been radical. Mr. Holmes spoke of the long, the melancholy and the tragic story of the delinquencies of the church in the past. I need not add any arguments to that brilliant statement of the church's position, long, melancholy, tragic; it has stood with the vested interests against the rights and liberties of the people. It stood thus on slavery. It stood thus on feudalism.
It stands thus today on capitalism. It has organized and main-
tained inquisition, and the Protestant churches have organized
and still maintain their attacks on science. It has burned its
thinkers and persecuted those who dared to differ with it.

Now, Mr. Holmes knew I was going to say all of that. He
told you so in advance. In these respects the church is exactly
like any other social institution. It places a premium on con-
formity. It emphasizes going along, and it smites those who
refuse to go along like any other social institution.

Now, I am talking to the millions, who want some institution
to be radical, who want to drop a five dollar bill in a collection
plate somewhere and have some institution reorganize the
world for them. The church is a social institution, and its
record, long, melancholy, tragic, is a record of the things that it
has done to thwart progress and protect privilege. Well, now,
let us see, can the church be radical? It is not. It has not been.
Can it be radical? I answer, “No,” and for the following rea-
sons: In the first place, because the church has a creed, and the
creed is drawn up by a convention, and a convention cannot be
radical. The convention is composed of lefts, and rights, and
centers, and the decisions of a convention are centrist decisions.
And, therefore, taking by and large the convention of a great
group of humans, you can pretty safely figure that a church
creed, even if it were made today, would not represent a left
position, it would represent a center position. It is in the
nature of creeds to be centers, and so, as Emerson points out,
when you go to hear a Presbyterian minister talk about Presby-
terianism, you know in advance what he is going to say, be-
cause if he said anything else he would lose his job.

The utterances of the church are limited by their creeds, their
constitutions. We have a Constitution in the United States.
When you do anything, or try to enact any legislation that does
not suit those in authority, you are unconstitutional. Well,
now, in the church you are a heretic. You are against the creed.
And the church as a church has a creed. Now, the worst thing
about the creed is that it is a creed. The next worse thing
about it is that it was made, as a rule, a long time ago, the longer
the worse, because the farther it is from the actualities of the
present and the possibilities of the future. The church as an
institution is hemmed in by something that conventions and
conclaves and diets did in past years or past centuries, and
therefore it is prevented from acting in a thoroughgoing:
fundamental manner on the principles and issues of the future.

In the second place, the church cannot be radical because it
is an economically unproductive, social unit, requiring large economic support, and it is therefore tethered to the source of its support. Mr. Holmes told you I was going to attribute the shortcomings of the church to capitalism. Not for a moment. What I have to say about the church would be equally true under communism. The church is non-productive. It does not make shoes. It does not make carpets. It does not make wagon tires. It does not make any economic goods. It has pipe organs and rocks and stone walls and other expensive accessories. And these things must be paid for. In 1916,—that is the latest report of the Census Bureau—the church in the United States spent $328,809,999. That is a third of a billion dollars. That is about one-third of what the Federal Government spent at the same time. Where did they get it? When the church wants money, when anybody wants money, he goes not to the good, but to the rich, because it is the rich that have the money. That is why we call them rich. Now, one peculiarity of rich people is that they are not radical. And so the church, a non-productive unit, is compelled to go to the conservative elements of the community for its support. Why the conservative elements? Because those who own the property and have a vested interest in the system are those who are asked to contribute to the church.

When the Inter-Church World Movement was organized, they had an executive committee with John D. Rockefeller at the head of it. Now, they did not pick Mr. Rockefeller, I assume, because of his spiritual qualities, nor because of his executive ability. They picked him because he was Mr. Rockefeller; they picked him because of his financial position. And that is generally the method of financing any non-productive social unit. If you want to run a charity society, you pick rich people to help you. If you want to run an orphanage, you do likewise. If you want to run a church, you get rich people interested in the church, because unless they contribute the church cannot function.

Now Mr. Holmes might tell you that there are churches out in the country towns without a single rich man in the congregation. I know that. But my answer to the proposition is a general one, not a specific one. I say the church, as a church, to raise that third of a billion dollars, has got to go to the people who have the third of a billion dollars, and among them are many of the richest people in the United States. They are the supporters, the beneficiaries of the present order. And the church must trim its sails to suit the breath from their nostrils before it can open the strings of their pocketbooks.
The church has a creed, a constitution, a bill of rights that it has to live up to. That is a tether that holds it in. The church has an income that it must raise. That is a tether that holds it in.

In the third place, the church as an institution, represents a great vested interest. Notice, in this same census volume there are the reports from 227,000 churches. That is a quarter of a million jobs, positions, professional opportunities—jobs. You have a quarter of a million people who are interested, as all people are, in holding jobs. That has always been the core of any institution. The heart of any institution is the mechanism of those who make up the man-power of the institution, those who do the work of the institution, those who hold the jobs, the positions in the institution—a quarter of a million of them.

Now, to go on; in these churches there are 1,952,000 Sunday school superintendents, teachers and other minor church officials, volunteers, yes, but they also hold jobs; that is, they have prerogatives. They are Sunday school superintendents! And when they go down the street, the people say, “There goes the superintendent of the Sunday school.” Two million of them in the churches! They don’t make money. They have prestige, position, a little brief authority, because of their official connection with the church. And then, that is not the worst of it. In these same churches there are 41,926,000 members—42,000,000 members! Now, let me ask my friend, Mr. Holmes, if he has read over the election returns for 1920. There were 16,000,000 votes for Harding. How many of those 16,000,000 do you suppose came out of the churches? There were 9,000,000 votes for Cox. How many of those 9,000,000 votes do you suppose came out of the churches? There were a million votes for Debs and Christensen. How many of those votes do you suppose came out of the churches? I don’t know, but I know that all of the 42,000,000 did not vote for Debs and Christensen. They got only a million votes, and there were 25,000,000 votes cast, and these were the people that voted for Harding and Cox, the membership of the church, 42,000,000 conservatives.

