

Real Religion and the Hypocrites

(December 18, 1915)

It may be set down as a rule that the gentry who constitute the self-appointed protectorate over the souls of the working class and who charge socialism with being infidels and socialism with attacking religion are themselves hypocrites who are profiting by the ignorance and superstition of their victims and who use the cloak of religion to conceal their own evil practices. Their pretended solicitude for religion is a sham. What they really fear is not that religion will be destroyed, but that hypocrisy and false pretense will be discovered.

These pious misfits who do not know what real religion is are one in raising the cry against socialism in the name of religion. Most of them have never read a chapter of socialist economics and are entirely ignorant of what socialism really means, or else, knowing what it means, deliberately misrepresent it to receive the "well done" and the stipend from their masters.

It is safer for the average clergyman to speak against socialism than for it, so far as his charge is concerned, his income, and his position in society. Some are, by reflex, so imbued with the hostility of the capitalists who pay their salaries that they deem it their special duty to denounce socialism as an attack upon the church and conspiracy against religion. Of course they speak in the name of religion, the religion of Jesus Christ, the homeless wanderer who sympathized and associated with the poor and lowly, and whose ministrations were among the despised sinners and outcasts.

These pious pickets of capitalism prostitute religion in the service of mammon. Of all men on earth they are the least fit to speak in the name of religion. They are utterly destitute of religion or they would not serve in such a degenerate role.

They are full of cant and glibly parrot their creed, but of real religion, the spiritual influence which exalts man and consecrates him to the loving service of his fellow man, they are as barren as the arctic region is of sunflowers. Christ knew them perfectly and denounced them as hypocrites.

It is false and slanderous to charge that socialism aims to destroy religion. The truth is that socialism proposes to destroy the conditions which make true religion impossible.

It is the veriest sarcasm to talk about religion in the cannibalism of the present system, in which men devour each other like hyenas and the millions who are robbed of what they produce sink into hopeless poverty while their sons are driven to crime and their daughters to prostitution.

Never until this brute struggle for existence is ended and our industrial life is organized on a basis of democratic mutualism will religion come to abide with men — not the religion of creeds written in books, but the religion of deeds written in the hearts of men whose brethren are all mankind.

Published as “Prostitution of Religion” in *The Christian Socialist*, Dec. 18, 1915, unspecified page. Copy in *Papers of Eugene V. Debs* microfilm edition, reel 10.