

Source 1

N.D. Cochran, "Is the Church the Best and Truest Friend Labor Ever Had?" *The day book*. September 05, 1913.

Note: Have students examine the front page of the source first. Then, depending on their reading level they can read through the article or read the excerpts below

Excerpt(s):

[From pages 2-3]

Yes, the head and founder of the church was a laboring man and He chose laborers to help Him carry on his work. But He went forth to the laborers and ministered to their physical wants as well as to their spiritual needs. And the people loved and followed Him. He loved them and suffered for them. The case of Cardinal Manning and the London dockworkers was an isolated case, but it shows what the attitude of the church would be toward labor if all-ministers practiced their Christianity as Cardinal Manning did. And if that were the general attitude of the church toward labor the church would be packed with laborers every Sunday. They would get acquainted with the preacher during the week, when they were solving their daily bread-and-butter problem.

But how many times has Rev. Mr. Lloyd gone to the workingmen in their troubles and tendered his aid toward getting them justice? How many ministers of the church took up the fight for justice and a living wage for the clerks in Chicago department stores when the O'Hara committee exposed the starvation wage policy of those stores? How many ministers of the gospel even lifted up their voices in the pulpit to help arouse a public sentiment that would insist on a decent living wage for the department store clerks?

What ministers of the gospel went down into the loop last year to help the striking newsboys and save them from the assaults of newspaper sluggers and policemen? How many labor strikes have ministers investigated? How many have they taken enough interest in to find whether the demands of the men were just or unjust? How will you make workingmen and women believe the church is the ally of labor unless the church is with them in their most serious trouble when they are striving for a living wage and a fair chance to feed, clothe, house and educate their children?

I am asking these questions to be helpful, for I know something of what

is running through the minds of men who are struggling with all their might to keep their heads above water in the fight for an existence. I have talked with preachers about the "falling off" of church attendance. I have talked with men and with women. I find no falling off of reverence for religion or of love for the Christianity of Christ. So there is nothing the matter with Christianity. It must be there is something the matter with the church.

Source 2

N.D. Cochran, "Why Rich and Poor Can't Always Worship the Same God in the Same Church," *The day book*. May 26, 1914.

Excerpt(s):

[From pages 2-3]

My own notion is that the main trouble with our churches is much the same as the main trouble with many of our newspapers; and that is, too much editing from the business office.

I mean by that, too much commercialization the wealthy pew renter being too influential in the church, just as the big advertiser is too influential with the newspaper; and the common people, and their everyday life problems, receiving too little sympathetic attention.

The attitude of "the burning bush" toward labor unions cannot be said fairly to be the attitude of the churches, for the general church attitude is not openly hostile, and varies with the convictions and courage of the individual ministers. Some are openly friendly. Others are more neglectful than openly hostile. They don't understand their Christianity, and while they preach beautiful sermons on Sunday, they have, to hump themselves the other six days of the week as ministerial business men, raising money to build a new church or pay off the debt on the old one; and in the meantime trying to keep alive on a beggarly wage, which is oozed out to them by a stingy congregation that pretends to love its religion but hates like the dickens to pay for it.

I don't know much about country churches, but have seen many country parsons wearing shiny clothes; and I imagine their congregations got all the ministering they paid for.

In the cities, however, the job of preaching beautiful sermons to rich congregations is a soft snap, for the rich congregation pays well and wants very little religion. The well kept preacher can't get away with much real christianity, for his bread-and-butter comes from exploiters of labor. And he would get in bad if he asked his patrons how they got it.

They will give up the money necessary to build a beautiful church, and furnish the preacher with' a fine parsonage and an automobile so long as their christianity doesn't interfere with

business. And labor unions interfere with "business, " because they insist on a greater share of the product of their labor than the employer would otherwise have to let them have.

There are many such churches, and I don't object to them if rich "Christians" want them. But I can't see any reason for poor people attending them. They are not wanted there in the first place, and won't feel comfortable or very religious if they go there. And such a church, can't be friendly to labor unions on Sunday because it can't be friendly to them on week days, when it might hurt business.