Mr. Holmes spoke about American labor. Has anybody here accused American labor of being radical? Not at all! These 42,000,000 are the heart of American bourgeois conservatism. They believe in the present order. They vote for it. They talk for it. They support it. They pay for it. And when war comes, they fight for it. And they make up the great body of the church, 42,000,000 of them! Can they be radical? In
1916, the value of the church property was $1,676,000,000. They say the only thing more cowardly than $100,000,000 is $200,000,000. Well, there is eight times one million dollars worth of conservatism right there in the churches. Can an institution like that be radical? A quarter of a million place holders, two million unpaid place holders, 42 million members, nearly two billions in investments! Does radicalism come from such sources? As Mr. Holmes says, grapes do not grow on thorns or figs on thistles. The church is one of the great, powerful, rich, institutions of the present order, untaxed by the present order, with places and property to defend in the present order. Will the church turn against the present order?

I think it says somewhere that no house divided itself shall stand. Is that correct? Mr. Holmes says the words are not quite correct, but the thought is there. No house divided against itself shall stand. The church as a part of the present order must support the present order if the present order is to continue. Was the church conservative? It was. Is the church conservative? It is. Has it been one of the most conservative institutions in the community? It has. Why? Because of its creeds, because of its organization as an institution, because it is a part of the mechanism of established society, with places of wealth and power which it has always been to the interests of the church to maintain.

Can the church be beautiful? It can. Can it be charitable? Yes. Can it prove a source of inspiration? It—may. Can it be liberal? Perhaps. Can it be radical? (Cry of “No.”) It is as hard for the church to be radical as it is for water to be dry. Conservatism is the very essence of its life, the fibre of its organization, the marrow of its bones. And out of such an organization comes no radicalism.

Now, let me just take the last five minutes that I have at my disposal, to sum up the position that that leads us to. Does this analysis lead to blackness and despair because the church cannot be radical? Can nothing be radical? Not at all. This is not pessimism, just social analysis. You who believe that there is hope, have only one source, and that is yourselves. Every man must be his own radical. You remember old Captain John Smith who said, “If a man would have a thing well done, he must do it himself.” Now, that may not be true regarding the transportation of milk, or the operation of subways, but if you want to be radical, you have got to do it yourselves.
You dare not commit the functions of radicalism to any institution, church or otherwise, because the moment you do, the moment you have a hired representative, a creed and bricks and mortar, you have fastened the shackles of conservatism permanently on that institution, and never while the stones remain upon one another, never while the creed lasts, never while the paid representative continues to represent, will your institution be a radical institution. It will stand by the present order, and I care not whether your institution be a church, an educational system, a political party, or a trade union. No matter what the nature of your organization, you dare not trust an institution to be radical. Why? I have tried to point out why.

The essence of an institution is a compromised, centrist position, neither to the right nor to the left, but somewhere in between the extremes of doctrine. Radicalism means thoroughgoing, going to the root, going to the bottom of things, and you millions who would like a radical change in the world had better keep your five dollar bills in your pockets, and spend them for sandwiches and coffee or other things to maintain life, not institutions. Institutions may be very beautiful, institutions may be very useful, institutions may serve many purposes, but institutions are not radical. And you who believe, we who believe, in the fundamental reorganization of the present social life, have one course and only one to pursue, and that is to study and to think and to observe and to draw our conclusions and to hold our faith high and clear and keep our ideals uncontaminated, and when the time comes act—we, not the church, not an institution, but we must act.

You can get 20 miles of transportation in New York City for a nickel, and for a few nickels you can have somebody tend your furnace and sweep your front doorstep when it snows, and so you get into that frame of mind which is summed up by the phrase, “Let George Do It.” Let the church be radical for me! I will pay to have it done. No! You will pay, yes, but you won’t pay for radicalism. You will pay for conservatism, for the preservation of the institution into which pours your wealth.

Does that mean that we shall have no institutions? I make no such assertion. The present organization of society is built upon institutions. Will these institutions be conservative? They will. Will you who hope for radical changes have any opportunity for radicalism through institutions? In all probability you will not, and particularly not
in an institution like the church which is vested and sewed in and tied down with the mechanism of an established order of society.

Every man his own radical, every man his own thinker, every man his own ideals, every man his own understudy and his own actor when the time for action comes—that is the only basis for radicalism. That is the only basis on which the present order of society will be changed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Holmes, for 25 minutes.

DR. HOLMES: Of the effectiveness of Mr. Nearing's argument there is no one who will testify more gladly than myself, and yet I must confess that I am greatly surprised that my dear friend Mr. Nearing, who stands in the midst of so many of us as the leader of progress and liberty and radicalism, etc., should be so dreadfully, almost confoundedly old fashioned. He started off his address by pointing out that we were not talking today about a church or this church or that church but about the church. That immediately carried us back a thousand years to the old controversy known as the nominalist controversy, the controversy over the question whether there was any such reality in the world as the horse or the dog or the cow in contradiction to horse, dog and cow. Now, the last occasion that I heard of this was 17 years ago, when I was in the theological school. I thought that I had disposed of it forever, when lo and behold, I come here to debate in the year 1922 on the question, “Can the Church Be Radical?” and immediately I run into the old medieval nominalist controversy.

