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Ecclesiastes 12:12

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James H. Billington's
FIRE IN THE MINDS OF MEN

(Part 1)

by David Chilton

If you read only one book on revolution during your entire life, you must read Billington's. This book is absolutely unequalled in its 'scope,' depth, and detail, In its magnificent literary power, and in its biting, trenchant analysis of what the subtitle calls the "Origins of the Revolutionary Faith."

For revolution *is* a religious faith; as Billington says, it is "perhaps *the* faith of our time" (p. 3), and his massive study abundantly demonstrates the anti-Christian and pseudo-Christian character of revolutionary ideology. One of the major theses of his book is that the revolutionary faith originated not in the critical rationalism of the French Enlightenment (which, admittedly, was a religion as well), but rather in the blatantly occult romanticism of secret societies, which stirred a heretical brew of Christian symbolism and pagan mysticism. Out of this demonic mixture were distilled the intoxicating revolutionary ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the idolatrous attempts to replace the Christian faith, preaching and practicing the gospel of salvation through the shed blood of man.

Incubus and Incarnation

The modern revolutionary faith was born, not in France, but in 18th-century Germany. Frederick the Great, the antichristian statist and occultist who turned his kingdom of Prussia into the foremost military machine of Europe, began to develop a philosophy of revolution as a secular, redemptive convulsion which would radically transform the worid. Frederick's ideas were then imported into France where. they were translated into action in the French Revolution, one of the most crucial turning points in history. It was "the hard fact" of the French Revolution which "gave birth to the modern belief that secular revolution is historically possible" (pp. 20f.). The dream of a totally secular order– i.e., a world ruled by Man as God—is the most basic lure of the revolutionary faith. The French Revolution, a self-conscious attempt to overthrow Christian society, has since served as the standard for all subsequent revolutions, right down to the present-day "Christian Marxists" of Europe and Latin America. As one example of the self-conscious, atheistic nature of the Revolution, Billington cites the strange fact of the origin of the terms Left and *Right*: It began in the political polarization in the French National Assembly, where the radicals (who sat on the left) proudly adopted the designation as a dramatic symbol of their "revolutionary defiance of Christian tradition, which had always represented those on the right hand of God as saved and those on the left as damned" (p, 22).

In many ways, the French Revolution set precedents for those which were created in its image. Beginning ostensibly as a revolution for 'democracy" in the name of "the People," it soon revealed the irresistible drive toward centralization that is the hallmark of modern revolutions. The Reign of Terror, that eminently logical application of the Enlightenment, claimed 40,000 victims in 1793-94, but that was only to be the beginning. For, as the Revolution progressed, its leaders calmly calculated the number of citizens who would have to be exterminated, laying elaborate plans for the methodical liquidation of two-thirds of the population– more than sixteen million people (see Nesta Webster, *The French Revolution: A Study in Democracy,* 1919, pp. 423-429).

The Search for Legitimacy

The revolutionary drive toward *centralization* can also be seen as an urge toward *simplification,* the monistic insistence that all reality can and must be reduced to One. The search for revolutionary simplicity required the destruction of the complex fabric of Christian civilization, the dissolution of the many estates into one unitary State, the substitution of slogans for thought. Tied to belief in a secular salvation, radical simplicity led to violence: a ritual of blood atonement, providing deliverance through destruction (cf. Otto Scott, *Robespierre: The Voice of Virtue,* 1974).

Central to the revolutionary activity in Paris was the Palais-Royal, headquarters of Philip, Duke of Orleans (who had begun his radical education in Freemasonry). The Palais-Royal l-renamed "the Garden of Equality"–was immune from arrest because it was owned by royalty, and under Philip's protection and sponsorship revolutionary intellectuals, plotters, and pornographers thrived in the numerous cafes stationed around the gardens there.

