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THE CHURCH AND THE PEOPLE

By JOSEPH McCABE

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THE CHURCH AND THE PEOPLE

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BY

JOSEPH McCABE

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PREFACE

This little work requires very little preface. It is an examination of the claim of the Christian Church, in all its branches, that it had a very important share in the improvement of the condition of the people. And since that comfortable minority of the people who are not what is commonly called "workers" have unquestionably always had the benevolent friendship of the Church, I confine my inquiry to the large majority of the people who more earnestly needed help and have not clearly had it. The book is an attempt to determine how much, or how little, the workers owe to the Church.

It is, from the nature of the case, an historical inquiry. It begins with the condition of the workers at the time when Christianity came into Europe. It follows the workers through the phases of slavery, serfdom, free labour, the industrial revolution, and modern democracy. It tries to ascertain, accurately, what the Church had to do with this development.

Since the book is intended for the workers themselves, it is not decorated with, nor is the reader distracted by, an array of impressive footnotes and learned references to Latin, German, French, or Italian literature. Only in a few passages, where a doubting reader may care to make an effort to consult the authorities, is any trace left of the very extensive reading on which it is

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based. I mention this lest the reader should conclude that I have for once adopted the very common view, especially on the religious side, that any kind of third-rate matter, culled from writers whose authority is not severely examined, will suffice for people who have, as a rule, neither the leisure nor the means to check it. He will find that this simple sketch of European development follows a more conscientious method.

J. M.

∴ Since my work was written the Church of England has issued the report of its Committee of Inquiry on "Christianity and Industrial Problems." It is an appalling plea of "guilty" to the charges I make in this book. It admits the remissness of Christianity in face of slavery and serfdom, and in regard to the modern phase it makes the terrible confession: "We have allowed avarice and selfishness and grinding competition to work havoc over the broad spaces of human life." I respect the Church's candour. The phrase, "The Great Lying Church," now passes to the Church of Rome. But what an end to four centuries of wealth and power!

J. M.

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CHAPTER I

WHAT THE PAGANS DID FOR THE SLAVE

THE first claim which the Churches make is that Christianity struck the chains from the ankle of the ancient slave, and thus won the first measure of freedom for the workers of Europe.

The way in which this claim is still put in sermons to many working-class audiences, or in clerical literature, will be familiar to the reader. The preacher or writer, who usually knows as little about the economic condition of ancient Rome as he knows about the atmosphere of the planet Venus, paints for us a highly coloured picture of Roman life. He has a vague idea that practically all the workers of ancient Rome were slaves, quivering daily under the lash, housed by night in filthy sheds and cellars. He describes for us the flushed and sated patrician sending to the cross some slave who has been unfortunate enough to spill the wine upon his silken robe : the hard-eyed Roman matron ordering an offending slave to be flung alive to the carp in the fish-pond : the whole democracy of Rome sighing for a gospel of deliverance which no religion or morality of the old world can inspire. Then, as opportunely as in the last chapter of a novel or the last scene of a melodrama, the Christian message runs through the Roman world, the doors of the slave-pits are opened, the free workers of Europe come forth to embrace their benefactor.

Unfortunately for pulpit-orators and writers of this type, the working-man has fallen into an ugly habit of reading social and historical literature, and the pretty story has to be deprived of much of its high colouring. Indeed, once men began to reflect, it was hardly necessary to read more than the Bible itself. There is not a word of condemnation of slavery in the New Testament. St. Paul, who is believed to have witnessed its horrors in every great city of the Roman world, no more condemns it than Christ had done on the rustic shores of the Sea of Galilee. Throughout the Bible, it is regarded, whenever it *is* noticed, as a legitimate institution. Christ repeatedly, in his parables, refers to slaves. But he never applies to the slave-owner one word out of that rich vocabulary which he reserves for the comparatively innocent Scribes and Pharisees.

So the quite up-to-date apologist alters the appeal. He invites us to admire the prudence, the social wisdom, of Christ and the early Christian leaders in *not* condemning slavery. What an indescribable chaos would have resulted! What a paralysis of the Roman economic world would have been caused, when that world became Christian, if Christ had plainly declared that slavery was a crime! Far wiser was it to put the seeds of the reform into the hearts of men and let them germinate slowly, so as to allow time for an industrial adjustment. The Christian gospel followed this wiser policy. It taught the brotherhood of men, under the fatherhood of God. That strange new message passed first between the bars of the underground quarters of the slaves, touching their squalid world with hope. Then, in the course of centuries, it conquered the hearts of their masters and won freedom for the oppressed.

Now this new piece of rhetoric is just as much at variance with the facts as was the older story.

In the first place, it is preposterous to say that the fatherhood of God was a new doctrine in the ancient world when Christianity began to preach it. On the contrary, it was one of the most familiar of religious ideas. The Zeus of the Greeks, like the Jupiter of the Romans, was their "father." Every Roman child knew that "Jupiter" meant "sky-father" or "heavenly father." The second part of his name (*-piter* or *pater*) was the common Roman name "father."

It was quite an old religious idea. Five hundred years before Christ, the prophet Malachi (ii. 10) had asked: "Have we not all one father?" Isaiah had said (lxiii. 16): "Thou, O Lord, art our father." But hundreds of years before even the oldest book of the Old Testament was written the Egyptians had regarded all men as children of a common maker, Amon-Ra. Before the time of Christ this idea was diffused throughout the Roman world. The Stoic moralist Epictetus, whom none will suspect of having borrowed from Christianity, asks (*Discourses*, I, 52): "Wilt thou not bear with thine own brother, who hath God for his Father?" We shall, in fact, see presently that the *Stoic* doctrine of the brotherhood of men rendered great and demonstrable services to the slaves, while the *Christian* doctrine cannot be shown to have had any appreciable influence on their evolution into free workers.

First, however, let us set aside rhetoric and study the real condition and development of the Roman industrial world. Religious controversy is generally obscured by rhetoric, but no part of it is so hopelessly confused and perverted by fine words as this social question. Fortunately, the power and responsibility which the workers have won in our time make them sharper in distinguishing between mere words and realities. The old practice of giving them pulpit-oratory instead of accurate statements of fact finds less favour with them. Almost any Free Library will now enable a worker to discover the historical facts for himself; and I venture to think that, if he cares to read a few authoritative works on slavery and Roman life, he will come to this conclusion: *The failure to condemn slavery is precisely one of the worst defects of early Christianity.*

The Greek and Roman worlds, or the Græco-Roman world into which Christ was born, rested to a large and lamentable extent on slavery. There are writers who say that Athens would never have reached its marvellous heights in art and philosophy and letters, or Rome have achieved its triumphs in law and organisation, if slaves had not done the coarser work. That is an intolerable fallacy. Slavery was a crime, the greatest crime of the ancient world.

As far as the Greeks are concerned, however, we must not be too exacting. The original root of slavery, it is generally agreed, was barbaric warfare. According to the rules of that warfare, if you took a man captive his life belonged to you. He might be either killed or enslaved; and the latter alternative was considered quite a humane advance upon the earlier practice of putting prisoners to death. Now it takes centuries of moral and social development to create a new conscience in regard to inherited traditions and institutions. One has only to remember that less than a century ago, fifteen hundred years after the establishment of Christianity, the great majority of the Christians of America regarded slavery as just; and about half a century earlier slaves had been bought and sold in London. Or we may reflect how long it has taken Christendom to realise the evil of war, or of cruelty to animals, or of persecution. But

Greece had been only a few centuries out of the barbaric stage of human development when its great moralists were called upon to judge its institutions. We should add that at Athens the slaves were, as a rule, well treated. They married, they attended public and private celebrations, and they had money and property of their own. The evil was, therefore, not so acute; and the civilisation of Athens came to so speedy an end that the high morality of Plato and Zeno and Epicurus had not time to produce all its social consequences.

When we turn to Rome we find a development which is as far as could be from the familiar pulpit-story. Rome conquered Greece in the second century before Christ, and before long Greek philosophers crossed the sea to Rome and began to teach their moral systems there. The chief philosophy that took root in Rome was the Stoic system, which had been founded at Athens. I have already quoted one of the Stoics, Epictetus, a Greek by birth, but one of the teachers of Rome in the first century after Christ. He explicitly proclaims the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. On the religious side he is more mystic than most of the Stoics, but his social gospel is the common teaching. The Stoic ethic was intensely and fervently social. What did it do in face of the terrible and universal slavery of the Roman world?

We must not be too impatient with the *earlier* Romans, or wonder that so enlightened a people lived on the labour of a mass of slaves. It is quite absurd to look for our modern attitude in men who lived two thousand years ago. We must expect it neither in a Galilean peasant nor a distinguished Roman moralist like Cicero. *We* have inherited the best of what there was in every ancient civilisation, but their inheritance was poor. Moreover, at the time when the Stoic philosophy reached Rome the Roman people were only a few centuries out of barbarism. They had the hard and imperfect moral ideas of any other people (such as the Hebrew) in the first stage of civilisation. The consequence was that, as their armies spread east and west, hundreds of thousands of men were captured in war and enslaved. A single frontier-war might yield as many as 100,000 slaves. As, at the same time, successful generals and officials obtained enormous grants of the captured land, or permission to work mines, there soon developed a Rome in which rich men could live luxuriously on the produce of estates or mines, which they had never seen, worked by thousands of slaves. It is probable that in the Italy of the time there were at least two slaves to one free man.

The essential inhumanity of the system cannot be too strongly condemned, even when we have set aside every exaggeration of Christian writers. Thus it is a grave exaggeration to suggest that these ancient Roman nobles extorted from their slaves as much as a modern Rockefeller gets from his employees. Some of our authorities on ancient Rome have carefully estimated the fortunes of the wealthier Romans. They would be regarded as quite moderate in Chicago or New York to-day.

It is, further, an exaggeration to suppose that nearly all the work of the Roman world was done by slaves. In the earlier period, when the conquering armies sent home myriads of slaves, there is no doubt that the proportion of free workers must have been small. That period of abundant slave-labour passed, and in the age of Augustus, when Christ was born, there were probably at least 400,000 free workers among the million citizens of Rome.

Finally, there is a good deal of exaggeration about the extent of the more brutal treatment of slaves. In the Roman Republic the State never crossed the threshold of a citizen's house. He was absolute master of his wife, children, and slaves. He could put them to death when he so decided. This sounds more horrible than it was in practice, for the standard of public opinion put a check upon a man's despotic power. The slaves were naturally the last and least to receive protection of this kind, and, until the Emperor Hadrian took from masters the power to put their slaves to death, there were occasional executions. The exaggeration is to take a few isolated instances of brutality and represent them as common practices, or at least not uncommon events. Every preacher, for instance, knows (he thinks) that slaves were thrown to the fishes in the Roman world. He does *not* know that only one such instance is on record, and that the pagan moralist, Seneca, who tells it, indignantly adds that this abominable master, Vedius Pollio, was himself " worthy of a thousand deaths " (*On Clemency*, I, 18). Such barbarities were rare.

Yet the fact that Roman civilisation rested on the labour of millions of slaves ought to have challenged every moralist, and the general treatment of the slaves was inhuman. On the large estates, especially, where escape was more likely than in the cities, they were treated with terrible rigour by the overseers. Even in the towns they were, as a rule, a despised and oppressed class. No man can condone the inhumanity which dragged them from their homes on the frontiers of the Roman world and loaded them with toil and ignominy. Is it true that the Stoic moralists were insensible of this inhumanity?

The lot of the Roman slave began to be improved in the first century before Christ. The Cornelian

Law (B.C. 82) punished the murder of a slave equally with that of a free man. The Petronian Law (B.C. 32) forbade masters to send their slaves to fight wild beasts in the amphitheatre. The slaves were more freely permitted to save money and purchase their liberty. Masters became more liberal in "manumitting," or freeing, their slaves.

At the root of this growing liberality there were, of course, economic causes. The armies no longer brought home the same long processions of captives. Slaves became less numerous, and the common sense of masters directed them to ensure, by better treatment, that the slave should have a longer life and a more willing disposition. In the time of Augustus slaves obtained their freedom so easily at Rome that the Emperor, in the supposed interest of the State, had to check the movement. But it is a mistake to think that every reform is due to economic causes. The fight for the abolition of black slavery in the nineteenth century ought to remind any social student of the real power of moral forces. So it was in ancient Rome. The Stoic philosophy was slowly extending its sway over the minds of the better Romans, and in the first century after Christ we find the problem boldly confronted.

The moralist Seneca, who wrote in the reign of Nero and whose work was overcast and restricted by the horror of the time, was content to plead for the better treatment of slaves, not the abolition of slavery. We shall see that no Christian writer did more than this for seven centuries afterwards, so we need not quarrel with the Stoic. His language, addressed to rich Romans of his own class, not to congregations of workers, is hardly equalled in humanity by that of any Christian moralist. "Slaves!" he exclaims (*Letters*, XLVII), "nay, lowly riends." Over and over again he pleads that they be treated as such; and the fact that the brutal Nero commanded the magistrates to receive, from slaves, complaints of bad treatment by their masters must be regarded as evidence of Seneca's influence. The slaves were no longer outlaws.

After the death of Nero a long series of good Emperors occupied the Roman throne, and there began, under Stoic influence, a period of social idealism such as the world has not witnessed until the revival of " paganism " in our time. The Stoic orator Dion Chrysostom, or " Dion the Golden-Mouthed " as the name given to him means, came to Rome; and it was not long before he attacked slavery. The fourteenth of his *Orations*, which was delivered in a public hall in the heart of Rome, opened the subject, and rightly traced the origin of slavery to capture in war. The fifteenth *Oration* continues the analysis and concludes with the first explicit condemnation of slavery. " If," he says, " this method of making slaves [by capture in war] is not just, then all the other methods bear the taint of injustice, so that no one can be truly called a slave." These words, let me repeat, were spoken boldly in a public hall and led to a heated debate; and Dion was the intimate friend of the Emperor. The reader may therefore judge for himself the untruthfulness of the common statement that the " pagans " never attacked slavery, and that the Christians did. He will be still more surprised to learn that, while the Stoics thus condemned slavery explicitly in the second century, *no Christian writer or speaker during the first seven centuries condemned it.*

In the same reign of Trajan we have evidence, in the *Letters* of the younger Pliny (VIII, 16, etc.), that even in the country the Stoic ideal of the treatment of slaves was accepted. Pliny treated his slaves with great liberality. At Rome itself, in the second century, the lot of the slave continued to improve. The Emperor Hadrian, who succeeded Trajan, abolished the underground dens in which it was customary to house the slaves (and which the preacher falsely represents as abolished by Christianity), and took away from masters the ancient right to put a slave to death (*Historia Augusta*, 18). The next Emperor, Antoninus Pius, decreed very severe punishment against any master who caused the death of one of his slaves. Then the throne was occupied by the famous moralist, Marcus Aurelius, whose lofty and austere ideals were not inferior to those of any Christian writer. " Love mankind, obey God," he gives as the sum of his philosophy (*Meditations*, bk. VII); exactly as Christ had formulated the two supreme commandments a century earlier. A great philanthropic movement spread over Italy, and the slaves shared the benefit of it. The leading Roman lawyers were now Stoics, and some of them, such as Ulpianus and Florentinus, declared that slavery was opposed to the " law of nature," which was the supreme standard of the Stoic.