Now, I want to point out that the nominalist controversy, the question as to whether or not in reality there is any such thing in the world as the church in contradistinction to churches which make up the genus church, was settled for most of us by the new scientific era. Our modern scientists tell us that the realities of the world are the facts with which we deal, the individuals who compose the structure of society. These various entities taken together give us the basis for certain generalizations, and these generalizations give us the basis for discussion and for determining possibilities and probabilities. I therefore desire to point out that so far as I am concerned by the topic of this debate, I want to live in the world of modern thought and thinkers, those who deal with facts. And I want to study those facts. I want to be able to make some kind of a generalization on the basis of these facts. That is to my mind the only scientific, and I may
say the only philosophic interpretation of the word "church." It is upon the basis of the realities in the world, or practical experience, that we have to draw our conclusions and make our assertion.

In the second place, I want to point out the exceedingly old fashioned character of the argument that organizations are exceedingly dangerous things—indeed they are—and that the ultimate resort of the radical is to be a radical himself and not have somebody else do his work for him. Mr. Nearing very carefully protected himself from the accusation of what to my mind is the counsel of despair. I don't want to turn to the days of individualism, when men drew apart from the great fellowship of their comrades in the world, and said they would think their own thoughts, live in the desert, and follow their own ways of life, save their own souls as Christians or radicals or anything else. We are living today in the age not of individualism but in the age of socialism, in the age of socialization. We are trying to find a way to organize ourselves into parties and groups and institutions of one kind and another which will enable us to do the work that must be done for the reconstruction of the world that is to come.

The only hope for the world of humankind is to be found not in the salvation of our own souls, not essentially in the integrity of our own isolated and separated thought; it is to be found in the fellowship of men organized into organizations; in schools, in political parties, in soviets, and I say to you that just to the extent that we can build up our churches and our organizations and our soviets and can give our lives to the business of dedicating them to the doing of the job for which they are made, to that extent, and to that extent alone can we hope to have any progress or advancement in the establishment of the commonwealth of man upon the earth.

From this standpoint, I want to point out that everything that Mr. Nearing had to say about the churches can be applied without the change of a word, the dotting of an I, or the crossing of a T, to any organization that exists anywhere today. It applies not merely to the churches, it applies also to the Socialist party. It applies not only to the Protestant organization; it applies also to the Rand School. It applies not merely to the Republican party and the Democratic party and to the Socialist party, but it applies to the great Soviet organizations in Russia.

Take the arguments which he presented here this after-
noon in order to demonstrate the fact that the church cannot in any sense of the word be radical. His first argument was that it has a creed. His second argument was that it is economically unproductive, requires large economic support, and therefore must depend on those who have the money to give that support. And in the third place, it represents a vested interest with officers and stones and mortar.

Now, I want to point out that everyone of those arguments can be applied, for example, to the Rand School, for the benefit of which our debate is being held this afternoon. The Rand School has a creed. It adopted a creed a few months ago, and the creed was so orthodox to certain people, that every Communist who belonged to the Rand School got out.* The Rand School, in other words, established its own private inquisition, its own heresy trial, and upon the basis of its creed it kicked out into the cold, cold world everybody who did not believe in its particular creed. In the second place, I must point that the Rand School is an economically unproductive social unit, requiring large economic support. They are obliged to come to you for money. I know it, because they came to me. I have not the money, but some people seem to think that I have got a little money. Therefore, whenever the school gets into trouble, they come to me and ask me to give them money. In other words, there are sources of economic support for the Rand School as well, and the Rand School has got to get to

* In reference to the Rand School Dr. Holmes repeated in entire good faith a report which he supposed to be true, but which is essentially incorrect. He has kindly consented to have this note appended.

The Rand School has not adopted a creed, nor held a heresy trial, nor kicked anyone out on account of difference of opinion.

In September, 1921, the American Socialist Society (which controls the Rand School) formally reaffirmed what had often been publicly stated: that the school is an autonomous auxiliary of the Socialist movement and that its primary functions are to disseminate knowledge of Socialism and to train workers for service in the Socialist party and the progressive labor unions.

Six or seven members of the society then resigned. No one was expelled, nor were any expulsions proposed or contemplated.

The resolution distinctly condemned the dogmatic teaching, on whatever side, as being unsuited to the purposes of a Socialist school.

No instructors have been dismissed because of opinion or belief. Earlier in the same month three instructors had been dropped (one of them having rather strong Communist tendencies, one an ardent opponent of Communism), not for political reasons, but because of financial necessity. This was done by the board of directors, and a majority of those who voted for the dismissal subsequently opposed the resolution defining the school's position and left the society when it was adopted.

ALGERNON LEE, Educational Director, Rand School.
those sources because it is economically an unproductive social unit requiring large economic support like the church. In the third place, I want to point out that the church and the Rand School represent a vested interest. I don’t know how many people there are that are holding down good fat jobs, but I know that there are people in the Rand School who have got jobs, and to the extent that there are people in the Rand School who have jobs, you can be perfectly sure that the Rand School is not going to be a radical institution—that is, if what Mr. Nearing has stated this afternoon about the church is really true.

Now, I don’t happen to believe that that is true. I think that the Rand School, in spite of its creed, in spite of its being an economical unproductive institution, and in spite of its vested interests, its real estate, its mortar, its bricks, it runs on the floor, its everything—in spite of all those things, I believe that the Rand School can be a radical institution. And if the Rand School under these present deplorable conditions can be said to be radical, why I am willing to believe that possibly something can be said for the churches to compare with it from this point of view.