Another nursery of revolution was the press, which was central—or, as Billington observes, *left*-center—to the Revolution at every point. Radical journalism increasingly took on the Church's abdicated role as the chief source and instructor of social mores and cultural values. A generation of talented journalist-agitators appeared on the scene, using the new tactics of "linguistic shock"– meaningless vulgarity and the ritual desecration of authority–as a means of bringing a highly traditional, verbal culture to its knees. In terms of this same perspective, revolutionary journalists attempted to destroy the provincial dialects (and thus local loyalties) by enforcing the use of their new creation, *la langue universelle*. In revolutionary Newspeak, old words were redefined, new words corned, in a dazzling fusion of Christian, occult, and sexual imagery. The language, and thus the thought processes of those who spoke it, were revolulionized. Words were seen as having mystical power, and were used "for incantation more than explanation" (p. 38); attempts were made to compile the "ultimate dictionary" in order to conjure absolute power.

Of all the secret conspiracies flourishing within the gardens of the Palais, the *most* secret and conspiratorial

was the Social Circle, founded by the pioneer of revolutionary journalists, Nicholas Bonneville. The Social Circle formed the inner, ruling core of the 6000-member Friends of Truth, a self-conscious, self-proclaimed, power-seeking intellectual elite, composed of "superior intelligences" who advocated "permanent insurrection" on behalf of universal social "equality" and "direct democracy." A standard pattern –elitist egalitarianism—was thus established, to be imitated and refined by dictatorial aspirants for centuries to come. At the heart of the Social Circle was the press, which served to spread Bonneville's concept of an international, egalitarian transformation of society. The Social Circle –globalist, ideological, disciplined – was the prototype of the modern revolutionary organization; and its locus of legitimacy, its unifying authority, was the press. Radical journalism has remained the central, surrogate authority for revolutionaries ever since.

The Conflict of Slogans

The revolutionary era offered three basic answers to the question of the purpose of society–answers which can be summed up in the slogans of the day: *Liberty, Fraternity,* and ***Equality.*** The ideal of liberty spread throughout Europe, but was soon eclipsed by the conflict between the more collectivist ideals of fraternity and equality. We should remember that the secular goal of liberty led to tyranny: *"The **European-wide** revolutionary tradition began as a series **of** republican, **constitutional** conspiracies"* against imperial and monarchical despotism (p. 56). The basic struggle which surfaced among revolutionaries was that between *national revolution* for the sake of fraternity, and *social revolution* to bring about equality. *Revolutionary nationalism* was an essentially romantic, emotional ideal expressed in mythic histories, poetry, and opera about past and future national glory. Nationalism continued to be the major revolutionary ideal until the end of the nineteenth century. *Revolutionary communism,* on the other hand, was an essentially rationalistic ideal, which eventually discarded romantic forms of communication for more prosaic, didactic, and "scientific" forms of expression.

Fraternity: The Nationalist Ideal

The mythic concept of la *nation* developed out of the French Revolution. Citizens were forced to communicate only in French (which was not the native tongue of many); official prayers were addressed "to the body of the nation" (p. 59). Music became increasingly nationalistic during the Reign of Terror. Great open-air festivals popularized new patriotic compositions: the most electrifying was ***La** Marsei//aise,* that bloodthirsty "war chant" which rallied the revolutionary nation and which was, fittingly, introduced at the same moment that the guillotine was first used in Paris. Nationalism also created a mytho-history centered around the ancient Germanic tribes, declared to be the prototype for a sovereign "people." Soon the revolutionary creeds proclaimed "the infallibility of the People" as an article of faith.

The living symbol of revolutionary nationalism was the ascetic young apostle of the French Revolution, Louis-Antoine de Saint-Just, who carried his large, brilliant head on his shoulders 'like a holy sacrament." Characterized by Billington as the embodiment of "passion disciplined by an idea," SaintJust exercised revolutionary detachment "in order to attach myself to every thing." Seeking a return to "original virtue," he advocated a "renewed communion with the primitive simplicity of nature." For Saint-Just, the function of the Terror was not to punish crime, but to excite the people, 10 fan their energy into a blaze. As he put it: "That which produces general good is always terrible" (p. 66). His semi-erotic idealization of revolutionary brotherhood was accompanied by fear and loathing of women (concentrated in hatred for Marie Antoinette, whose execution "began a series of public guillotinings of symbolic women of the era in a short space of time"). Saint-Just was not seeking personal power, for himself or anyone else; yet he illustrates the revolutionary tendency to create a "tyranny of virtue" to counteract a real or supposed tyranny of vice. In order to destroy abuses of power, the revolutionary ends up justifying and enforcing absolute power.