If this happy period of Roman development had lasted, Rome would have been purged of its old abuses and injustices. Unfortunately, the State was already in decay, and the long reign of good and strong Emperors was followed by a century of confusion in which the work of the Stoics was fatally interrupted. At the close of the third century another strong man, Diocletian, mounted the throne; and it is interesting to learn that he destroyed two of the roots of slavery, by forbidding the free man to sell his liberty and abolishing the old law that a man might be sold into slavery for debt. A few years later the first Christian Emperor came to power, and we shall see in the next chapter that he and his successors actually undid some of the reforming work of the pagan Emperors and made no appreciable addition to it. The great majority of the wealthy Romans still remained "pagan," as we shall see, for nearly another century. They despised Christianity, and would not embrace it until a fierce policy of persecution forced it upon them. I need only add that to the end they showed the better temper in regard to slaves which the Stoics had introduced. They were, like the wealthy of any age or country, a mixed body, but the more thoughtful of them (whose sentiments are well expressed by a writer of the time, Macrobius, in his *Saturnalia*) were as humane and refined as the best of their class would be fifteen centuries afterwards.

This is the real record of what is called "paganism" in regard to the slaves. In every civilisation there comes at last a period of humanitarianism, when the crude and imperfect moral ideas of the ancestors are questioned. As those ideas are incorporated in institutions, like slavery and militarism, which seem to the superficial crowd essential to the prosperity of the State, the reformers are few and their work spreads over centuries. The civilisation of Athens lasted so short a time—only three or four centuries—that this process could not be completed, but the feeling of the better Athenians was expressed in systems of philosophy, such as the Platonist, the Stoic, and the Epicurean, which passed over to Italy and there resumed their beneficent work. It was chiefly the Stoic philosophy which appealed to the better Romans. Most English writers speak of it as "the Stoic religion," but this is generally done merely because they are unwilling to admit that anything but a religion can inspire men. The founder, Zeno, had not the least idea of establishing a religion, nor was it a religion to the Romans. Most of them believed in a kind of

God or Providence, but there was no Stoic cult, and the ethic was purely humanitarian. It was this (and the economic causes which we shall see later) that transformed a greatly reduced slavery in the first four centuries of our era, and would eventually have abolished it. Let us now study the true record of Christianity in this regard.

CHAPTER II

WHAT CHRISTIANITY DID NOT DO FOR THE SLAVE

There are to-day many religious people who are aware that the claims which have until our time been made on behalf of Christianity have been grossly inflated or wholly unsound. They acknowledge that the early Church quite failed to condemn slavery. It was Stoic influence that bettered the lot of the slave, and certain economic changes, which we will presently consider, that abolished slavery. But they still claim our gratitude. After all, they say, there was one great advantage to the slave in the new religion. Seneca did not invite his " lowly friends " to his table. Pliny may have treated his slaves well, but he had no idea of making them his equals. Now in the humble gatherings of the early Christians all were equal. Here the slave bore no stigma. Bond and free were alike the moment they passed the guarded doors of the secret Christian meeting-place. This was, we are told, a new and portentous thing in the Roman world.

It was nothing of the kind, and there is scarcely a single authoritative modern work on the life of the Roman workers that would not teach the apologist otherwise if he chose to consult it. There is one aspect of Roman social life which completely spoils the Church's claim to have rendered great social service in ancient times, and it is therefore generally ignored. But it is an aspect that ought to be of considerable interest to the modern workers, and it is very material to our present subject, so we will briefly examine it.

There were, as I said, some 400,000 free workers in the city of Rome. Originally, as the reader will know, Rome was a Republic (after getting rid of its early kings), and every citizen shared political power and responsibility. This power they foolishly abandoned to an Emperor, nearly thirty years before the birth of Christ, and Rome became an Empire. They still, however, retained more power, and were better educated, than any body of workers in Europe until recent times, and the modern worker is usually surprised to know that they had trade-societies or brotherhoods—"Colleges," they called them—which one might compare with the Guilds of the Middle Ages or the earlier of our Trade Unions. The comparison must not be strained, as they were merely local groups, not national organisations; and they had no political aim or direct industrial purpose. Perhaps it would be better to compare them to Workmen's Clubs, or Friendly Societies, except that each admitted only the workers of a particular trade.

These Colleges had existed for centuries in the Greek world, from which the Romans seem to have taken the model. The carpenters, let us say, of a particular town, or a particular district of the metropolis, would form a College. They paid fixed sums to a common fund, built or hired a room (perhaps in a Roman tavern), and met periodically to enjoy a brotherly meal and discuss their affairs. Frequently, as we learn from inscriptions which have survived, they called each other "brothers." Mutual help was their chief aim, and one of their most important functions was to provide for the decent burial of dead members.

There was a religious atmosphere about them, for the room in which they met seems always to have had, on an altar, a statue of the deity they chose as their patron.

The Roman and Italian workers, as I said, adopted this institution from the Greeks, and, although the authorities feared political plots and sought to restrict the Colleges, they flourished throughout the Empire. The workers had their trade-societies and "suppers" everywhere, and it seems that, when one had occasion to travel, he found a brotherly welcome in the College of his own trade in another city. It has been suggested that Paul, the tent-maker, simply used the privilege of any artisan of his time in his travels, and found hospitality and converts amongst the little groups of his fellow-workers in all the cities of the Mediterranean. It has even been thought that the earliest Christian communities were at first Colleges, or trade-societies, which took the Jewish Jesus as their patron, just as other Colleges took the Serapis of the Egyptians or the Neptune of the Romans. More than one writer believes that the meeting-places of the workers were the first models of the Christian "church."

Striking as is the analogy between the College, with its air of brotherliness and piety, its mutual aid and its persecution by the authorities, and the early Christian community, I would not press it. The question of the origin of Christianity is far too large and complicated to be discussed here. All that I need draw attention to is that in the Colleges of the Roman workers the slave was welcomed on equal terms with the free. The Christian gathering was by no means the only place where he could for a few hours forget that he was a slave. Some Colleges consisted entirely of slaves: some, no doubt (though we have no positive evidence of this), excluded slaves. But we have definite evidence that the slave was admitted with the free workers to the College.[1] Roman historians, like the majority of our modern historians, describe only the spectacular doings of Emperors and Empresses, the course of wars, and the follies of " the smart set." But in the soil of Italy we find thousands of inscriptions, which were once set over humble graves or inserted in the walls of buildings, and from these we learn much about the life of the people. It is mainly from these that we gather the story of the Roman Colleges and learn that in them the slave mingled fraternally with the free worker. One more of the traditional boasts of religious writers has been destroyed.

I am ignoring the free workers of Rome and confining my attention to the slave, because the workers had a remarkably easy life. No one has ever suggested that the Christian Church bettered their condition. Their wage was low, and rents in the city were terribly high. Within a circuit of one mile from the centre of Rome, where the gods (or the priests) and the emperors had their spacious marble palaces, hundreds of thousands of workers were crowded at night into four- and five-storey tenements. In that lovely climate, however, one lived in the open air, and holidays were surprisingly numerous. The one claim which Christian writers seem to make in regard to the free Roman worker is that the new religion brought him a " Sabbath," or one day's rest in seven. It is as ludicrous as most of the other claims. The Roman worker had, not fifty days' rest in the course of a year, but *two hundred* (by the fourth century). The British worker a century ago, when England was thoroughly Christian, worked for about 310 days a year, for twelve or fourteen hours a day (including Saturday). The Roman worker of pagan days worked only about 170 or 160 days a year. The way in which Christian writers represent the Sabbath as a boon to him is grotesque.

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[1] These interesting institutions are very rarely treated satisfactorily by English writers, though the main facts may be read in any good Classical Dictionary. Sir Samuel Dill gives a fairly long account of them in his *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (1904, pp. 250–286), and there is an excellent chapter on them in my translation of A Kalthoff's *Rise of Christianity* (1907, Chapter V).

Nor had the Roman worker any difficulty in choosing what to do on his holiday, or any great need to save money for it. For a fraction of a penny he could spend an hour in princely baths such as the world builds no longer. Then there was the Great Circus, holding 380,000 people, where, on more than a hundred days a year, he could enjoy, from morning until night, without payment, the finest chariot-races and the rarest entertainments that the whole world of his time afforded. In another part of Rome was the Amphitheatre (the Coliseum), where, equally without payment, 90,000 Romans witnessed the combats of beasts and gladiators. In other districts were the theatres, equally free, where the worker rocked with laughter at the antics of the mimes and mummers. He had free municipal medical service, free schooling, an excellent and free water-supply, a good system of sanitation, and—to crown the extravagance—free doles of corn, pork, and oil several times a week! We shall see later what the worker became in the Christian Middle Ages, which ignorant Catholics regard as his golden age. No, the new religion brought no material or social advantage whatever to the free worker.

Let us return to the slave. We will make no complaint that the Church had no influence on his position during the first three centuries. It had no social ethic at all, and never glanced at such problems as war, poverty, slavery, and political tyranny. Christ and the early Christians expected every moment that the world was coming to an end. Why, in such circumstances, trouble oneself about social problems?

But even if the Church had had a social ethic, it would not have affected the lot of the slave in the first three centuries, because it had no influence whatever on Roman affairs. The belief, which preachers once loved to impose upon their congregations, that the new religion spread with miraculous speed through the Roman Empire, is one of the fairy-tales of our youth. Christianity spread no more quickly than the other Asiatic religions which were seeking to take the place of the dying Roman religion. Two hundred and fifty years after the death of Christ it had only a few thousand followers among the million citizens of Rome. It began to draw ahead of its rivals only when, at the beginning of the fourth century, the Emperor Constantine—the natural son of an ignorant tavern-maid who turned Christian—more or less embraced it, and at all events showered wealth and favour on it. Rome detested and despised him, regarding him as a barbarian. In 329 he had his wife and son murdered, and, stung by the contempt of Rome, he went off to found Constantinople. He had his revenge upon the pagans by putting Christianity on a level with the Roman religion. His successors at length made Christianity the only religion of the Empire, closed or destroyed all other temples, and converted the Romans at the point of the sword. By the end of the fourth century the Church had supreme power in the Roman Empire.

The worker who would apply the test of historical facts to the claims of the Churches will now ask if the Church used its power on behalf of the slaves. It did not. Still no Christian leader condemned slavery, or even faintly suggested " a new industrial adjustment." Less was done for the slave than had been done in the second century. Christian masters here and there freed their slaves: just as pagan masters had done. Christian preachers here and there urged the humane treatment of slaves : just as pagan moralists had done. Christian Emperors suffered the worst disabilities of the slaves to continue; the law (now Christian) did not recognise the marriage of slaves, and it still permitted the torture of slave witnesses and decreed that the slave who falsely accused his master (except of treason) should be burned alive. No Pope or bishop said a word against slavery.

If any man imagines that the Christian leaders were still restrained only by a very natural fear of paralysing the industrial order—a miserable subterfuge, which one finds even in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*—let him carefully consider the next stage. For most of us the fallacy is transparent enough. The early Christians never gave a thought to the Roman social or economic order. They lived apart from its life and prided themselves on their " unworldliness." The last thing they would have dreamed of doing would be to consult the economic interest of the great Roman slave-owners. Indeed, how any Christian can suggest that Christ or any Christian leader refrained from clearly condemning so grave a crime out of consideration for the luxurious idlers of Rome, whose fortunes were based upon slave-labour, surpasses understanding.

But the hollowness of this pretext is just as plainly seen on the economic side. We do not read that the Southern States of the American Union suffered this terrible dislocation when the slaves were freed in the nineteenth century. In point of fact, it was precisely economic interest, as I said, which led to such a widespread emancipation of the slaves in the first century that the Emperor interfered. Masters began to realise that a free and willing worker was more valuable than a slave. When the Emperors became Stoics, this process of emancipation continued. It was, however, still too infrequent to affect the great mass of the slaves. From pagan masters they simply passed to Christian masters. There is not the slightest proof that the Christians liberated more than the Pagans had done. Then occurred one of the mightiest events in the history of Europe—the fall of Rome—and it shook the Roman economic system in ruins to the ground. It was the Germanic barbarians who, for the most part, abolished slavery.

At the very time when Christianity secured its moral and religious supremacy in the Roman Empire, the half-barbaric tribes of the north were pressing hard upon its frontier. Rome was in full decay, and, on the other hand, a terrible invasion of Asiatic tribes in the north-east of Europe was pressing the Teutons southward upon the weakened barriers of the Empire. In the fifth century the barriers gave way, and Goths and Vandals trampled underfoot the fabric of civilisation. The city of Rome suffered so severely that within another century its hills, which had been clothed with the marble palaces and superb gardens of its patricians, were deserted, ruin-strewn wastes. Less than a tenth of the original population lingered, in poverty, in the valleys. The wealthy, the great slave-owners, were annihilated.

Their immense estates in the provinces were cut off from Rome, and their industrial organisation was completely destroyed. Myriads of slaves now found no master to own them; and the tribes which had once supplied slaves were the masters of Rome.