Now, Mr. Nearing pointed out and pointed out very effectively that there is a whole lot of young men and young women in the world today who want to see the world become radical. They want to have a share in that work. They want to see, in other words, some progress in society, and he pictured these people going into the church and putting $5 in the collection box, an almost unheard of thing. When I heard Mr. Nearing talking about $5 going into the contribution box, I had a feeling that every one of his facts were to be distrusted. He drew a very pathetic picture of a person going into the church, dropping $5 into the box, and expecting to get $5 worth of radicalism in return.

Now, I want to say to you, my friends, that neither the church nor any other institution or group that I know anything about works in that particular automatic way. You don’t get the good things out of life by dropping your money into a contribution box or into a slot machine. If there are any young men or young women in this audience who want to see the church become radical, let me give them a bit of advice. I want them to put away their five dollar bills, the whole money relationship of life. The church has nothing to do with the money relationship of life, properly speaking. Let them get aboard the ship and put their hand on the helm and do something to drive the ship in the right direction.
We do not get a return in life for what we buy, but we get in life a return for what we do, what we sacrifice for; and therefore I say to you that the whole question as to the radicalism of the church, or what is to come out of the church, depends not upon the money that you put in at all, but depends upon the gray matter of your brains and the red current that flows in your blood—and if you give those things to the church, there is some possibility perhaps that the church may return to you the thing that you expect of it. In other words, our interpretation of life today is the interpretation in terms of creation. We get what we make, what we create, and it is true of the church as it is of society at large, that we can get the radicalism that we are after if we ourselves create that radicalism not merely in our own hearts, but in the hearts of all the men and women with whom we are associated.

Now, Mr. Nearing in replying to what I had to say about the test of the radicalism of the church said, it is all right to talk about platforms and pronunciamentos, about leaders, some of whom are dead as well as alive—we will drop the dead ones—but the really important thing is deeds as contrasted with words. I thought it was a mighty good point—an everlastingly good point, until Mr. Nearing spoiled it all by going on and talking about creeds.

Now creeds are nothing in the world but words, that is all. And I ventured to point out that the church today was writing sociological creeds, creeds anticipating the future as well as stating the ideals of the past. And those creeds which I cited from Dr. Ward's book, no one of them represents anything but an anticipation of the future, and their hope for the great achievements that the future is to bring. Mr. Nearing pointed out that the essential thing after all is not words, but deeds. "What," said Mr. Nearing—and the question was a perfectly proper one, and went right to the heart of the situation—"What does the church do when a strike comes along, and the church has to choose between capital and labor?" Well, usually the church runs to cover just as fast as it can. It does not meet that particular issue. But I say to you that the church is awakening to the great issues between capital and labor, the reorganization of society, and we are coming to a time when the church, through some of its most potent organizations, is not afraid to espouse the cause of labor in its great fight for emancipation.

Now, I want to deal with facts this afternoon and not with theories. I want to remind you of the report of the steel strike in 1919 by the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the
Inter-Church World Movement. I hold in my hands the first volume of that report. The second volume has recently been printed and the second volume among other things points out frankly and freely the delinquencies of the churches of Western Pennsylvania in the steel strike. But here is a fact. An organization, the most powerful church organization ever created, an organization which represented the great Protestant churches of this country, an organization which had as its chairman, or was he on the finance committee, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and had him because of his millions and not because of his character—that organization, headed by Bishop McDowell of the Methodist Church, the very moment that the steel strike broke out, sent its investigators to the fields. They stayed on the job throughout the progress of the strike, and Dr. Nearing knows, as I know, and as you ought to know, that the documents presented and published by this Inter-Church Commission tell the story of a strike as it has never been told before in the history of America.

Mr. Nearing just wrote down a few words on a piece of paper, and I know what they are without looking at them. He is pointing out the fact that after the Inter-Church Commission got out that report, or before they got out that report, they had to go out of business. And he intends to point out to you that that was the consequence of the work that it did in the steel strike. Now, in answer to that proposition, I want to say two things. There is a great saying that he who loses his life for the sake of God, or the sake of the truth, that it is he that finds it,—that the greatest thing that any individual or organization can do is to lay down its life for the truth. Let us assume for the sake of argument, as it is generally supposed, that orders were issued to the Inter-Church Commission that that work should stop and that if the work did not stop the resources would and the Commission would go out of business. Let me point out that if that threat was made the work went on nevertheless, and it is going on today. In other words, the Inter-Church organization was so true to its understanding of the truth, of the great issue involved in the steel strike, that it was willing gladly to lay down its life for the cause.

But there is a second thing to be said about the Inter-Church Commission and that is this. The complication over the steel strike report was only a part of the story. The real story of the tragedy of the Inter-Church organization pertains not at all to the thing that it did in reference to the steel strike. It pertains unfortunately enough to the old
echoes and superstitions, first of theology and second of denominationalism. And I believe that the disintegration of the Church Commission is to be attributed fundamentally to those facts, and that the disintegration of that commission represents the final victory over theology and denominationalism. Those two forces in the religious world are now gone forever, so far as effective power is concerned, and therefore we can say that here, in this one issue at least, and it was a great issue, the steel strike, the church rose to the occasion and did its work.

