
Something to Think About

by Eugene V. Debs

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In a May [1891] issue of the *New Nation* we find the following:

Serious questions, growing out of the relations of individuals in society, are up for consideration, if not for solution. The name of "Jesus" was cheered, no irreverently, at a workingmen's meeting in New York not long ago, but the "church" was hissed. Why was this? Surely it was not because of the mere personality of the man Jesus who lived nearly two thousand years ago, but because of his teachings, and the splendid church was recognized as being out of harmony therewith. No one thinks that the modern clergy will ever become Christians to the extent that they will imitate the example of the Master, who mingled with the poor to bless them; who solemnly appealed to the conscience of his followers; who laid down the Golden Rule as the platform upon which Christians must stand; who mingled with publicans and sinners to save them; who uplifted the Magdalenes, utterly indifferent to the false imputations his conduct called forth from the fashionably religious of his age and generation; and who preached righteousness — right conduct — to the world. Speaking to his followers, of the hungry and poor and naked and sick, he said: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."

To applaud when the name of Jesus is mentioned, and "hiss" when the "church" is mentioned is strangely suggestive. Do Christians ever ask the reason why? Do the clergy, who hold forth in palatial edifices stop to inquire, what's the matter? Yes, once in a while, but seriously — because the facts would not be complimentary.

Thousands of churches are run on the theater principle. The seats in the sanctuary are sold out annually. The rich Christians get the most fashionable pews. An observer, at all critical, can pretty nearly tell the size of a communicant's bank account by the seat he occupies

as he takes his share of the “bread of life” handed over a richly upholstered pulpit. As the bidding proceeds, and the auctioneer goes toward the doors, prices decline, until somewhere the “pauper’s bench” is found. But the rank and file of the people are not there. Once in a while the kind of people Jesus loved are present, and when His name is mentioned they “cheer.” Why not? When the church is referred to they “hiss.” Why not? It may not be agreeable to ears attuned to costly music, trained and salaried choirs, but it is perfectly natural, and is likely to be done more frequently in the future.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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