Now here was the golden opportunity of the Church, if there were a particle of truth in the suggestion that it only awaited a favourable time to destroy slavery. But the plain historical truth is that even in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, when there was no definite industrial order to disturb, no Churchman raised a finger against slavery. Christians who retained any wealth clung to their slave-property. Salvianus, a priestly writer of the time, complains that they treated their slaves more harshly than the pagans had done. Paulinus of Pella, another pious Christian of the time, naïvely confesses (in his poem *Eucharisticos*) that they thought nothing of having sexual intercourse with their female slaves. Instead of issuing a plain condemnation of the system of slavery, which was crumbling before their eyes, the Popes harshly endorsed it. No slave could enter the clergy, said the most famous Pope of the time, Leo the Great, lest his "vileness" should "pollute" the sacred order. No slave could marry a free Christian woman, said the next most famous and most pious Pope of the time, Gregory the Great (*Letters*, VII, 1).

Curiously enough, the one positive claim on behalf of the Church at this period is that Pope Gregory himself made a wonderful and most beneficent utterance in regard to the slave. It is quoted by Mr. J. K. Ingram in his *History of Slavery and Serfdom*, from whom it has been eagerly copied by religious writers. In this letter (*Letters*, VI, 12) Gregory most admirably observes that all men were "born free," and that the slave is only such by "law of nations." And as, he says, Christ died to liberate mankind, it is fitting that men should free their slaves. Surely we have here at least the first Christian condemnation of slavery! It is a little late, it is true—550 years after the death of Christ—but Ingram assures us that this "celebrated declaration" represents "the general attitude of the priesthood toward slavery."

Now Ingram, who is a good authority on slavery, is not a Roman Catholic. But he is a Positivist, and he shares the strange bias which most Positivists have in favour of the Church of Rome. That prejudice leads him, not only to subscribe to the absurd idea that the Church acted out of social wisdom in not condemning slavery, but to commit here one of the most amusing errors. Neither he nor any of the Christian writers who quote Gregory's letter seems to have read more than the opening lines of it. If they had done so, they would have perceived that the words they quote are merely pious clap-trap, covering one of those shrewd bargains which the Pope loved to make. The letter is written to two of his slaves whom he is freeing. They have, it seems, inherited money, and one of them is anxious to enter a monastery; and Gregory is freeing them on the express condition that the first hands over his money to his monastery, and the second leaves his money to the Church at his death! Such is the kind of evidence by which the clerical case is sustained.

In point of fact, Pope Gregory was the greatest slave-owner of his time: the greatest slave-owner in Europe since the extinction of the old Roman capitalists. On his assurance that the end of the world was not far off, numbers of land-owners had left their property to the Church, and the Papacy had thus come to be the heir, not of the

Roman Empire, as some foolishly say, but of the Roman capitalist. It is calculated that Gregory acquired for the Papacy no less that 1800 square miles of cultivated land, and these estates were tilled by slave-labour, or serf-labour. This was the foundation of Rome's "temporal power." Europe was in a state of indescribable confusion and ignorance, and the Papacy easily obtained a despotic power in such a world.

Neither Gregory nor any other Pope or bishop denounced slavery or advocated the wholesale emancipation of slaves. We shall have to wait still two centuries for an explicit Christian condemnation of slavery, and, when we at last get it, slavery will be already extinct over the greater part of Europe. This is the simple historical truth in regard to slavery, as one will read in any history of the institution. Ingram, the English historian of slavery, is, as we saw, anything but biassed against the Church. But the only piece of definite evidence which he gives to support his compliments to the Church is the quotation from Pope Gregory which we have examined. If one omits that page from Ingram's work, the story of slavery is truly told. It was deeply affected and alleviated by Stoicism, but it was abolished, or converted into serfdom, by a series of secular or (in the broadest sense) economic causes which acted from the first century to the early Middle Ages. The claim that Christianity abolished slavery, or played any large part in abolishing it, is fantastically untrue. It is not until the ninth century that we find a Churchman, St. Wulstan, zealous to eradicate the last traces of it.

We cannot assign any date, even a particular century, when slavery ended in Europe. It began to dissolve, we saw, in the first and second centuries of our era. A German social historian, Weber, says that the emancipation of the slaves is one of the most prominent features of Imperial Rome. The coming to power of Christianity in the fourth century made no difference to this development. There is no evidence whatever that the steady emancipation of the slaves increased its pace in the fourth century. But in the fifth century the barbarians overran the entire Empire, with appalling destructiveness, and the greater part of the millions of slaves must have found their liberty in the confusion.

But to describe these causes as bringing liberty to the slave is misleading. They merely converted him into a serf. The history of Europe after the barbarian invasions is so dark that we have some difficulty in tracing the development. The Roman system of education was destroyed, and the Church refused to replace it. Popes like Gregory the Great frowned on the efforts of a few Christians to restore culture. Europe sank rapidly into an abyss of ignorance, superstition, violence, and squalor. The few men who attempted to write the history of their time are almost unreadable; their pages are a confused and badly-written jumble of murders and vicious careers.

We may, however, assign a few reasons for the general change from slavery to serfdom. In the old Roman days there had been free agricultural workers—" Colonists," the Romans called them—as well as slaves, and the barbarians, where they settled and made princedoms, would be apt to ignore the distinction. The slaves, on the other hand, although " freed " by the destruction of their Roman masters, had little choice but to remain on the soil and try to wrest a living from it. In the increasing violence of the age all of them would purchase the protection of the German warriors by rendering feudal service and thus setting up new and hardly better masters. In the towns the large bodies of free workers would suffer and decay like the wealthy, on whom they had to a great extent depended. We saw that in the best days of Rome the city had a population of one million, including about 400,000 free workers. In the days of Gregory the Great the entire population of Rome was only about 40,000, so that we may conjecture that the number of free workers in the metropolis had sunk from 400,000 to about 10,000. The other towns of Italy, Gaul, and Spain suffered equally or even more. The artisan-class shrank enormously. The manhood of Europe became a mass of dull, brutal, poor, squalid agricultural workers, tied to the soil, densely ignorant, shamelessly exploited by the clergy, gradually shaped into serfs by the new, semi-barbarous nobility. Such was the "great emancipation," for which the Church is eager to secure the credit.

CHAPTER III

THE WORKER IN THE MIDDLE AGES

ALTHOUGH it is easy to give a legal or economic definition of the difference between the slave and the serf, it is not so easy to describe the difference in human values and say how much improvement was effected. The religious writer, as a rule, takes slavery at its worst, and therefore he finds a vast difference. But, as we saw, Roman slavery had been profoundly modified before the fourth century. The master could no longer kill a slave, send him to the amphitheatre, or even use him brutally; because the slave had the right of appeal to the magistrates.

Under early medieval serfdom, on the other hand, brutal treatment by a master was more common, since any legal appeal against it would have been a mockery. Again, though the serf was "free," he was tied to the soil; he was bought and sold with the soil. It may be urged that at least he was free to marry and keep his family with him, but even here there are reserves to be made. Over a large part of Europe, for instance, the lords, without opposition from the clergy, developed a "right" to enjoy a young woman for three nights after she had married a serf. In fine, the serf worked for himself; but whether the part of the fruit of his labour which he got, after rendering his dues to the lord-abbot or baron, was greater than a slave got on any decent Roman estate, it would be difficult to say.

On the whole, we may conclude that this change was a useful step in the emancipation of the European worker. He had his own little cabin, filthy as it was; he had his own wife and children about him; he was not the abbot's or baron's property in quite the same sense as the cattle and sheep. But his condition—the condition of the overwhelming mass of European workers from the sixth to the thirteenth century or later—constitutes almost as grave a crime as the old Roman slavery: probably graver than slavery was under the Stoics. His liberty was illusory, and his life was brutalised to an inconceivable degree. He was reduced to such dense and pathetic ignorance that he was exploited at every turn; whereas all the free workers of the Roman Empire had had at least an elementary education. The filth and violence of life even in the castles of the early Middle Ages were such that we can guess the condition of the poor cottagers. But we shall see more closely what the life of the workers was at a later and better period, and that will be enough to suggest what it must have been during the terrible Dark Ages.

The Church had now despotic power in Europe, and we naturally ask whether it used that power on behalf of the oppressed and exploited workers: whether, allowing that it could not abolish slavery, it at least played a respectable part in the emancipation of the serfs. And the answer may be read in any serious history of serfdom, even in Ingram: The Church did no more to abolish serfdom than it had done to abolish slavery. "The banners of the Church," as Gibbon said, "were never on the side of the people." Serfdom, even more truly than slavery, evolved under the stress of economic conditions into free labour.

We must keep some sense of proportion in studying these questions. If you take the common type of controversial religious work, which pleads the merit of "the Church," you find that it really does no more than quote the good deeds of some isolated Churchman. In connection with slavery it is the "celebrated declaration" of Gregory the Great, or the destruction of the Bristol slave-markets by St. Wulstan. We rule out Gregory, and we are reduced to the single instance of the English Churchman, who lived when slavery had been almost entirely abolished over Europe. It is quite absurd to ask us to put down to the credit of "the Church" or "the Christian religion" what one man did, when tens of thousands of other saints and bishops had calmly contemplated slavery without protest for centuries. The universal omission is infinitely more significant than the single act.

So it is with serfdom. A number of individual clerics can be quoted who urged the emancipation of serfs: not the abolition of serfdom—not one of them was moralist or social philosopher enough to do that—but the liberation of particular bodies of serfs. Even in regard to these individual bishops or abbots we must make a reserve. The Catholic historian Muratori no less than the recent Protestant historian Eccardus warns us that the clerics who urged laymen to free their serfs were very slow and reluctant to liberate their own serfs. Eccardus (*Geschichte des niederen Volkes*, p. 186) says: "It is openly stated [in contemporary chronicles] that the Church everywhere opposed serfdom except in the case of its own estates." The expression "everywhere" is too strong. All that we can say positively is that many abbots and bishops urged emancipation; but, as Muratori says, the great abbeys clung to their own serfs more closely than any other owners. One may be tempted to see the explanation in another remark of Eccardus. He says that the clergy were at work everywhere inducing people to "commend" their property to a bishop or abbot, and that "they abused their right to protect widows" by inducing them to leave their property "to the Lord." Clearly, a population of free workers, accumulating land or property, would be more profitable to such people than serfs. A more charitable interpretation would be that these particular abbots were—as sometimes, but rarely, happened—themselves sons of the people who had not forgotten the awful wrongs of their class. In any case the *Church* did nothing for the serfs, and the *Churchmen* who did something were few. No one pretends that even during the Dark Ages *every* man and woman was deaf to the call of humanity. That would be too terrible an indictment of their religion.

But we need not waste time over the number of abbots who urged the liberation of serfs or treated them humanely. Ingram's or any other history will show the reader how the political and industrial development of the early Middle Ages brought with it the emancipation of the serfs, and these abbots are merely part of the general liberating process. The first cause was purely economic. The lord found, as the old slave-owner had found, that a free worker was in the end more profitable to him than a serf. Then there were particular causes such as giving freedom as a legacy or as an act of piety, purchasing it out of laborious savings, catching the fancy of a free woman and marrying her, or entering the Church. Purchase was by far the most important of these. Needy nobles, especially when they set out for the Crusades, sold freedom to their serfs at a moderate price. Kings soon discovered in this a fine source of revenue. Philip IV of France liberated the serfs of whole provinces—for a consideration. He gave them the title of "king's burghers" and released them from feudal service to their lords. At other times kings released the serfs of nobles or of cities which resisted the royal authority. Towns, in their turn, emancipated serfs as an obstruction of the warring lords or of some rival town. As the towns grew in wealth and power, fugitive serfs found protection in them.

All these causes were active in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. By the fifteenth century serfdom was generally at an end. How little the Church had to do with the change may be gathered from the different rate of emancipation in different countries. In Russia, where the Church was enormously powerful and economic life correspondingly low, serfdom lingered until 1861. In Prussia, another isolated and backward land until modern times, it lasted until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Neither Russian nor Protestant Church condemned it. But the Catholic Church was just as bad. Serfdom substantially ceased in England and France and Italy about the fourteenth century, not because they were more religious, but because secular development was more rapid in those countries. In the more isolated and more religious provinces of France serfdom lingered until the Revolution. An eighteenth-century French bishop had 40,000 serfs, and it was the Rationalist Voltaire who won emancipation for them. In Italy the Rationalist monarch Frederic II abolished serfdom (on the Crown lands) in 1231; but in the more religious south it survived for centuries afterwards. In Catholic Austria the serfs were not emancipated until the eighteenth century, and then for purely secular reasons. In the Spanish dominions progress was equally slow.

It is therefore ridiculous to ask us to attribute the abolition of serfdom to religion or the Churches. The general causes which put a slow and gradual end to it were secular, and they are a conspicuous part of the whole secular life of the Middle Ages. Economic profit, purchase, and the quarrels of kings, nobles, and cities were the chief factors. Isolated emancipations in some abbey-church or other count for very little in the general development. For the overwhelmingly greater part Popes, prelates, and priests regarded the exploitation and brutalisation of the workers of Europe without as much as a sigh. They were themselves of the exploiting class, and they were very largely corrupt.

As the process of the emancipation of the serfs spreads from the twelfth to the nineteenth century, it is not possible to make this study of the development of the worker as clear as one would wish. We cannot say that serfdom ended at a particular date and then turn to study the new and free agricultural worker. His condition—say, in the fifteenth century—differed in every country.

But the reader ought to be seriously warned against the pretty pictures of his lot which are occasionally offered us by superficial or controversial writers. Remember the profound disdain with which Shakespeare introduces his occasional "clown"—that is to say, peasant. The black night of his profound ignorance shut off from him the life of the world. He toiled as long as the light lasted, and his scanty produce was lamentably robbed by tithes and dues. His home was a stye: a filthy, chimney-less, single room, with bare-earth floor, with muck-heap at the door and open drain a few yards away. Constant disease made sport of him and his family, and he had no remedy. His lords made him cringe like a dog, and their incessant fights and hunts devastated his bit of land. All that his admirers can speak of is his abundance of food and his "sports on the village-green." As to the latter, one has only to say that it is open to any person to reintroduce them in any village to-day—the climate is the same—and see what the villagers think of them. As to the food and other conditions, we will turn to one of the ablest of the optimistic works about the English worker in the Middle Ages, Thorold Rogers's *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*.