Now, I want to speak just for a moment, if I may, about those three arguments which go to prove that the church cannot be radical, arguments, as I have said, which apply just as much to the Rand School as they do to the Christian church. In the first place, Mr. Nearing has argued that the church cannot be radical, because it has a creed. I should like to point out in answer to that, if I had time, that there are lots of churches that not only do not have a creed, but that never have had any creed, that the creeds of today are a nuisance to be sure, but are hardly to be taken more seriously than nuisances. They are simply a survival of an age that is dead, and today on the social question, the only thing that really concerns us, the church is engaged in formulating new creeds, which point the way to the coming of a better day.

If I had my way, I'd say exactly the thing that Scott Nearing is going to say now when he gets on his feet. He is putting down a note. The thing that I would say is this, that creeds in themselves are dead, and that the very moment that the time comes when those creeds really point to the truth, they will already be behind the times, and be a clog on the activity of the church. Well and good, but I simply point out to you that the church has the creed-making habit, and today that habit is being used for the formulation of new things that must be done for the reordering of society, and not for the forging of the fetters that shall keep the church away from the task it has before it.

Secondly, Mr. Nearing says that the church is economically unproductive and requires large economic support and has to stick very fast to the people who have the money. Now, I don’t know any way of dealing with an assertion of that kind except by getting down to the facts and seeing what is actually happening. Now, I happen to know, as you ought to know, that there are occasions today when the church proves that it is not bound to the money machine, not bound to the rich people, and I say that if the church
demonstrates today that it can work independently of its sources of wealth, it gives us the assurance that tomorrow it will be freer than it is today and ultimately will be, as it can be, radical.

I want to speak in reference to that assertion, of two things that have happened. I want to point out that memorable instance a year ago in the city of Pittsburgh when the Young Women's Christian Association, which so far as I know is not an extraordinarily radical organization, started a campaign for funds. Now, it happens that at the national convention of the Young Women's Christian Association they had adopted a program of social reconstruction, and among others things gave their opinion about women's hours and wages and various other things that are embarrassing to the great business men and financial interests of the present day. Now, when the campaign was on, a group of business men got together and served notice on the Young Women's Christian Association of Pittsburgh that if they expected the business men of Pittsburgh to give money to help them to raise the $200,000 quota after the adoption of the platform some months before, they were entirely mistaken. And in answer to that challenge, the Young Women's Christian Association of that community picked up the gauntlet and reasserted its belief in the platform of social reform adopted by the general convention and practically informed the Pittsburgh business men that their money was not either needed or wanted and that they could go back and sit down. (Laughter and applause.) And what is more, I want to point out that the ministers of Pittsburgh, not exactly a center of radicalism, came publicly to the side of the Y. W. C. A. and themselves informed the business men that they had no right to cripple the campaign and they did everything they could to help the campaign.

This platform was only a step in the direction of radicalism, but here is the second point. When the crisis came, Mrs. Helen Gould Sheppard rose up in that convention and she informed the convention, if I have been rightly informed, that if that platform were adopted every cent of her money would be withdrawn from the support of the Y. W. C. A. In the face of that statement, the platform was adopted. Mrs. Sheppard resigned her position and walked out of the convention and her millions walked out with her. Now, I say to you that it is not a very significant thing in itself, but it shows what religiously awakened people can do. It shows especially what the young men and young women can do, and it points the way to the demonstration of the fact that in the future the church is going not only to prove that it can be radical but that it is radical.
Lastly, I want to say just a word about the third point, that the church represents a vested interest. Well, upon my word of honor, I never knew before that the church was such a splendid institution, with such an amazing number of office holders, thousands and millions of people overwhelmed with the great distinction and honor of being Sunday School superintendents, and Sunday School teachers. I am informed that the churches, most of which are empty, have 42,000,000 members. Why, it seems to me as though I had been transported to another world, when I see this gigantic financial institution rearing its magnificent front for all those who would see the glory and the power of the church. Now, suppose we get down to the facts. A quarter of a million men are holding jobs in the church, salaried positions. Well, I am one of them and I happen to know what the quarter of a million men are paid, the amount they get. The average salary for the clergymen of this country is between $800 and $900 a year. The average salary of the Unitarian Church minister, of which church I was a minister for many years, is today a little over $1,600, and the Unitarian ministry is the best paid ministry in Protestant America. Do you think that these people represent any great amount of financial power? And do you think that those poor wretches, unhappy, underpaid ministers would hold those jobs if they could get something better? But about the 2,000,000 Sunday School superintendents, teachers, etc. Well, all I have got to say is this, that after spending days and hours and weeks trying on bended knees to get somebody to be superintendent of my Sunday School, somebody to take some of my Sunday School classes, I don't see in the churches I know of the kind of honors and emoluments and all the rest that go with volunteer service in the church that Mr. Nearing spoke of.

The chairman informs me that my time is up. Let me simply summarize the thing in one statement. The idea that the church is a vested interest, forming an intricate part of our great vested financial civilization, needs to be tested by a thorough-going study of the economic facts. So far as I note it, my conclusion would be this, that the church today, economically and financially considered, is an embarrassed institution, very close to bankruptcy, and this is an initial step towards the discovery of radicalism.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nearing, for the negative for 30 minutes.

MR. NEARING: I never made the assertion that the
preachers were paid high salaries. I made the assertion that they held jobs. And Mr. Holmes made the qualification that they would not hold them if they could get anything else. Which means that those jobs stand between them and starvation. Now, if you had a family and a job that was between you and starvation, no matter how poor the job was, no matter how little it paid, if it kept starvation away from your family, would you not want to hold on to it?

