

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) was a Christian theologian and Baptist pastor who taught at the Rochester Theological Seminary. Rauschenbusch was a key figure in the Social Gospel and Single Tax movements that flourished in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The last book by Dr. Rauschenbusch is an important event to a large and increasing public; perhaps no other modern religious leader reaches so many thinking people in our country. The present volume, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, is especially opportune. For how can we maintain loyalty to our holy religion while we face the new world order which these tremendous days may signal, unless our systematic theology prove that it holds implicit the thought of the new age? Even among those who claim to be orthodox, many will say, Keep the religion and let the theology go. But the suggestion is futile, for a religion without theology is as unthinkable as it is invertebrate. Only as the Church and all other organizations, governments and classes give up monopoly power and come under the law of Christ, shall they reach salvation. By such sacrifice, they step out from the Kingdom of Evil and into the Kingdom of God—that Kingdom which must be the purpose for which the Church exists. In talking of the Kingdom, Dr. Rauschenbusch is on his own ground: this is his dear truth, to which all his books are dedicated, and as now commonly recognized it was the truth central to the Mind and Purpose of Jesus. Yet since The kingdom-ideal contains the revolutionary force of Christianity, mere recognition does not carry us a long way. If the Church is to be saved, if the Kingdom is successfully to oppose that dark Kingdom of Evil, we must get back to the Founder. Here in the center of the book, between the discussion of mans need and of Gods nature, comes the Christology. The Christ of this book is the Initiator of the Kingdom of God: it is He who set in motion the historical forces of redemption which are to overthrow the Kingdom of Evil. That this point of view does not show the whole truth, Dr. Rauschenbusch would be swift to assert: but that the neglect of it has robbed religion must be granted. Is it true that Jesus has been experienced as a Liberator more frequently apart from theology than within it? If so, why? In part because Theology has made the divinity of Christ a question of nature rather than character. The actuality of this study may seem at first to lessen awe, to bring the Christ-Figure too near. But can Christ be brought too near to our understandings? To apprehend Him in His historic setting is to obey the very method of the Incarnation. To the social Gospel, the conception of God, taken next in order, is inevitably viewed as largely the product of economic and political conditions.

**CONTENTS** • The Challenge Of The Social Gospel To Theology • The Difficulties Of Theological Readjustment • Neither Alien Nor Novel • The Consciousness Of Sin • The Fall Of Man • The Nature Of Sin • The Transmission Of Sin • The Super-personal Forces Of Evil • The Kingdom Of Evil • The Social Gospel And Personal Salvation • The Salvation Of The Super-personal Forces • The Church As The Social Factor Of Salvation • The Kingdom Of God • The Initiator Of The Kingdom Of God • The Social Gospel And The Conception Of God • The Holy Spirit, Revelation, Inspiration, And Prophecy • Baptism And The Lords Supper • Eschatology • The Social Gospel And The Atonement

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It is here that Rauschenbusch, the father of the social gospel in the United States, articulates

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