Thorold Rogers is so full of generous indignation against the later agricultural and industrial development in England, which defrauded the worker, that he is tempted to glorify the earlier times. That indignation I fully share, but let us look coldly at the mass of facts about medieval life which the economist has put together. He pictures the squalid little cottage just as I have described it above. There was no china in it, no curtain or carpet or boarded floor, no metal fireplace, no candle or artificial light for a winter's night. We have discreet hints of "the inconceivably filthy habits of the people." Linen and sanitation were unknown. The monotony of the life was appalling. One never got away from a village of 60–80 people. As to the famous sports on the green, which delight Mr. Chesterton, we learn that "the mediæval labourer took very few holidays" (p. 181). In fact, Thorold Rogers gives good evidence that he worked 308 days a year: rather more than he does now, and nearly twice as many as the Roman worker did. At least he had a "coarse plenty" in the matter of food. But it appears presently that the "plenty" was *very* coarse. He had to eat salt meat for five or six months out of every twelve, and salt fish (generally) on the fast-days; and as the common salt was then an abomination, his diet led to a vast amount of scurvy, leprosy, etc. I may further remind the reader that he had not the variety of vegetables and fruits which the modern peasant has, and no tea, coffee, sugar, spices, or tobacco; and that many historians deny, as Thorold Rogers says, that he ate white bread.

This was the glorious thirteenth century of our Catholic writers. Of the two or three million people in England (who supported 30,000 fat priests and monks) all but a few lived this life. London had then only 35,000 inhabitants, and there were only five other towns in England with more than 5000 inhabitants. Let us, as I said, keep a sense of proportion. This was the life of ninety per cent. of the Christian inhabitants of Europe. In many countries it was worse. Certainly a superb monument to the new religion! The Church did not complain.

Now let us turn to the towns and see what the artisans were doing. From the figures which I have just given it will be gathered that these were a very small class in the thirteenth century. Let us take in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries also, and make the matter worth studying. The earlier artisan—the freed serf with some skill in iron-work or carpentry—was not much better off than the peasant. He wandered from village to village, and he *might*, with luck, earn as much as five pence a day. With the growth of towns the artisans multiplied. There were bodies of workers in metal, wood, cloth, leather, stone, etc. It is clear that in very many respects these fared as badly as the peasant. They shared his coarse and salty plenty and his skin-diseases. Their houses were a little brighter, and there was no muck-heap at the door; but there was an equally rich source of deadly microbes in the open drain which ran along the unpaved street. Epidemic disease and famine stalked through town with worse effect than in the country, and remedies or palliatives were unknown. The Black Death slew 50,000 Londoners and one third of the inhabitants of England and Europe generally—or 25,000,000 people—in two years. Death by the knife of a robber or of a neighbour was also pretty familiar. The wave of war swept over the town frequently. Famine was not uncommon, for corn was not imported to supplement a bad harvest. Transport was so dear and dangerous and uncomfortable that one rarely travelled.

But the guilds, the never-to-be-forgotten guilds, of the Middle Ages, some reader will exclaim! Here, we are told, was the really great service of the Church. It organised the artisans in corporations, or guilds, which kept up both the quality of the work and the wage of the worker. Let me recall that ninety per cent. of the workers were *not* artisans, but agricultural labourers (who were left to their hundred-fold reward in the next world), and we will discuss the guilds.

The origin of the guilds is still a matter of controversy and speculation. Some think that they were survivals or revivals of the Roman Colleges which I described in the second chapter. Some think they descended from old German fraternities. Some think they began by abbots forming their workers into trade-groups. Probably the majority of the authorities now hold that they were a spontaneous growth among the medieval workers, such as had arisen in Greece and Rome, and would arise again in the nineteenth century. It is easy to see the force of the last theory. Greek and Roman and modern workers found a necessity in their own condition to form such unions. Why should not the medieval workers feel the same pressure, without either Roman model or guidance from the Church? It is quite possible, but it is material to my study to consider the point.

One of the ablest of recent writers on the guilds, Dr. C. Gross (*The Gild-Merchant* and article "Gilds" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*), says that there is no trace of the survival of the Roman Colleges in the medieval guilds, and that, on the other hand, the Church did play an important part in connection with them. "Imbued with the idea of the brotherhood of man," he says, "the Church naturally fostered the early growth of gilds and tried to make them *displace the old heathen banquets*." I have italicised the last few words of Dr. Gross's sentence, and the reader will at once understand the reason. It is another instance of the way in which our historians still, whether they accept its creed or no, say smooth things about the Church and depreciate paganism. No man of sober and healthy judgment will decline to grant Churchmen whatever merit is due to them. No one suggests that from the fifth to the fifteenth century Europe had no men of humane feeling. What one dislikes is the tendency of historians to pay the Church a high compliment and then offer no evidence, or very unsatisfactory evidence, in support of it. The sentence I have quoted is a curious instance of this. The Church acts from "an idea of brotherhood," but in the same sentence we are told that it is zealous to displace "old heathen banquets." We had been previously told that there was no trace whatever of the survival of the old Roman Colleges, of which the banquet was a great feature, and now it is admitted that the new corporations were to "displace" old associations, presumably of workers, who held periodical common meals.

I cannot enter, in this short work, into a satisfactory discussion of the origin of the guilds and the relation of the clergy to them, but I will give some important evidence which suggests that the *second* part of Dr. Gross's confused sentence is correct; that the early guilds were more or less continuous with the pagan Colleges, and that the clergy opposed them, and, being unable to suppress them, encouraged (in the interest of the Church) the formation of thoroughly Christian Guilds. We have the same thing in our time. When the Churches found Socialism irrepressible, they encouraged the formation of "Christian Socialist" societies.

The first piece of evidence is a recent discovery, which older writers on the guilds were unable to take into account. In 1892 a French scholar, Jules Nicole, recovered an ancient edict which showed that the Colleges still survived in the Eastern Roman Empire in the tenth century. Many social writers had supposed that the Colleges had disappeared with the Western Empire in the fifth century. They did not. They persisted in the Greek world, at Constantinople, and it is not impossible that the model might be reintroduced from there to Europe. That, however, is not very probable, as religious fanaticism raised a barrier between the Latin and Greek worlds, and we will consider the next point.

Dr. Gross refers us lightly to certain passages in the *Capitularies* of Charlemagne. Let us take the Latin text of this collection of decrees, as it is given in the Migne edition, and see what we can make of it. First, at the year 779 (v. 16), there is a severe prohibition of people who take oaths to each other, "conspiring together in guilds." The word is *gildoniæ*, which we may take to be the first historical mention of guilds. In decrees of the years 805 and 821 this prohibition is repeated, and it is supported by savage penalties. We next turn to the *Capitula Synodica* of Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, and at the year 852 we find the decisions of a Synod which was held at Nantes in that year. It has a section (I, 16) entitled "On Confraternities," and it says that they are "popularly called Guilds [*gildoniæ*] or confraternities." It forbids their banquets—in another place it forbids priests to get drunk and sing ribald songs at such banquets—directs that they must never meet unless the priest is present, and orders all members of the fraternity to attend regularly the services of the Church.

Here we have a plain indication of the line of development which I have suggested. In the eighth century there were brotherhoods or guilds of workers, who took oaths of loyalty to each other and held periodical common meals. Instead of the Church having founded these out of an "idea of the brotherhood of man," it was entirely hostile to them and tried to suppress them. The earlier decrees simply and severely prohibit them. Why the Church was hostile is left to our conjectures, but one must not for a moment suppose that it was on account of the heavy drinking at the suppers. Clergy and Laity then drank very heavily, and the utmost that the Church did was occasionally to attempt to put a check on the extraordinary licence of the priests. Therefore the Church was hostile either from an aristocratic fear of combinations of the workers, or because the proceedings were "heathen," as Dr. Gross says. The evidence I have quoted strongly favours the latter alternative; and in that case we must conclude that they were survivals of the Roman Colleges, which, on account of the money-subscription, had taken the old German name *Gilt* or *Gild* (related to our Anglo-Saxon word "to gild").

In any case, in the very earliest evidence about the guilds the Church is entirely hostile. Then, nearly a century later, probably because it was unable to suppress them (as the successive decrees show), we find the Church taking them over and making them Christian fraternities. The priest of the district must preside at the meetings; the guild-members must be assiduous in attendance at Church. The guilds were not created by the Church at all, and had nothing to do with the Christian doctrine of brotherhood. We saw how little benefit ninety per cent. of the workers of Europe derived from that doctrine. But the guilds were Christianised, or rival Christian guilds were substituted for them, for the same reason that Kingsley founded "Christian Socialism"—for the good of the Church.

This evidence is earlier than any other mentioned by Dr. Gross, or any given in Walford, Eberstadt, Mueller, or any other writer. We are not surprised that the earliest guilds they describe are very religious. The clergy had won. Indeed, the priests were now (in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) at the height of their power, and nothing could be done in Europe without their presiding over it. The religious character of the fully developed guilds has therefore no significance. By the thirteenth century, when towns grew and artisans were more numerous, the workers availed themselves of the machinery they inherited, and for a time the guilds rendered them considerable service. By imposing a long apprenticeship and a "masterpiece" as a test of skill, they kept up the standard of work. By close co-operation they maintained high wages (for the time) and good conditions. But it is a commonplace of recent literature on the guilds that they soon outgrew their usefulness and became mischievous. They stifled inventiveness, became stupidly conservative, and ruined certain towns. French writers tell that the butchers of Paris took such advantage of their monopoly and gave such bad service that their guild had to be destroyed. The journeymen formed independent bodies and attacked the sleepy and selfish "masters." They were dying a natural death in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the new and larger development of industry and commerce swept them away. They had no power of adjustment to the new conditions. To hold them up as models for the workers of our time is ridiculous.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT THE REFORMATION DID NOT DO

Up to this point, the fifteenth century, I have been dealing with, not "the Churches," but one Church, the Papal Church. The opening part of my inquiry really concerns Christianity in general, or in its purer form. It had no social ethic, no practical and plain message of justice to the workers. It had no influence on their development out of slavery. However, the Protestant may plead that just in the fourth century, when the Christian Church began to have influence, it became the Papal Church; and he will grant you any indictment you care to bring against the Church of the Middle Ages. Why Christ permitted his Church to be so degraded for a thousand years, why the Christian message was so ineffectual for a thousand years, why men repeated the Golden Rule for a thousand years without it having any influence on their lives. . . . But these things must not be discussed here.

Some workers, who have been brought up entirely outside the Churches, as hundreds of thousands are to-day, may ask how a Church with such a record as the Roman Church contrives to keep its hold on millions of modern workers. They have, to begin with, probably an exaggerated idea of the "millions." The Catholic Church is rapidly losing its control of the workers of Europe, *in proportion as they become educated.* It is significant that all over the continent Socialism is solidly anti-clerical. But I may return to this point in the last chapter. If one is asked why at least large numbers of workers in England or Germany still adhere to the Church of Rome, the answer is : Read the literature which the Church provides for them, and you will understand it. The Catholic young man who obeys the order of his Church—to read Catholic literature and avoid all literature that differs from it—is appallingly deluded. Catholic literature reeks with untruth.

The Protestant worker has very often a simple formula by which he interprets the history of Europe. The Church of Rome withheld the Bible from the people for a thousand years, and so Europe was degraded. Luther restored the Bible to the people, and Europe has advanced ever since.

I will not be suspected of propaganda in the interest of the Roman Church, so I may point out the fallacy of this formula. Seeing that at least ninety per cent. of the people of Europe from the sixth to the sixteenth century could not read, it does not really seem to matter very much whether the Church did or did not withhold the Bible. Further, since printing was not invented until the middle of the fifteenth century and paper was unknown, the cost of books was such that no worker could have bought a Bible even if he could read it and the Church allowed him to do so. When printing was at last invented, although it was long before the Reformation, the Bible was quite the most popular book to leave the presses. Between the invention of printing and the activity of Luther—a space of seventy years—about 800 editions (partial or complete) of the Bible were issued, one fourth of them being in the vernacular languages. In fine, this naïve Protestant theory, in so far as it is applied to our present subject, overlooks altogether the chief difficulty. The prelates and priests and nobles *could* read, and *did* read, the Bible; yet it is precisely these who were the worst offenders of all, for they kept the mass of the people in ignorance and exploited them.

But the best thing for us to do is simply to continue our historical study of industrial development and see whether the lot of the workers *was* improved by the Reformation. Leave rhetoric to preachers. They can prove anything. If you take a dozen volumes of sermons by so many preachers of different denominations, you will find it proved up to the hilt, and with amazing eloquence, that Popery is the ruin of the world, and that Popery is the one indispensable foundation of society; that bishops are a gross adulteration of Christianity, and that there is no Christianity without bishops; that baptism is far more urgently necessary even than vaccination, and that baptism is merely a useless bit of pagan mummery. And so on. Then they wonder that the modern working-man is rather sceptical. We will stick to the historical facts.

And, first, it is a fact that the Reformation was a great stride in the liberation of Europe. Many people imagine that Europe lay quite docile and stupefied at the feet of the Papacy until Luther came along. That is quite untrue. There had been one attempt at revolt after another, and the Papacy had succeeded in drowning each in blood, or at least in killing it by murdering its leaders. It was a splendid thing to have the power of the deeply corrupt Papacy shattered over at least half of Europe. Yet the singular thing is that, while the earlier revolts against the Papacy had generally been allied with democratic aspirations, the Reformation had no direct advantage for the workers and did not bear fruit for them until centuries afterwards.

It is just as untrue to think that the workers submitted humbly all through the Middle Ages to their hard conditions as to think that men submitted servilely to priests and Popes. Remember the great rebellion under Wat Tyler and John Ball in the fourteenth century, or the moderate democracy of the Lollards a few decades later. In Italy and France, which were the most advanced countries of Europe, there were important democratic movements. Arnold of Brescia, in the twelfth century, got an enormous following for his democratic gospel in France and Italy, and even attempted to restore the old Republic at Rome. He was, of course, hanged by the Popes (1155), but for a very long period afterwards the Popes had to sustain a severe struggle against the democrats of Rome. In the early part of the thirteenth century the Albigensians and Waldensians, who had a vast following in France and Switzerland, were thoroughly democratic; and the Popes extinguished them in a brutal and comprehensive massacre. At the beginning of the fifteenth century John Hus and Jerome of Prague raised new democratic hopes; and they were burned at the stake.