I did not say that the church was as rich as the National City Bank, or the Guaranty Trust Company, or the Standard Oil Company. What I said was that it was a vested interest. People hold jobs. That is a vested interest. They have bricks and mortar. That is a vested interest. And I said that the church as a vested interest, untaxed by the present social order, necessarily went along with the present order.

Now, Mr. Holmes comes back with that rare capacity that he has for seeking out moral value and cites the case of the Inter-Church World Movement, which gave its life for the cause. The Inter-Church World Movement saw the steel strike. They said, "This is our opportunity." They plunged in and investigated the steel strike and were destroyed in the process, and Mr. Holmes says that there is no greater thing in life than to give your life for a cause. I have no objection to that moral interpretation of life in general, but I have this objection to that specific illustration. The Inter-Church World Movement did not give its life for a cause. It came head on against the steel trust. Now, Mr. Holmes says of this Inter-Church World Movement that it was the most powerful organization ever created by the American churches. And when they struck the steel trust, they went out of business.

Now, Mr. Holmes won't say that that Inter-Church World Report is a radical report. It is a liberal report. It is mildly critical. It is not radical. It does not demand thoroughgoing reorganization of industry. It is liberal. But the most powerful organization that the American churches ever created, which became mildly liberal in a labor crisis, ran head on against the steel trust and the steel trust destroyed it, or something else destroyed it, but anyway it was destroyed in the process. Now that, to my mind, is one of the best illustrations of the impossibility of the American church becoming radical. Because, if this great organization was destroyed, when it was merely liberal, had its prelates become
radical, they would be with the I. W. W. prisoners in Leavenworth Penitentiary today.

And that leads me to say a word of caution to Mr. Holmes. He has only five more minutes and far be it from me to attempt to interpret as cleverly as he does what he will say in that five minutes. But let him in that time draw a distinction between liberal tinkering and radical change. And notice what he said when he referred to Y. W. C. A., which by the way, had had pretty rough sledding since that convention. He said that their platform was progressivism or radicalism. It could not be both. It has to be one or the other. Now, which was it? Why, it was progressivism, not radicalism. Mr. Holmes cannot take from that Y. W. C. A. platform any essential radicalism. It was a progressive and liberal document. Now, let Mr. Holmes in his final five minutes draw a line of distinction.

You remember in my first speech, I asked the question, "Can the church be liberal?" And I answered, "Perhaps." We are not discussing that. The question is, "Can the church be Radical?" Can it go to the root? Can it be thorough? Can it go to the bottom of things and stay on the job till the changes are made? I answer, "No." "Well then," says Mr. Holmes, "if that is true, neither can the Rand School be radical." Well now, let us see. Mr. Holmes says, "Everyone of these arguments applies to the Rand School. The Rand School had its own inquisition recently and threw out into the cold, cold world every last Communist who did not accept its creed." He says, "the Rand School has a creed. It is unproductive. It has a vested interest." Yes, that is all true. There is one thing about the Rand School, however, that differentiates it from the church, and that is that it is not a part of the present social order.

I said four things about the church. I said that it represented a creed, was unproductive, was vested, and was a part of the existing order and therefore was supported by it. The proof of the Rand School's relation to the existing order will be found in the number of suits that the order has instituted against it in the last three years. And so there is a valid distinction. I waive that distinction entirely and I reply to Mr. Holmes, "I accept your argument, word for word and line for line. Neither do I believe that any educational institution can be fundamentally radical." I spent 35 minutes saying that in the first speech. I don't believe the Socialist party can be consistently radical. I don't believe the Communist party can be consistently radi-
Cal, and I don’t believe that the Soviet Government of Russia can be consistently radical.

And those of you who differ from that need simply to watch the Communist party and the Soviet Government during the next three or four years. Already in Russia there is a line of division between the party in power and the radicals. I met a Communist friend of mine the other day and he lamented the fact. He said: “We are developing a center and a right and a left in the Communist party.” Of course they are. Any social institution necessarily splits up into groups commensurate with the individual inclinations of its members, and whether it be an Anarchist organization or a chamber of commerce, some of the members will be on the left and some on the right and others will be in the center, and out of it all you will either get a split or else you will get action, compromising the positions of the extreme wings. If you get a split, the new organizations will do exactly the same thing.

Therefore, I contend, as I have tried to contend in my first speech, that it is perfectly futile for any person to expect, through supporting an institution, to support radicalism, because the institution itself when it is once established becomes conservative. If it hires employees, if it buys bricks and mortar, if it secure a vested position, it becomes conservative, and as the years go by and its position becomes better and better established it becomes more and more conservative.

Well, now, just let me turn the argument about a little bit and raise another point for your consideration. Mr. Holmes has given you a very interesting and very impressive demonstration of the possibility of an individual’s becoming radical. Well, I want to ask Mr. Holmes a question. I want to ask him two or three. Suppose, granted that all that he has told you represents his belief. Suppose that the 227,000 preachers in the United States all believed as he does, radically, and suppose that on the 19th day of February, 1922, the whole 227,000 of them got up and said the same things that he gets up and says in his pulpit. How many of them would still hold their jobs on the following Sunday, and that day a year? In other words, Mr. Holmes, who represents spiritual aspirations and courage and the power to stand by his own convictions through thick and thin, and who has separated himself from his denomination and built his own church, suppose Mr. Holmes had a job in all the churches of the country, suppose that people with his courage and his ability to state their position and who are willing to state that position have jobs in all the churches of the country, how long would they hold them down? I wish he would
take a minute or two of his five minutes to answer that, because
the question concerns me very profoundly.