Annotation: From the 1880s to the 1930s the labor movement in the United States made multiple attempts to organize the mass of industrial workers into unions to advocate for better wages, safer working conditions, and a shorter work day and work week. Employers resisted these efforts, sometimes violently, either by employing private security forces or by calling on the police or even the national guard to end labor strikes. As conflicts grew in number and intensity, it is not surprising that churches and religious leaders would be drawn into the conflict to endorse the goals of one side or the other. These articles from a Chicago pro-labor newspaper gives one perspective on how some labor organizers perceived church leaders as being too friendly to employers. In the first from 1913, the author responds to a church leader declaring that the church is "best and truest friend labor ever had" by pointing out that the same reverend voted against laws that labor unions supported. For a positive example of a religious leader helping labor the author points to Cardinal Manning in England who worked with striking dock workers in the 1898 London Dock Strike to help them achieve their demands. Some religious leaders in the United States supported the labor movement too arguing that a shorter work week would make workers more likely to attend church. Also note that the author does not criticize religion for being anti-labor but instead criticizes the church saying that working people are still religious even if they are moving away from the church.

The second article by the same author in 1914 argues that churches too often take the side of employers because the wealthy employers have more influence on churches. The author argues that churches are afraid to offend the "wealthy pew renter" (a person who pays for the exclusive use of a particular pew in a church) because "They will give up the money necessary to build a beautiful church, and furnish the preacher with' a fine parsonage and an automobile so long as their Christianity doesn't interfere with business." Again the author notes the difference between the church and religion saying "There are many such churches, and I don't object to them if rich "christians" want them. But I can't see any reason for poor people attending them."

Source 3

Alice Henry, *The trade union woman*, 1915.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/15024465/>

Excerpt(s):

[From page vii-viii]

Many of the difficulties and dangers surrounding the working-woman affect the workingman also, but on the other hand, there are special reasons, springing out of the ancestral claims which life makes upon woman, arising also out of her domestic and social environment, and again out of her special function as mother, why the condition of the wage-earning woman should be the subject of separate consideration. It is impossible to discuss intelligently wages, hours and sanitation in reference to women workers unless these facts are borne in mind.

What makes the whole matter of overwhelming importance is the wasteful way in which the health, the lives, and the capacity for future motherhood of our young girls are squandered during the few brief years they spend as human machines in our factories and stores. Youth, joy and the possibility of future happiness lost forever, in order that we may have cheap (or dear), waists or shoes or watches.

Further, since the young girl is the future mother of the race, it is she who chooses the father of her children. Every condition, either economic or social, whether of training or of environment, which in any degree tends to limit her power of choice, or to narrow its range, or to lower her standards of selection, works out in a national and racial deprivation. And surely no one will deny that the degrading industrial conditions under which such a large number of our young girls live and work do all of these, do limit and narrow the range of selection and do lower the standards of the working-girl in making her marriage choice.

Give her fairer wages, shorten her hours of toil, let her have the chance of a good time, of a happy girlhood, and an independent, normal woman will be free to make a real choice of the best man. She will not be tempted to passively accept any man who offers himself, just in order to escape from a life of unbearable toil, monotony and deprivation.

Annotation: This excerpt is from a book, *The Trade Union Women*, written by Australian-American journalist Alice Henry. Henry wrote for several labor-oriented publications and was interested in making her (largely middle class) readers understand the lives of working class women. Henry was also a member of the Women's Trade Union League, an organization that included both working women and middle class women and advocated for women's suffrage. The source is both an example of how middle class progressives tried to advocate for working women and how those efforts could be hampered by a patronizing attitude toward culture and

morality. In addition to class differences between these women, there were religious differences too as most of the middle class activists were protestant and most of the poorer working women were Catholic or Jewish. In this excerpt, Henry laments that young women who work in factories are less likely to choose a suitable husband simply to “escape from a life of unbearable toil, monotony and deprivation.” The implication is that women who choose lower quality husbands will have lower quality children, a notion that reflects ideas about eugenics which were common among middle class progressives at the time.