In his earlier days Luther raised just the same popular hopes as his predecessors. Like them, he found that the teaching of Christ was not very consistent with the social order which had developed in Europe, and he began to use strong language about princes as well as Popes. The lot of the agricultural workers in Germany had become worse than ever owing to the introduction of Roman Law instead of the older German law, and serfdom was actually on the increase. In

England and France the conditions were different. This period was precisely one of the best for the agricultural worker until modern times. In Germany the life of the peasant and serf was more heavily burdened than ever, and the poor human cattle seemed so spiritless that a German noble said: " They will never rise until you cut a slice off their ——." But they rebelled, and even Erasmus said that the rising of the peasants was " a fruit of Luther's spirit." Catholics made it one of their fiercest charges against him that his teaching had led to the rebellion. Had not the words, " He hath put down princes from their thrones and hath exalted them of low degree," been one of his favourite texts in the New Testament?

It is well known that Luther, to whom the leaders of the peasants appealed, drastically condemned the rebellion. German writers assure us that he caused the workers so keen a disappointment that his influence sank in Germany from that year. At first he hesitated. He knew well the awful burden of injustice which crushed into the earth the class to which he belonged. He knew that not only did frivolous nobles exploit them, but spiritual lords, like the Abbot of Kempten and other ecclesiastics, falsified their charters in order to turn free workers into serfs, or threatened to refuse the sacraments at death if a man declined the yoke. And the peasants had appealed confidently to the Gospels. But the Gospels are a patchwork of contradictory teaching, put together crudely in the course of many decades after the death of Christ, and Luther, now a friend of princes, sought new texts. The rebels had found the injunction to obey God rather than men; Luther countered with the order to be " subject to all higher authorities."

In short, as the bloody fight proceeded and the ignorant peasants fell into excesses, Luther passed entirely to the side of the masters and used atrocious language. In July, 1624, he wrote a letter to the princes of Saxony, urging them to smite the peasants. "They must," he said, "be crushed, strangled, and spitted, wherever it is possible, because a mad dog has to be killed." He now calls Demos "Mr. Everybody," and makes merry of his pretensions. The leaders of the peasants had drawn up a charter of twelve articles, and they submitted this to him. His reply, in the spring of 1625, must be a bitter pill for any man who thinks that brooding over the gospels begets sympathy with the workers. Luther rejected the most obviously just claims. Even the demand for the abolition of serfdom was "against the gospels and robbery." Melanchthon, the second leader of the Reformation, was just as bad. In a letter to Ludwig of Pfalz he defended serfdom and said: "The Germans are always such ill-bred, perverse, bloodthirsty folk that they must be kept down more stringently than ever." So the obedient princes first put them down, and then kept them down. The slaughter was such that in the district of Zabern alone 16,242 Alsatian peasants were more or less buried, and the stench kept travellers away from Zabern for years. "All their blood is on my head," Luther wrote some years later. "But I leave it to the Lord God, who bade me speak thus."

In the home of the Reformation, and as a direct result of the teaching of the Reformers, "the arm of the prince and the noble everywhere became longer, swifter, and firmer," Eccardus says. Germany began to feel the effect of economic changes which were lowering the position of the worker all over Europe. I will describe these presently. The craftsman, now the victim of his own guilds, had not the wit or vitality to meet the new conditions. Town and country workers alike sank to a lower level. Then Catholics and Protestants entered upon their Thirty Years' War—to decide which of them Christ really preferred—and the whole territory which was then known as Germany returned to something like barbarism. Women ate their children. The population of Bohemia was reduced from 4,000,000 to 900,000. The slave-estates of the Romans were restored. Ministers of the Gospels and lawyers sided with the oppressors. Germany lay prostrate until a more Rationalistic age dawned upon it.

Thus any Protestant who imagines that the dreadful era of Popery, the Middle Ages, was succeeded by a period of real human brotherhood when the Bible was restored to honour, labours under a very singular delusion. The Reformers were men of high character, and they were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Gospels. But they were continuous with the older Church in one respect. Their banners were never seen on the side of the people. In fact, every Protestant claim of having, by opening the Bible, done more for the people than the Roman Church had done falls ignominiously before this historical fact, which may be verified in any modern social historian: *For three centuries after the Reformation the lot of the European worker grew steadily worse.*

Here the Catholic, who may have found some of my earlier pages rather uncomplimentary, begins to chuckle. At least the peasant had a coarse and salty plenty in the Middle Ages. He got less to eat, because food was dearer and wages not proportionately higher, after the Reformation. The artisan had had guilds to protect his wage in the Middle Ages. His guilds were destroyed, and his condition sank pretty steadily until the nineteenth century. The Catholic raises his drooping head and crows.

But the crowing would at once be suspended if he noticed the fact, which is equally admitted by every modern authority, that the condition of the workers grew worse in every country, *whether it was Catholic or Protestant.* Although there was no Thirty Years' War in England, the labour of Thorold Rogers has established the steady deterioration of the life of the workers in this country. In France, however, which expelled its Protestants and clung fervently to Rome, the development was just the same. Brissot (*Histoire du Travail*) shows, just as Thorold Rogers does for England, that in the fifteenth century the position of the French workers was relatively good. In the sixteenth century it began to grow worse, and it sank steadily until the Revolution. The peasants—still the greater part of the workers—bore a brutalising burden which almost explains the horrors of the Revolution. The artisans found wages decrease, and prices increase, each century. Moreover, the guilds survived more in France than in England and Germany, and Brissot counts them among the influences which lowered the position of the worker. In Spain and Italy there was a corresponding depression.

The truth is, of course, that Europe was entering upon a new economic development, and religious doctrines floated as idly on its surface as corks float on the surface of a swollen river. The only thing that we can say about the Churches here, as in nearly every other section of our subject, is that they *ought* to have had a good deal to say about the condition of the workers, and they had not. They ought to have condemned slavery, and did not. They ought to have condemned serfdom, and did not. They ought to have condemned those features of the new industrial order which injured the worker, and they did not. They were too busy with spiritual things to ask how much a worker paid for bread or cottage; and they were very good friends of the squire and the merchant. All that I am concerned about is to show that people who make positive claims on behalf of the Churches are talking nonsense.

Europe was in the preparatory stages of what is called the age of capitalism. The discovery of new worlds beyond the seas was followed by the discovery that some of them contained vast wealth; and, as they were pagan, any good Christian with a sufficiently long sword could help himself to it. Portuguese brought in the wealth of the Indies. Spaniards discovered "West Indies," or America, and piously cut the throats of the Peruvians and Mexicans and appropriated their gold. English mariners waylaid the Popish Spanish dogs on the seas, cut their throats, and transferred the gold. The Dutch and the French joined the great scramble.

Then it occurred to some one—he was a Catholic bishop, Bartolomé de las Casas, an expert on the Golden Rule—that it would be a good idea to transfer African heathens to America and make slaves of them. The incidental benefit of Christian baptism would be a sufficient reward to the blacks for the earthly inconvenience. Queen Isabella was not clear on that point, and she consulted her theologians; but as the Church had never condemned slavery, *they* were not clear. Anyhow, America was being so rapidly stripped of native workers by the greed and cruelty of the Spaniards that the trade in negroes began. I am only concerned with it here as a source of European wealth. Captain John Hawkins and other deeply pious mariners—this is not ironical—flung themselves into the traffic, and in a century had a million blacks transferred to America. It was a risky business, as the poor devils died like flies in the abominable conditions aboard ship; but one put the charges high enough, and fortunes were made.

Wealth now poured into Europe by a dozen channels. Italy drooped, as its trade with the east was cut off by the Turks; but Portugal, Spain, France, Holland, and England were congested with wealth and flushed with luxury. For various reasons, however, Demos did not get his share, and the Churches, not being so devoted to him then as they are to-day, interfered not. In the first place, the stream of incoming gold and silver lowered the value of gold and silver, and the weekly wage began to find its purchasing power grow less. In the next place, the fierce luxury of nobles and princes devoured the new resources, and they began to look round for additional wealth. Debasing the coinage was one method, and Demos found his coins growing lighter than ever.

In England the rise of prices was accompanied by what Thorold Rogers calls " a conspiracy of the lawyers " to prevent conspiracy of the workers : in other words, the passing of Acts which prevented the workers from taking collective action to maintain wages. It is possible that the angry economist has not fully weighed the other economic factors. There was a much more rapid growth of the population than ever before in England, and, in the absence of proper organisation, it strained the native food-resources. There was a quicker growth of towns, at the expense of the country; and, although England seems to us ample enough for a population of five millions, we must remember that a very high proportion of it was then forest and waste, and that agriculture remained very primitive. The towns, on the other hand, created poverty while they created wealth. Prices went up: labour was more abundant and cheaper. From 1640 to 1740 the tide turned a little. There was some rise in "real wages." The Civil War led to some improvement. After 1740 the ebb set in once more, and the "industrial revolution," which we will consider presently, began.

In France the fall was even more steady and serious. The wage of the agricultural worker sank from one franc and a half in the fifteenth century to half a franc on the eve of the Revolution; and the gay nobles of the courts of Louis XIV and Louis XV cut down the peasant's rights (timber, game, etc.) and increased his burden. The wage of the artisan sank from three francs fifteen centimes to two francs twenty centimes, and the price of food rose. Brissot gives (p. 216) an interesting table showing the variation in the purchasing power of a day's wage from 1450 to 1725. During that period it lost more than half of its value. The worker's life deteriorated in every respect. In Catholic France he lost more ground even than in Protestant England. In Catholic Spain, now in decay, he lost as much as in Protestant Germany. The particular colour of the creed or the clergy made no difference. The fatherhood of God was not forgotten, but a polite clergy would not push it too far. The bishops of France had no more mind than the bishops of England to help the workers; and in the eighteenth century they were not much more corrupt than ours.

It was, in other words, a sheer economic development, and all we can say of moral forces at this period is that they made no attempt to interfere. To us who look back now, and see how the world was approaching a phase of production and invention which *might* have brightened the lives of all, this was a lamentable and flagrant omission. The course of the nineteenth century might have run differently if the Churches—both of them—had not been so supine and timid in the eighteenth century. The Reformation had done nothing for the people. The Catholic Church continued to do nothing. But a new force was gathering in Europe which would cry a plague on both their houses. We have to consider very carefully how this new force is related to the rise of the workers which now begins.

CHAPTER V

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

THE French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century was the bugle-call that awoke the workers of Europe. That sudden and mighty uprising degenerated into excesses which spoiled its effect. It was followed by a profound reaction. But sleep was no longer possible, and the workers entered upon that development of which our time constitutes, perhaps, the middle stage.

No one—neither Church nor anti-Church—seems eager to claim the credit of having inspired the French Revolution. Preachers award it to Rationalists, and, because they have visions of dripping guillotines and ghastly heads on pikes, Rationalists evade the honour. I think the reader will get a better sense of proportion and historical truth if he divides the Revolution into two parts. Just about the middle of Carlyle's history of the Revolution there is a date, September 30th, 1791, of which the great writer does not appreciate the full significance. On that date the sober and educated men who had made the Revolution brought out the new constitution which they had framed, and voluntarily broke up their Constituent Assembly.

Now up to that time the Revolution had been a splendid achievement. There had been excesses committed by the poor stunted peasants. There had been blunders and excesses in Paris. These were unavoidable. But the early Revolutionaries had done a remarkable and beneficent work, not for France only, but for Europe. Even Carlyle asks: "Shall we not bless them?" Then they made a blunder which, while it does high credit to their character, ruined the Revolution. They bound themselves not to accept office during the two following years. They meant to avoid anything like corruption; but what they did was to leave the control of France to less experienced and less educated men, and the second and terrible part of the Revolution began.

Carlyle would have been juster to the French people if he had cleanly divided his history at this point into two parts. Before September 1791 the only bloodshed was the irresponsible work of mobs, intoxicated by their new liberty. The guillotine was not built. The whole of that tragic mixture of murder, folly, and heroism, which people usually have in mind when you speak of the French Revolution, lies after 1791. Yet the Revolution was already accomplished. So let us take this sane and substantial part of the story and apply to it the inquiry we are making. What had the Churches to do with it?

Nothing, as all the world knows. Amongst the great names of the Revolution are those of a few ecclesiastics. They are generally apostates, to whom the clerical title clings, such as Abbé Sieyès and Bishop Talleyrand; both what we should now call Agnostics. A few really orthodox clergy were found in the early stages of the Revolution, but the Church was so bitterly hostile to it, and adhered so resolutely to the corrupt monarchy and aristocracy, that these priests had to quit either the Revolution or the Church. Pick the chief names out of any history of the first and beneficent part of the Revolution: Mirabeau, Sieyès, Talleyrand, Lafayette, Desmoulins, Mounier, Danton, Condorcet, Pétion, Duport, Barnave, etc. They were all either Deists or Atheists.

If we further ask whence they drew their inspiration, we find that it was certainly not from the Christian religion. Carlyle describes them all as having "the gospel of Jean Jacques in their pockets," but the matter was not quite so simple. I have in the last chapter described how the condition of the workers in France had grown steadily worse. Even the artisan could rarely buy meat or butter. The peasant had a pitiful lot. His wage was less than sixpence a day. His old right to free pasture and to get firewood in the forests had been taken from him. Even salt was heavily taxed. The luxury of the court and war had so impaired the finances of the country that eighty-one francs out of every hundred went in taxes. The land owned by the people had been so subdivided, as the population grew, that the share of each was miserable. Four-fifths of the population of France, or twenty million people, lived on the soil, yet they owned only two-fifths of it. There were tolls to pay at every bridge and boundary. They were forced to have their corn ground in the lord's mill, at his price, and their bread baked in his oven.

The Church was represented by 200,000 priests, monks, and nuns, who owned one-fifth of the soil of France and paid no taxes. They had, as I said, looked placidly upon the degeneration of the lot of the worker for two centuries. At the Revolution a few districts would send their priests to present their grievances, but these either left the Church or the country when the full rights of man were demanded. The bishops were wholly on the side of injustice. That is the record of Catholicism in regard to the beginning of the modern emancipation.