Mr. Holmes has told you in his life as well as in his sermons
where he stands. But he has also told you that for most of the
preachers $800 stands between them and poverty, stands be-
tween their families and starvation, and those $800 will be
wiped out if they take a radical position. I know a number of
young preachers with families, and they say, “What is a man
to do? I have not any other trade. I cannot be a carpenter.
I cannot lay bricks. I cannot drive an automobile truck. I am
not a trained man. I am a preacher. I am trained as a
preacher, and if I stand up and say what I believe I will lose my
job. What am I going to do?”

Now, let us take the thing practically. Here is a war coming
on and these preachers have been preaching peace on earth and
goodwill among men. They have been saying, “Love is the
greatest word in the language; love your enemies, bless them
that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.” A
war comes on and this quarter of a million men who have been
singing the same tune in unison, Peace on earth, goodwill to-
ward men, love your enemies—that have been at it for years, it
is their life work—what do they do? Why, a few like Mr.
Holmes run the danger of being locked up, and some of them
were locked up, for stating their position. But about ninety-
ine and a fraction out of every hundred were not locked up, be-
cause they went along with the existing order of society.

Now, let us suppose for the sake of argument that this had
been Russia, and not the United States, Communist Russia.
The Russian Church is no longer a state church. The preachers,
as I understand it, are free to preach. Suppose it had been
Russia and a war had come on. What would have happened to
the preachers? Why, just exactly the same thing. They would
have been silenced or jailed. Why? Because the state acts that
way. Read the history of social institutions and see how they
function. They function that way whether you like it or not.
And if the church is an established one and has a position in
society and needs to go to the authorities for money, they will
turn the thumb screws, and the preacher who does not con-
form will lose his job.

Therefore I say, in the future as in the past and the present,
the church will not, cannot, be radical.

Mr. Holmes told you a good deal about the technique of
debate, about the universal negative. A certain duty rests on
the affirmative in a debate. The affirmative undertakes to
establish the point beyond a reasonable doubt. I don’t want to
stress this too much, because of the character of the subject, but Mr. Holmes has to convince you, beyond a reasonable doubt, that this sad, melancholy institution which always has surrendered in the past, which surrendered during the war, and which is at the present time definitely under the control of the established order of society, he has got to convince you that that institution in the future can right-about-face, have a rebirth and act as no institution in society acts or has acted.

Now, Mr. Holmes said that I talked about $5 bills in collection plates. I am sorry that I got off from the jitney level, but it was a slip of the tongue. And what I meant by the $5 bill was support. I realize perfectly well that you cannot buy salvation or anything else. You have got to live it. But my point is this: You people, you young people who want a new world, what must you do? "Why," says Mr. Holmes, "let them get aboard the ship, put their hands on the helm and do their bit." Which ship? That is a mighty good moral sentiment. I approve of it. But which ship? Here we are, a lot of young people. There are many ships. Apparently, they are going in different directions. Which ship shall we get aboard?

I have always been interested in the church. I have always been interested in preaching, because I have regarded the preacher as having the hardest job in the community. He sets himself up, as Harry Ward says, without respect for persons or consequences. He sets himself up as the spiritual mentor of the community. He has the hardest job there is. Laying bricks or running a street car is a cinch in comparison. The preacher, like the teacher, like the journalist, undertakes to mold public opinion. Says Mr. Holmes, "It is a bankrupt organization." No, it is one of the best assets that the established order has, because there are 42,000,000 members on the rolls, and they go, more or less—Mr. Holmes says less; I don't know—but they go more or less into the churches and they hear what is said. The church is a great channel for the influencing of public opinion, and I have always felt that the church might be a tremendous force if, or when, we had John Haynes Holmeses in every pulpit.

But, what did the war show? The war showed that one man in a hundred stood with Holmes, and the other ninety-nine stood with Schwab. One in a hundred stood for peace and the other ninety-nine stood with the munition makers and the war profiteers and all the rest of the mechanism of our established order. Says Mr. Holmes, "Get aboard. Put your hand to the helm. Do your bit!" Right, good, well put. What shall you get aboard? I believe that you should get aboard that ship
which seems to have the best equipment, the best carrying
power, the best staying power; in other words, the ship that
will go the farthest and get there in the best shape. And in
my judgment that ship is not the church.

You want society fundamentally reorganized. Where shall
you throw in your lot? Where shall you put your might? To
what shall you devote your energy? Why, I answer, to your
life relations. Mr. Holmes says, in order to live we must live.
Yes, true, and the church plays little part in life. What por-
tion of the life of an ordinary human being is devoted to
church? Is it 1 per cent, 2 per cent, 3 per cent? I know not.
But I do know this, that about one-third of this time is devoted
to his job. Now, I say, therefore, that if you want society re-
organized, instead of going outside of society, more or less to a
church, stay on your job and organize a union, let us say, or
some other institution that is more intimately tied up with life.

When the church was the library and the hospital and the
charity society, and the school and the workshop, when the
church functioned intimately in the community, then the
church had a possibility which it did not realize, of putting this
fundamental doctrine of brotherly love into practice. But at
the present time the church has got on a side track, and the
great moving forces of human life are not in the church any
more. They are in the functional professional trade organiza-
tions which you and I work. The school is far closer to life
than the church. The trade union is closer to life than the
church. The state is closer to life than the church. And so I
say, if you have a nickel's worth of energy, organize a union,
build up an educational institution, start a newspaper, run a
library, sell pamphlets and literature, be a part of the life of
the community that is going to function most significantly in
the future. Those institutions will not be radical, but they
will be more radical than the church.