Mr. Joseph Clayton, the Christian Socialist, speaking of the Revolution in his *Leaders of the People* (p. 310), says: "The ideas of the French Encyclopædists, the writings of Rousseau, and the revolt of the American colonists, had aroused a belief in social equality and the natural rights of man." That is a fair statement of the Rationalistic inspiration of the best part of the Revolution, but it is interesting to consider the matter more closely.

The story really begins in England, where a very strong anti-Christian movement developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a movement so widespread among the educated that even an English queen, Caroline, wife of George II, caused little or no scandal by preserving her Deistic opinions on the throne. Most of the English Deists, and of the earlier French Deists, were of the conservative or aristocratic party. To be a heretic in those days one had to be a scholar, and to be a scholar one generally had to be rich. The early Deists, therefore, neither suspected nor desired that they would help the emancipation of the people. They confined themselves to attacking the clergy and the Christian religion. But one of them, John Locke, was a liberal politician as well as a philosopher, and he set forth political and educational ideals which, however moderate we may think them to-day, were very advanced in the actual condition of Europe.

This was in the last decade of the seventeenth century, and thirty years later there came to England from France the young writer who would presently be known to the whole world as "Voltaire." He was delighted with the comparative freedom and enlightenment of English life, and after his return to France he published certain *Letters on the English* (1734), which were not at all acceptable to the oppressive French authorities. Voltaire was no democrat in the modern sense. He came of the French middle class, and it was chiefly the position of the English middle class that he wished to see reproduced in his own country. He at times uses harsh language about "the common people." But he had a passion for liberty and justice, and there are other passages in his works which we must regard as the seeds of progress. In his *Republican Ideas* he defines government as "the execution by one or more of the General Will, in accordance with laws which have been voted by all." In spite of his vacillations Voltaire was a pioneer of the Revolution.

His contemporary, Rousseau, another Deist, was also a philosopher of the middle class, not of the workers, but his ideas were beyond question one of the main inspirations of the Revolution. We must remember that the Revolution *was* a middle-class revolt, driven by its own principles to lighten the burden of the workers. In this Rousseau's ideas had a greater part than he intended. He had, like Voltaire, been influenced by the writings of Locke, and from these he deduced that men were originally equal, the State was the outcome of a social contract, and the laws must be made by all. The tone of the Deists, who now became very numerous in France, was more and more democratic. They talked increasingly of "the misery of the people" and denounced the corrupt alliance of Church and monarchy. There was much discussion of "equality." Atheism quickly evolved from Deism, and the more radical the heresy the more advanced the politics. Diderot, Atheist and Encyclopædist, and one of the most learned men of his time, was an ardent republican and champion of the people.

Into this stirring world at Paris there presently (in 1776) came the news of the American Declaration of Independence, and this gave a powerful impulse to progressive ideas in France. Some readers may think that here at least a current of Christian influence enters the story, but the most active men in the founding of the American Republic — Paine, Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, Washington, etc.—were Deists, and generally very anti-Christian. However, the development in France now proceeded more rapidly, and "the prophetic song of Paris and its Philosophers," as Carlyle says, penetrated the royal palace. I need not follow the story in detail. The new generation of Deists and Atheists—Mirabeau, Sieyès, Lafayette, Dupont, Condorcet, etc.—shook the ancient system of tyranny into ruins and formulated the Rights of Man—for all time. What followed, after 1791, only proved the correctness of the reserves of Voltaire and Rousseau. The French people, ninety per cent. illiterate (after more than a thousand years of Christianity), was not ripe for pure democracy. But even after receiving so dire a lesson the Church would hear nothing of even moderate democracy. It allied itself intimately with the restored monarchy after Waterloo. Liberty was extinguished. The workers sank back to their economic position of the eighteenth century. The great educational schemes of the early Revolutionaries were shelved. Fraternity became Christian, and utterly futile and meaningless, once more.

Now let us turn to England and see how the Church was related to the development of the workers there. We have seen how the lot of the workers had been left to the mercy of economic forces, the change of national religion not making the slightest difference in this respect. We saw, too, that the economic development steadily lowered the position of the worker until the middle of the seventeenth century, and that there was a slight recovery until the middle of the eighteenth. Then began a new development which made the wealthy wealthier and the poor poorer.

On the land, on which half of the six million people of England still worked, a great reform was needed; and, in a world which was left entirely to the play of economic forces, the profit of the reform naturally went to the people who effected it. These were the agricultural capitalists and land-owners. In the middle of the eighteenth century a very large part of the soil of England was still forest or waste, and half of the remainder was cultivated on the old and inefficient "open field" system. The villagers were partners in the land, with no clear boundaries, no incentive to exceptional energy. They used primitive tools and were burdened with domestic industries, making their own wooden spoons, horn mugs, coarse linen, leather, and so on. There were few roads, and there was little movement. The cattle were turned on the commons, infecting each other with disease, and, as there was no winter keep for them, they nearly starved before the spring. "The roast beef of old England," says Prothero, "for the enormous majority of the people, consisted of the worn-out oxen or the aged cows that were slaughtered in the autumn, when at their fattest, and salted for winter consumption." In a word, the rural world was still medieval, though the price of food was higher. The growth of towns made a greater demand on the food-supply.

At this juncture new ideas of agriculture began to spread among the educated land-owners, and a change that might be called an agricultural revolution took place. New implements, methods, and roads were adopted. Millions of acres of waste were reclaimed. The vast idle commons were coveted, and enclosure proceeded rapidly. The enclosure of the commons was not the simple matter of filching land which some now imagine, but the whole development favoured the man with capital and trained intelligence, and the ignorant small farmer and peasant suffered. The yeoman class sank into the peasant class. Prices increased and wages did not increase. The burden became heavier than ever.

The industrial revolution proceeded simultaneously. The period from 1740 to 1780 was rich in inventions, especially of textile machinery, and from the nature of the case this favoured the man with capital. Some one must buy the machines and build or rent a factory to house them. From poor employment on the land people flocked to the towns, and the employers were able to offer low wages. A series of bad harvests from 1789 to 1792 made the food-supply worse and dearer, and just then began the long French War, which raised the National Debt to an appalling figure. The quartern loaf went up to 1*s.* 10½*d.*; and during the better period from 1640 to 1740 people had learned the enjoyment of white bread.

Numbers of trade-unions were formed, and Parliament was pressed to fix a minimum wage. It refused, and the Combination Act was passed against the workers. Employers represented that "trade would be driven abroad." By the end of the eighteenth century the workers of Britain, industrial or rural, were in a lamentable condition. "I am convinced," says Thorold Rogers, "that at no period of English history for which authentic records exist was the condition of manual labour worse than it was in the forty years from 1782 to 1822." The economist might, perhaps, have reminded his readers that the new industrial system enabled England to bear the burden of the Napoleonic War, but otherwise he is right. A small class of men heaped up wealth. The great majority had a miserable life.

I have briefly sketched the economic causes of this because there are Catholic writers who connect it with England's change of religion. This is the kind of social philosophy with which they delude a certain number of our working-men. The first part of the present chapter shows how ludicrous it is! The workers of France suffered an equal debasement, yet the Church violently opposed the men who fought for them, and, after the fall of Napoleon, co-operated with the restored monarchy in pushing them back into their ignorance, misery, and subjection. In Italy and Spain the gospel of the Revolution had aroused corresponding hopes and aspirations among the workers. At the fall of Napoleon the Church co-operated everywhere with the restored monarchs in stifling democracy and resisting the hopes of the workers. Neither Catholicism nor Protestantism nor Nonconformity (which now arose) had any influence on the development. They were equally guilty. The fact that the factory-system was mainly confined to England ought not to mislead any sensible man. Italy and Spain were far too backward and sleepy to adopt an industrial revolution, nor had they the enterprise on sea to create markets. England was full of splendid energy, but the moral forces which ought to have directed it—the Churches—were too cowardly to interfere.

The work of reform did begin in England in the eighteenth century, and here, as in France, the reformers were mainly Rationalists. The *Cambridge Modern History*, one of the most authoritative historical works in the English language and anything but radical in tone, says (VIII, 764): "Nine out of ten Englishmen who sympathised with the [French] Revolution were outside the Established Church." Sympathy with the Revolution across the Channel was, of course, the rallying point of our reformers. Liberalism had evolved out of Whiggism, and the Liberals were generally liberal or heterodox in religion. Indeed, heresy in religion was a wider common measure of sympathisers with the people than political liberalism. In the early and sane part of the Revolution or under its influence (though of the next generation) a remarkable group of English writers took up, in one form or other, the task which the Churches neglected: Priestley and Horne Tooke, Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, Erasmus Darwin and Paine, Hardy and Holcroft, Byron and Shelley. I think these would be selected as the leading writers who hailed and propagated the moderate principles of the Revolution. Of the ten no less than eight were Deists or Atheists, and one was a Unitarian. Hardy's views I do not know. Perhaps Thomas Paine and Shelley, both very anti-Christian, did most.

Two things conspired to thwart the work of social reform in England, or prevent the general principles of these writers from being translated into active social reform. One was the bloody development of the Revolution in France. The other was the long and exhausting Napoleonic War. One liberal after another fell away as the news from France became gloomier and gloomier. The cry of the Churchmen and Conservatives was triumphant. These things are bound to happen, they said, once you begin to talk about rights of man and tamper with authority. The English people were taught to ridicule everything French. Paine was hunted out of the country. Godwin and others were struck dumb. The mind of the nation was absorbed in the war. When the war was over, when the Holy Alliance of monarchs spread its unholy tyranny over Europe, the work had to begin afresh. Nearly eighteen hundred years of Christianity had ended in this. The overwhelming majority of the workers of Europe were densely ignorant, grossly exploited, tyrannically governed, and miserably poor.

Lest any reader should imagine that the Churches attended at least to the spiritual health of the people, which they regarded as far more important than material comfort, let me say a word in that respect. Even if it were true that the Churches did this, it would not in the least relieve them of the grave charge of contemplating, century by century, a comprehensive system of social injustice without a word of protest. But it is not true. Wesleyism arose precisely because the Church of England grossly neglected even this work; and Wesleyism, being a new broom, did a good deal of sweeping. The mass of the people of Europe, however, remained under the older Churches, and they were a credit to neither. What else could one who knows their environment expect?

We shall see presently what the workers were in the early nineteenth century, and I must be content here with general statements. There is not a single one of the Ten Commandments, except the first, which is not better observed in our time than it ever was before in the history of Europe. The number of the clergy, in proportion to population, has shrunk very materially. The number of people who never enter a church or come under the influence of the clergy has grown to many millions in England alone. Yet in every moral respect we are better than our Christian ancestors. In regard to drink, violence, theft, and cruelty, few would question this. The Middle Ages drank amazingly, and the period we have just covered drank, if it was possible, even more. Cruelty to women and children and animals was equally rife. Robbery was a common incident. The knife and sword and cudgel were very busy. Gambling and fighting were so rife that the London of our time is a nicely-conducted Sunday School in comparison with the London of a century ago. It was the same all over Europe, in Catholic countries and Protestant.

Some may be surprised to hear that sex-immorality, which the clergy now make their special care, was just as bad as the other immoralities; but of this there is abundant evidence for every century. The moral condition of London at the beginning of the nineteenth century is described carefully for us by a magistrate of the time, Colquhoun. It then had 60,000 prostitutes to a million people, or nearly one to every four adult males. Now it has about 20,000 to seven million people. All classes drank more, gambled more, fought more, and were far looser sexually, than now. Amongst the workers, from whom divorce was absolutely cut off, there was the utmost freedom of sex-relations. The condition was the same in Catholic countries as in Protestant; and it had been the same all through the Middle Ages and after the Reformation. In the sixteenth century Popes had invited their mistresses to dine in the Vatican. In the eighteenth century English bishops had mistresses at table. We are a surprisingly virtuous generation in comparison with our predecessors. But to me social virtue is immeasurably more important than this, and I will resume the story of the liberation of the workers.

CHAPTER VI

THE CRUSADE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Since the chronology of our Christian Era is found to have begun at a wrong date, it is now calculated that Christ died, and completed the work of redeeming mankind, in the year 29. If one says that the work was not *completed*, but left to the beneficent operation of his teaching, we will grant it 1800 years for the purpose, and examine the condition of the vast majority of mankind in 1829.

Now it happens that that is precisely "the darkest hour before the dawn." It closes the period of depression which I have described. It is the eve of the second French Revolution and of the great stirring which won the Reform Bill in England. It is the year in which Mazzini began the emancipation of Italy. It may seem brutal to bring the figures together in this way, but in view of the claims of the modern representatives of the Churches one has to put the facts pointedly. During those 1800 years of Church-power the worker had been left to the harsh and pitiless stresses of economic changes. What are the moral forces which have since delivered him from them, educated him, and made him fit to work out his own redemption?

Let us first examine the condition of the English worker at this time. There is a certain terrible blue-book in our libraries which would suffice of itself to justify what I have said above. It is a

Report of the Select Committee on the Labour of Children in Factories, published in 1832. The witnesses are mainly factory workers from the north, simply reporting what they have seen.

The children begin to work in the factories at the age of five. One witness says, quite seriously: "The youngest age at which children are employed is never *under* five." Another witness has seen a boy of five call for ale, and swear like a trooper, at a bar. Seven or eight is a common age to begin work. The hours of work are usually twelve per day, in some factories thirteen or fourteen. The children begin at five or six (generally six), and work, even on Saturdays, until eight or nine. Some of them have two hours out of this for meals, some one hour. If their energy droops in the evening, it is stimulated by a heavy strap or an iron bar. Large numbers are "orphans" from workhouses in the south of England. The guardians, who have sent them up north in carts, are far too polite to ask if they are well treated. Six thousand out of ten thousand in the manufacturing towns die before they reach the age of twenty. Those who have homes near are often too tired to eat when they get home, or to strip before sleeping. The food they take to the factory gets a coating of dust, for the atmosphere is appalling. Their mothers give them a vomit once a week, to scour their little stomachs. Witnesses regret to say that a large number do not attend Sunday School—which often refuses to teach them to read and write, because that would be a desecration of the Sabbath—that the moral atmosphere is indescribable, and that the girls are often mothers at sixteen. This is England 1800 years after the redemption of mankind.

Other blue-books of this period, when England was awakening to its danger and scandal, describe the life of the adult worker. By working a little longer and harder than the child he earns as much as a shilling or 1*s*. 2*d*. a day. There is no compensation for accidents, no sick-pay, no supervision of the condition of factories. How he contrives to do it on such pay is unfortunately not explained, but it seems that he drinks very heavily. His manners are brutal: his morals, as a rule, do not exist. His recreations are cock-fights, dog-fights, and man-fights. He can't read, and he would have nothing to read if he could. His home is foul, for the houses, built hurriedly to accommodate the factory workers, are sorry structures; and he has not much to spare for rent. In the earlier part of the century there had been a tax on windows, and he had lived mainly in dark cellars, without drains. He is generally glad to send his children to the mill at seven or eight, because they can (by working twelve hours a day) earn a penny a day each. Their chief meal consists of potatoes and fat.

I have shown that the agricultural worker was no better off, except as regards atmosphere. The artisan was not much more comfortable. During the Napoleonic War he had worked up to 32*s*. 6*d*. a week, for a 74 hours week; though bread was at 1*s*. 10*d*., and even his boots and salt were taxed. Trade drooped after the war. There was "a contraction of currency," he was told. Even when the law against combinations was repealed (1824), and he began to form Unions, there was little improvement. There was a heavy trade depression from 1826 to 1830. The artisan, in other words, got a little better food and clothing and housing than the unskilled worker, and had more to spend on beer. He could rarely read. He had the same amusements as the poorer worker, and he patronised cheap and tawdry shows ("The Murder in the Red Barn," etc.). He arose at four or five on Monday and worked until eight or nine on Saturday. And preachers explained to him on Sunday how Christianity had lifted the worker out of the depths to which paganism had condemned him.

What was Parliament doing, some novice in these matters will ask? Parliament was the most corrupt and obsolete institution in the country. A few rich men controlled it. Of 638 members of the House of Commons 276 owed their seats to patrons. A large number of the remainder bought their seats. The " constituencies " were in many cases shams.

What was the Church doing? The Methodists were of the people, and knew, but they were too busy singing ghastly hymns about hell and the blood of the Lamb to attend to social problems. The Church of England was chiefly, as far as action goes, represented by its bishops, and the man who would like to know how the Church, thus represented, confronted the social problems of the time should read *The Bishops as Legislators*, by Mr. Joseph Clayton, a zealous Christian.

The Rev. Stewart Headlam writes the preface to the book, which he calls a record of " the crimes and follies of the bishops." The fundamental reform needed was a wider franchise and purer Parliament, so a Reform Bill was drafted and a fierce fight waged in 1830 and 1831. When it came before the House of Lords for rejection, twenty-one bishops voted against it and two for it. The Archbishop of Canterbury pronounced it " mischievous in its tendency and dangerous to the fabric of the constitution "; and the bishops agreed with the Lord Chancellor that this precious British constitution was " the best that ever was since the creation of the world." The " mob " retorted with such arguments that some of the bishops changed their mind, but fifteen of them were still on the opposition when the House of Lords was terrorised into passing the Bill. Bishop Horsley said: "I do not know what the mass of the people in any country have to do with the laws but to obey them." Voltaire and Rousseau and Diderot, not sharing the Christian idea of the brotherhood of men, had thought differently. Yet the "great" Reform Bill of 1832 enfranchised only 500,000 men of the middle class. When it came, later, to the enfranchisement of the workers, the bishops were still reactionary.

Education was another fundamental reform. To read some of the pamphlets issued by the Churches one would imagine that in the days of their power they had been marvellous educators, and that the "materialism" which in the early nineteenth century robbed them of power defrauded the worker of education. The fact is that the nineteenth century dawned upon an appallingly illiterate England. Then a group of liberals and heretics at Manchester decided that something must be done, and the Quaker Lancaster founded a system of "undenominational" schools. It was only in face of this terrible threat to the orthodoxy of the workers that the Church of England stirred (unofficially) and set up a system of denominational schools. There was a pretty skirmish for the souls of the little factory-hands: the "fight of Bel and the Dragon" the wags called it, as the chief champion of the Church against the heretics was Dr. Bell.

But the overwhelming majority of the children still got no schooling, and what was given was of the crudest description. Old women or one-legged sailors were good enough for teachers. Laymen formed a Central Society of Education. The prelates denounced it and opposed State action. When a measure was proposed in 1839 the Archbishop of Canterbury and nearly the whole of the bishops opposed it. "Looking at the poor as a class," said the Bishop of Exeter, "they could not expect that those who were assigned by Providence to the laborious occupations of life should be able largely to cultivate their intellects." At that time, after forty years' agitation, only one in fourteen of the inhabitants of England attended school. Oldham and Ashton, with 100,000 inhabitants, had no school. The Church still obstructed every measure. In 1860 a Government inquiry showed that of 2,500,000 children only 1,500,000 attended school, and that more than half of these received an "education" which was a mere sham. So it remained until 1870. "The interdict against a united and national system," says Professor Adams, reviewing the whole century, "came from the moral teachers of the people"!

The record of the bishops is equally bad in regard to almost every other piece of reform legislation. No bishop supported the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Bill in 1809. Only three bishops attended the House of Lords when the Bill to Prevent the Use of British Capital in the Slave Trade came before it in 1815. They took no part in the Prevention of Cruelty to Cattle Bill in 1824. In 1839 only two bishops voted for the Sale of Beer Bill, only one for the Bill for the Suppression of the Portuguese Slave Trade, only two for a measure for the Total Suppression of the Slave Trade. Two supported the Refreshment Houses Bill in 1860, and two the Intoxicating Liquor Bill in 1872. They talked unctuously about temperance, but, when an important measure to promote it was before their House, "only two out of six-and-twenty Right Reverend Prelates will sacrifice their dinner, and their regard for their belly . . . to attend and vote." So Lord Brougham angrily told them in 1844. Against Chartists and similar champions of the workers they were very zealous. "In its weakness," says Mr. Clayton (p. 82), "the Labour Movement found the bishops always amongst its enemies. To-day, when the Labour Movement is a growing force in politics and an increasing power in the country, the bishops speak smooth things of it." And Mr. Clayton thinks it possible to bring the workers back to the Church!

Perhaps the clergy were better than their bishops, some one may reflect. Not in the least. Clayton's hard saying applies also to them. When Lord Shaftesbury, a devout Churchman, was fighting for the welfare of the children, he was moved to exclaim—I quote from Clayton—that the clergy were "timid, time-serving, and great worshippers of wealth and power. *I can scarcely remember an instance in which a clergyman has been found to maintain the cause of labourers in the face of pew-holders*." Shaftesbury was wrong. There was *one*. Joseph Rayner Stephens, a Wesleyan clergyman, earned imprisonment by his fearless championship of the people. But he is the *one* Christian cleric who insisted on the practical brotherhood of men until, near the middle of the century, Kingsley came along; and Stephens was hotly disowned, and expelled from the ministry, by his denomination. Kingsley was a great worker, of sincere sympathies, but he professedly was as anxious about the Church, in founding Christian Socialism, as about the workers. Anyhow, that is the record of our Churches in the first half of the century. Some of the clergy were really concerned about education—the marvellous thing is that so few out of thousands saw the futility of preaching virtue to the stunted, ignorant mass—but they insisted on Church education (which blocked the way), and such education as would not lift the workers "above the station which Providence assigned them."

Two names in a half-century of thrilling fight for the uplifting of the workers is the record of the clergy. What about the Christian laity? They have not quite as much right to represent the Churches as the professional exponents of its ethic, though we must certainly not omit them. But in seeking to answer the question, let us bear in mind that it is a matter of proportion. A religious writer flings at you the names and deeds of Cobbett, Wilberforce, and Shaftesbury. It would be very remarkable indeed if the Church of England, comprising then the far greater part of the nation, did not include a few men who were humane enough to be dissatisfied with the social conditions I have described. What we want to know is: On which side was the best inspiration found? The Church of England? Catholicism? Nonconformity? Or Rationalism? The answer can be found only in the proportion of representatives which each had in the van of progress relatively to its total membership.

Roman Catholicism may be ruled out at once. Catholics have been at least as numerous as Rationalists in England until recent years. They numbered 100,000 at the beginning of the century: 500,000 in 1851: a million in 1881. But you will not find a single Catholic name in the battle for the workers until recent years. The most they can claim is the dubious Irish Catholic of the Chartist movement, Feargus O'Connor, who went insane. No English Catholic name is found in the roll of honour. It was much the same in Catholic countries. Successive Popes denounced plans of reform, and only apostate Catholics took part.

Nonconformity also may be curtly dismissed. Considering the large membership of the Nonconformist Churches among the workers, their social record in the nineteenth century is extraordinarily blank. Quakers and Unitarians, on the fringe of the Christian world, have a much better record. The farther you get away from the citadels of orthodoxy, the better the record. The less priesthood there is in a Christian Church, the more it does. The Quakers, indeed, have an extremely good record in proportion to their numbers. The Unitarians have a fair record, but we must remember that their creed is so slight that many Rationalistic Theists have at all times sheltered under their respectable umbrella.

In judging the respective records of the Church of England and Rationalism, our task is made difficult by the fact that many heretics conceal their ideas about religion. In the first half of the century a confession of Rationalism often meant persecution, or even ruin, to a professional man. Many find it still too dangerous a luxury to speak out about religion. The consequence is that, while men like Wilberforce and Shaftesbury were unquestionably orthodox, many others whose names appear in the roll of honour are, though they adhered to the Church of England in profession, very questionable. Yet even with this caution the record is remarkable.

The fight against black slavery in America does not much concern me here, but I may note that the first powerful Americans to condemn it were Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison (all Deists); and that the most influential abolitionists, when the great battle raged, were Lincoln, Lloyd Garrison, Channing, Phillips, Emerson, Bryant, Lowell, Whittier, and Whitman (all Deists or on the verge of it). The Churches were overwhelmingly against them.

"The Christian Churches in the Slave State," says the mild Ingram, "scandalously violated their most sacred duty and used their influence in the maintenance of slavery." On the English side Wilberforce and the Quakers were the most active. But the Churches generally were appallingly indifferent, while Carlyle was the only Rationalist to defend slavery; and Carlyle was an isolated, anti-Darwinian mystic.

This, however, was not strictly an English problem, and it is not altogether relevant to this inquiry. We want to know who are the men who, especially in the days when the workers were too ignorant and helpless to better their own condition, when "society" frowned heavily on any middle-class man who helped them, stood out in the chronicle of the times as apostles or leaders of reform.

I run over a small collection of works—histories of liberalism, radicalism, social reform, etc.—so that no important name may escape my memory, and draw up the following list. There were, lingering from the eighteenth century, Horne Tooke, (Deist), Cartwright (Church), Godwin (Agnostic), Paine (Deist), and a few other liberals I have mentioned. In the early part of the century Lancaster (Quaker) began the education of the workers, and Robert Owen (Agnostic) showed the world *how* to educate, without religion, and espoused every social reform of his time (temperance, eight hours' day, enfranchisement of woman, abolition of war, industrial reform, prison reform, etc.). Cobbett (Church) was a great, if peculiar, force. Francis Place (Atheist) took up the question of unions (and many other reforms) and won for the workers the right of combination. Jeremy Bentham (Atheist) was a Tory, but a great reformer and learned supporter of reforms. John Austin (Deist) and James Mill (Atheist) supported Bentham. Elizabeth Fry (Quaker) attacked the appalling evils of the jails. Sadler (Church) and Shaftesbury (Church) took up the cause of the children, but were lamentably bigoted in regard to other reforms. Sir Francis Burdett (Agnostic) rendered great service in parliamentary reform and the education of the workers.

The splendid spirit of Owen and the philosophy of Bentham deeply influenced the next generation. Holyoake (Agnostic) sustained Owen's breadth of idealism and became the apostle of Co-operation. J. S. Mill (Agnostic), Thornton Hunt (Agnostic), Sir W. Molesworth (Agnostic), Leigh Hunt (Agnostic), and Harriet Martineau (Agnostic) represented the Benthamite tradition among social workers, while Cobden (doubtful), Bright (Quaker), Grote (Agnostic), Fox (Deist), and Hume (Church) rendered service in their various ways. The workers were now producing champions of their own, and prominent among these, chiefly in the Chartist movement, were G. J. Harney (Agnostic), Ebenezer Elliot (Deist), Ernest Jones (Agnostic), Henry Vincent (free Christian), Lovett (Church), Hetherington (Agnostic), Bronterre O'Brien (free Christian), Lloyd Jones (Church), W. J. Linton (Agnostic), R. Buchanan (Agnostic), and Feargus O'Connor (nominal Catholic). Francis Place (Atheist) was behind them all, a mighty worker for the workers.

At this point, the middle of the nineteenth century, the worst part of the struggle was over. First Owenism, then Chartism, had fired the workers with new aspirations. Democracy became a respectable Liberal doctrine. On the other hand, great masses of the workers had, in disgust at the inaction or the opposition of the clergy, abandoned the Churches and listened eagerly to the Secularist doctrines of Holyoake and Bradlaugh. Kingsley and his Christian Socialist colleagues began to awaken some social zeal in the Church of England, urging that otherwise the masses were lost to the Church. I do not care to count heads after that date. But the worker may consider whether, even in recent times, the Churches have provided him with a body of champions to compare with Hyndman, B. Bax, G. B. Shaw, S. Webb, H. G. Wells, E. Carpenter, W. Archer, G. Wallas, R. Blatchford, John Burns, Norman Angell, J. R. Macdonald, the Countess of Warwick, and Herbert Burrows, all of whom are Rationalists.

To tell the story in more detail, bringing out more clearly the lack of inspiration in the Churches, is a task I leave gladly to Upton Sinclair, who informs me that he is engaged upon it. I have impartially reported the names which stand out in the great and varied crusade of the nineteenth century. When one remembers how slender the Rationalist body was in the strenuous first half of the century and how feeble its resources, the proportion of Rationalist names in the list is very significant. The small proportion of Church names to the millions of members of the Church and its resources is not less significant. Let us see if we can master this significance.