Suppose I am up at Albany and I want to get to New York.
There is a freight, there is a local, there is an express. Mr.
Holmes says "Board the freight; it will get to New York." Well,
maybe it will, but the express will be there and back to
Albany before it does. Are there no choices in life? Is the
future in the hands of one institution? Not for a moment. The
future lies with those institutions which are most closely con-
ected with the lives the people lead, with the work they do,
with the things they think, and those institutions today are not
the church.

And so I say, first, if you want radical changes made, make
them yourself, study, read, maintain your radicalism under your
hat. Nowhere else is it safe. No organization will remain radical, no vested power can be trusted to remain radical. That is not doctrinaire individualism. That is not saving your own soul. That is looking over the facts and acting in view of the things that have always gone on since history has borne a record. Don't believe that you can pay anybody else nor elect anybody else to be radical for you. You are the most radical radical that you will ever maintain in your community. That is the first point. Neither the school nor the church, nor any other institution, can be relied upon to be radical, and to stay radical through prosperity as well as through adversity.

The second point: If, and when, the time comes to act, throw in your lot with those institutions which promise to get there the soonest and the best. Study them, examine for yourselves, look the field over and then get aboard the ship that is best suited for your purposes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Holmes, for five minutes, in closing.

DR. HOLMES: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Nearing and Friends: I want to remind you that I have only five minutes in concluding, and I have to hustle more than I ever hustled before if I am going to answer all the questions that Mr. Nearing addressed to me. So please spare every little sign of approval or disapproval that you want to make so that I may have every possible half second for the things that I want to say.

It seems to me that in what Mr. Nearing has been saying during the last five or ten minutes he has been speaking on a subject that is quite different from the subject that is before us. He has pointed out to you that if you want really to organize society and carry on radical work you should not throw in your lot with the church. Well, now, that is a perfectly sound proposition. I am not claiming here that the church is the most radical organization in society. I am not even arguing that the church has any possibility of being the most radical organization in society. That is not the question before us. The question is, "Can the Church Be Radical?" And I want to gather as much evidence as I can to indicate that there is the possibility of the church becoming radical.

Mr. Nearing pointed out that if we are going to travel from Albany to New York we can take the express or the freight, and he thinks it is a good idea for those of us who care to travel that way to take the express. Well, I think he is perfectly right, and when I travel from Albany to New York I always take the express. I want to point out that we are talking this afternoon, not as to whether we can travel faster between Albany and New York on the express train, but we are
debating the question as to whether the freight train is ever going to arrive, and I am staking my chances on the faith that it will arrive some time.

I am rather sorry that I said what I did about the ministers who received an eight or nine hundred dollars' salary and that if they could they would get better jobs. I think it was rather unkind for me to say that, and it was only because of my inability to resist the temptation to make a point and stir a laugh and get a little applause. The fact remains that these men are getting something like eight or nine hundred dollars a year, and Mr. Nearing points out that that stands between them and starvation. Oh no, it does not. Starvation has already arrived. The point I was trying to make was that men who were earning that amount of money were not particularly interested in the present society or the vested interest represented by the church in society, and once they realize why they get only $800 or $900 a year out of the present economic order the chances are they will do something and that they therefore will become radical.

He asked a very embarrassing question—I did not want to touch on it—if all the 227,000 ministers declared in their pulpits what I say in my pulpit, etc., how many would hold their jobs? Well, I don't know. I want just to read a little passage that I found in the Outlook of January 25, which I brought here in order that I might give an answer to some such question as that, although I had not realized that it might be put in the personal form that it was. This article tells of the experience of an Episcopalian minister, unnamed, who fought the fight for a free pulpit and won out and held his job, and the conclusion which he draws from his experience is thus: "The man who stands firmly for the truth will win the support of every man and woman who is open-minded. For years I have been convinced that a good many men in our churches gave up the fight just when they had begun the fight. I am inclined to think that if they had not only begun the fight but had carried it through, trusting to society to give them a new recruit for every one that they lost, they would find in the end that they would hold their job and that the church in the long run would stand by them."

Now, I have two or three things to say here, splendid points that will make you laugh and everything else, but I come to the final word, which I know Mr. Nearing wants me to answer. I am going to run over just 10 seconds, Mr. Chairman, but I mean to answer this point. He wants me
to make a distinction between liberal tinkering in society and radical change. Well, I will quote from the platform of the established Church of England in order to make my point: "The distinction is to be found here that the efforts of Christians should be directed not merely to attacking particular evils as they arise, but at discovering and removing the roots from which they spring." That is the distinction.

And now, my concluding word. Mr. Nearing pointed out that I must prove my proposition, as the speaker of the affirmative, beyond a reasonable doubt. Well, I might as well say at the very last moment that you cannot do it. I did not expect to do it when I came here this afternoon. And it never entered my head that I could. You cannot prove any proposition of the future beyond a reasonable doubt. All you can prove about any human affairs as regards the future is that there is a fighting chance. When, for example, the army of Joffre and Foch stood there on the battle line of the Marne, do you suppose there was any man in the French army who could have demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that the hordes of German legions could be thrown back? It could not be demonstrated, but there was a fighting chance. The soldiers of the French army took it and they proved that a fighting chance could be won.

Now, to my mind there is a fighting chance for the church, and if the young men and young women who care about religion get hold of the church and use it, that fighting chance can be made a victorious certainty, and the church, representing the power of religion, could remake the social order and bring in the Kingdom of God upon the earth!
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