CHAPTER VII

THE KINGDOM OF MAN

Ruskin gives us, in the superb introduction to his *Crown of Wild Olive*, a clue to the preponderance of Rationalists in the humanitarian work of the nineteenth century. At the time when he wrote these pages (1870) he had, apparently, abandoned the Protestant creed of his youth, but had not reached the decided Agnosticism of his later years. He stood, as it were, between the camps and spoke impartially; in fact, some of his words express a shrinking from Agnosticism. But of social inspiration he saw none in Christianity and much in Rationalism. Speaking of Christians, he says: "In them it may be no sign of hardness of heart to neglect the poor, over whom they know their Master is watching; and to leave those to perish temporarily, who cannot perish eternally." Then he turns to the Rationalists, who do not believe that there is a hundred-fold reward awaiting factory-workers and peasants beyond the grave. He says:—

> For *you* there is no such hope, and therefore no such excuse. This fate, which you ordain for the wretched, you believe to be all their inheritance; you may crush them, before the moth, and they will never rise to rebuke you;—their breath, which fails for lack of food, once expiring, will never be recalled to whisper

> against you one word of accusing;—they and you, as you think, shall lie down together in the dust, and the worms shall cover you; and for them there shall be no consolation, and on you no vengeance,—only the question murmured above your grave: "Who shall repay him for what he hath done?" Is it therefore easier for you, in your heart, to inflict the sorrow for which there is no remedy? Will you take, wantonly, this little all his life from your poor brother, and make his brief hours long to him with pain? Will you be more prompt to the injustice which can never be redressed; and more niggardly of the mercy which you *can* bestow but once, and which, refusing, you refuse for ever?

In this beautiful passage Ruskin is not merely arguing, though even as a logical argument it has great weight. Preachers all over England were saying that the inspiration of the world would fail if the views of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford, and the other great Rationalists of the time, prevailed over the old faith. On the contrary, says Ruskin, one can quite understand people who think that they are going to live for ever making an evil use of this life, and taking little trouble to improve it for others; but people who reject that belief must surely make a better use of this life and, if they have a spark of humanity, help others, who are to die for ever, to live here more happily. As logic, if such questions are to be settled by logic, this is sound.

But it is more than logic in the mind of John Ruskin. It is his own experience in the first place. No doubt he still, at this time, believed in some sort of immortality, but he ridicules the "Father's mansions in the skies" of which

Christians speak. Yet in no work does he show a fiercer social ardour. He looked round on his fellows and saw the same. There was William Morris, an Atheist, whose tastes and means ought to dispose him for a life of personal enjoyment; but something turned him into a restless advocate for the less fortunate. So it had been from the beginning of the century.

I think that some day the chief fount and source of the great English crusade against injustice will be recognised in the industrial experiment at New Lanark in the early years of the century. It was conducted and carried out by Robert Owen, an Agnostic manufacturer who by his unselfishness shamed all the Christian manufacturers of Britain; and his two partners and supporters were the Atheist Bentham and the Quaker (the weakest of the three) Allen. Later there were two great streams of reform : Bentham's Atheistic philosophy amongst the middle class, and Owen's idealism amongst the workers. The time came when Owen had 100,000 immediate followers, and an influence on more than a million workers. All his assistants were, like himself, Rationalists. He prepared the way for Chartism, in which, again, most of the chief workers were Rationalists. The next phase was Socialism (in which the overwhelming majority of the leaders, all over the world, are Rationalists) and Trade Unionism (which chiefly owes its existence to the Agnostic Owen and the Atheist Place).

It is worth noting, too, that there was generally a breadth of reform in the Rationalists which the few Christian reformers did not share. Cobbett worked up a hatred of the French and a lamentable Jingoism in his *Political Register*. Cobden strongly opposed Trade Unionism and Factory Legislation. John Bright fought vehemently against the Ten

Hours Bill. Shaftesbury struggled against nearly every reform (the Reform Bill of 1832, the ballot, the admission of Jews to Parliament, etc.) except his own. Sadler bitterly opposed Catholic Emancipation. No Christian reformer countenanced the claims of women, as Owen and Mill did.

Nevertheless, Ruskin's reason for the social sterility of the Christian faith is not more, and was not intended to be more, than a clue. It is not an analysis. In actual fact, the Christian mind, regarded as a non-social moral force, is more complex. Ruskin knew quite well that his Christian neighbours did not take their "mansions in the skies" so literally as to argue that that was enough for the poor. He himself twits them mercilessly, in this introduction, with their remarkable reluctance to die and go to heaven. Amongst the early Christians, and a large part of the better medieval Christians, who took these things quite literally, the belief in heaven was undoubtedly a serious obstacle to social progress. The next life was so important and glorious that this life mattered little. Even amongst the more orthodox and literal Christians of Ruskin's time, and ours, this is true.

But it is by no means the full or the chief explanation. Shaftesbury, the devout Churchman, gives a more important element when he says that the clergy are "great worshippers of wealth and power." Having been a clergyman, I know the truth of this; but, being an honest man, I would warn the reader not to take it too crudely. The human mind is far from simple. Bishops and priests enjoy wealth, as a rule, like ordinary human beings, but they persuade themselves that they have an unselfish aim in "worshipping wealth and power." It is for the good of the Church, which means the good of humanity. It was all very well for Christ to disdain them—one with *divine* moral force might dispense with such aids—but his followers have to build churches, support colleges, influence legislation, and so on. So they must cultivate the wealthy and powerful. Therefore bishops absent themselves from the House of Lords, as we saw, when there is an attack on the profits of brewers or manufacturers. They eagerly snap up social philosophies which argue that there must always be a mass of poor, laborious, ill-educated workers. They persuade themselves that reformers are "paid agitators" or dangerous disturbers of the social order.

I am, of course, thinking mainly of the first half of the nineteenth century, when the great work was done, though it is in the second half that definite results were won. It matters very little what amount of social zeal the Churches display to-day. No one doubts that many parsons to-day resent social injustice, and would help to abolish it, as sincerely as any of us. How much they are really doing, even to-day, in proportion to their resources, the reader may judge for himself. For the great majority of Churchmen "the social question" merely means the existence of prostitutes. When they touch more important matters (in the Congresses of the Church of England or in Catholic or Methodist literature, for instance), such as the minimum wage, the hours of work, or the limits of wealth, they have no more courage or inspiration than they had a century ago. They are content to say that employers must be just; and they know perfectly well that every employer thinks he *is* just and will go no farther. As a body, the Churches are really doing no more than they did half a century ago. As to the increasing number of individual clergymen who preach an advanced social gospel, one may surely say, without for a moment questioning their sincerity, that they have been made by their environment, not by their creed.

Some of those who appeal to the masses to-day put it that we have at last really assimilated and appreciated the teaching of Christ. How they reconcile themselves to the fact that, as they believe, Christ foresaw the futility of his teaching for 1800 years, and made no effort to alter it, I do not know. How they explain that the most learned and the most devout Christians during those 1800 years—St. Augustine and St. Gregory, Thomas Aquinas and Francis of Assisi, Luther and Melanchthon—utterly failed to see implications of Christ's teaching which are as plain as a pikestaff to a Baptist preacher to-day, I have never read. There is, apparently, no limit to the audacity of preachers and religious controversial writers nowadays.

The most profound analysis of what has happened in Europe during the last hundred and fifty years will bring us back to the conclusion which even a superficial glance at it suggests. Humanitarianism of the kind which Ruskin describes is the great modern event. For redemption the world had to await the birth of scepticism. In the first half of the eighteenth century the Deists spread amongst the middle-class a very wide doubt about the truth of the Christian doctrines. This at once led—logically and in point of historical fact led—to the French humanitarianism which culminated in the Revolution. That outburst diffused throughout Europe a spirit which has been more than half the power of every progressive movement. There were, of course, other developments. Tories like

Bentham independently wrought a humanitarian philosophy, which, when it reached men who were not Tories, had great effect. Its fundamental test of morality was, "Does it promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number?" We see at once how this is the germ of social humanitarianism. In Germany it was the Rationalistic spirit of Goethe and Schiller which led to humanitarianism, especially when it at length blended with the lingering spirit of the French Revolution. Almost every Radical and (later) Socialist leader in Germany was either an Agnostic or an Atheist.

In France, Italy, and Spain it was the same. The priest Lamennais tried a Christian democratic gospel in France, but the Church would not have it, and he died a Rationalist. The men of 1830, 1848, and 1871 were almost all Rationalists. The men who have made modern France since 1871 were all Rationalists. The only Catholics of distinction are a few soldiers like Foch, who know nothing of modern culture, or a few literary men and artists.

In Italy progress was made almost entirely by Rationalists. Mazzini was a Theist; Garibaldi an Agnostic. Most of their supporters were Voltaireans or Agnostics. The successive Popes of the nineteenth century thundered against the aspirations of the modern democracy. Gregory XIII and Pius IX protected corruption and condemned the most just and obvious claims of humanity. Under them the Papal States were a disgrace. Leo XIII saw Europe turning away more and more from the Vatican, and he tried to soothe and attract the workers by the moral platitudes which fill his Encyclicals. But the workers noticed that these platitudes had not the least effect even on the feelings of their employers, and they continued to pour out of the Church. Pius X, a man utterly ignorant of modern life and thought, almost returned to the conservatism of Pius IX. The present Pope maintains his policy. Catholicism has proved itself without the least social inspiration, and the workers of Italy, Spain, and Portugal abandon it in millions. They smile at the social work (agricultural banks, etc.) which the Church is supposed to have inspired. It owes its inspiration either to priests who have been driven out of the Church for heresy, or to the very transparent policy of conciliating the workers.

Thus I do not see that even in our time the Churches are rendering any social service. That they engage here and there in philanthropic work need not be questioned, but philanthropy is not what the modern worker wants. It is a mistake to call it social service. That some of them, especially in America, have "social experts" is a fact; but that is one of the most transparent of all the tricks which the secession of great bodies of workers has forced upon the Churches. But where is the Church which *dare* approach the serious social problem of our time—that is to say, Is one class to be eternally worse paid and more heavily burdened than another, to what extent, and why?

Some clergymen would surmount the difficulty by saying that such questions contain two elements, an economic and a moral element. The moral element is to insist on justice, and this they do; but no one can expect them to go into detail, because a very large and exact economic knowledge is necessary for that. To this one must reply that merely insisting on justice is no use whatever. The slave-owner regarded slavery as just, and no priest corrected him. The serf-owner considered himself perfectly just, and the Church did not contradict him. The sweater does the same to-day. It is perfectly just, he says—and he could quote economists—to let a man work at the wage he asks. The clergy have insisted on justice during all the centuries over which I have run. What effect had it on the atrocious conditions I have described? None, we saw. When a moral force is vague and general, it is easily evaded.

Others think they make quite a good point by retorting: What has Rationalism done, or is it doing, for the people? The man who can ask such a question is in a mental muddle. Religious literature is full of claims that the Churches or Christianity have rendered great *social* service to the people. Rationalism as such has never aimed at rendering *social* service. Its sole business is to attack superstition, correct clerical misstatements, and diffuse knowledge. I have shown that this indirectly is a social service, and the extraordinary proportion of Rationalists in the front line of social reformers proves this. But let it be clearly understood that the Rationalist body as such does not profess to teach either moral or social duty. It is therefore absurd to ask what Rationalism has done in a field which it never promised to enter. The Churches, on the other hand, expressly claim to have given social inspiration, and we search history for it. We have seen the result.

We therefore see the answer to the very common question: What would you put in the place of the Churches? I am at present concerned only with that question in so far as it relates to my subject, and the answer is plain: Nothing. If the Churches have had no appreciable effect on the evolution of the worker to a higher standard of life, why on earth should we put anything in their place? If they left the worker in all ages to the stress of economic forces, he will be no worse off if they disappear. Indeed, we need not confine ourselves to this aspect. If you ask who will replace the Churches as teachers of humanity, we very promptly reply that they are already replaced by science and history. If you ask what will be substituted for the Churches as ethical trainers of the individual character, we say that until modern times, when the mass of mankind were kept in gross ignorance, they *may*—it is not very apparent in the life of the Middle Ages—have done some such service, but they are not needed now. Five-sixths of the people in the large towns of Europe do not come under their influence at all. Yet those towns are, as I observed of London, better morally than they ever were before. So are their clergy. The people have improved their pastors.

In any case, the task which I approached has been accomplished. It was to ascertain whether the Churches have, in point of historical fact, rendered to the people the social service which they claim to have rendered. We found that they have, on the contrary, grossly neglected to do such service during the long ages when the mass of the people needed it. We found that, while slight improvements were brought about at certain stages by economic changes, the workers were still in a lamentable position at the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Now it is a general and notorious fact that their position has been greatly improved since that time; and it is an equally general and notorious fact that the influence of the clergy has decayed in proportion as the workers advanced. I would go so far as to say—the reader may check it by the facts I have given—that the people have made far more progress from 1830 to 1919 than they made in the whole period from 400 (the date of the general establishment of Christianity in Europe) to 1830; that is to say, they have obtained more social justice in one hundred years of disturbed and decaying faith than in fourteen hundred years of undisturbed faith and enormous clerical power.

In fine, I ask the reader to consider carefully what forces were at work during those hundred years. There was no change in the Churches: at least, none at all until the middle of the century, and little until near the end of the century. The great force was Rationalistic humanitarianism, corresponding to that Stoic philosophy which first denounced slavery. The period between ancient and modern paganism is a hollow, a swamp, for the mass of the people.

I will not stop to argue whether there can be any moral forces; whether all changes are not due to economic forces or environment. Those who hold this view would simply count the idealism of Robert Owen or Francis Place an economic force, or part of the environment. This is a quarrel about words. The fact is that a very high proportion of middle-class Rationalists helped the people to their feet in England, France, Germany, and Italy. The Rationalist organisation, as I said, makes no social professions and avoids economic controversy. It unites men and women of different political creeds in a campaign for the rational education of the people. But the list of reformers which I have given shows that there is something in its principles which inspires humanitarianism. If we are asked, not what Rationalism has done (as an institution organised for a totally different purpose), but what Rationalists have done under the impulse of their principles, the answer is given in the last chapter.

In proportion to their number, Rationalists have several times as many representatives in the group of modern reformers as any branch of the Christian Church. In proportion to their numbers, every branch of the Christian Church has a scandalous record in the history of the uplifting of the workers.

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