Equality: The Socialist Ideal

The third revolutionary ideal, that of social & economic egalitarianism, was the progenitor of modern communism. Grounded in Rousseau's call for a social contract based on the general will, "common happiness"–at the expense of freedom–was proclaimed the proper goal of society. The ideal of social revolution *(equality)* thus began to rival, and came eventually to replace, the ideal of national revolution *(fraternity);* and the titanic struggle between these two totalitarian ideologies destroyed the originally professed ideal of revolution: ***liberty.***

Social revolution found an able spokesman and organizer in François-Noël Babeuf, whose short-lived conspiracy became a model for later revolutionary organizations. Babeuf, like many other revolutionaries, used the journalistic profession as a means of propagating his ideas and fomenting revolution. He hailed Robespierre as "the genius in whom resided true ideas of regeneration" (p. 73). He worked out a plan to organize all of society as a military force, along the lines of the Greek phalanx. All government would be destroyed by revolution; through revolution everything returns to chaos, and out of chaos comes "a new and regenerated world" (p. 75). The names of Moses, Joshua and Jesus were invoked as forerunners of the revolutionary faith.

Linked to Babeuf through Nicholas Bonneville's Social Circle was the inventor of the term *communism,* the journalist and pornographer Restif de la Bretonne (dubbed the "Rousseau of the gutter"). Restif virtually worshiped the printed word; his attachment to printing, Billington says, was "almost physiological" (p. 79). His detailed blueprint for communist society envisioned fantasies which became essential aspects of the socialist utopia: a total "community of goods" (another term Restif invented), the abolition of private property and possessions, universal forced labor, communal eating, and the abolition of money. In one of his saner moments, he suggested that an appropriate site for the communist experiment might be the planet Venus–a point which brings us to the heart of the revolutionary faith. For, despite their differences and individual idiosyncrasies, the common bond which tied together the revolulionaries was the antichristian religion of *romantic occultism.*

The Occult Origins of the Revolutionary Faith

With the coming of the Napoleonic reforms, the revolutionaries retreated to secret societies, where they nursed their envies, cultivated the fond myth of the "Unfinished Revolution," and took on the air of an elect waiting for the Second Coming. Revolutionary secret societies multiplied throughout Europe, and reached even into Latin America and the Middle East. Billington's thesis here—a central aspect of the book– is "that the modern revolutionary tradition as it came to be internationalized under Napoleon and the Restoration grew out of occult Freemasonry; that early organizational ideas originated more from Pythagorean mysticism than from practical experience; and that the real innovators were not so much political activists as literary in-intellectuals, on whom German romantic thought in general—and Bavarian Illuminism in particular–exerted great influence" (p. 87). While Billington could not afford the embarrassment of acknowledging the fact, his landmark work is substantially a confirmation of the thesis developed by Nesta Webster, a historian whose solidly documented findings are taboo among Establishment scholars. (See Webster's *French Revolution,* cited above; also, *World Revolution: The Plot Against Civilization,* 1921; and *Secret Societies*

and Subversive Movements, 1924.)

Romantic occultism provided the underground revolutionaries with ground for resistance against Napoleon and his glorification of Enlightenment rationalism. The myths of the "Unfinished Revolution" and the return to "nature" and "primitive equality" were refined and developed within the sanctuary of occult organizations modeled on the structure of Masonic Lodges, in which many revolutionaries were trained and discipled. The radicals borrowed from Masonry not only the basic metaphor of the revolutionary mission—that of architects building the new society–but also the symbols and forms used in the conspiratorial groups. In the borrowing process, the Masonic orders themselves became fertile recruiting grounds for the conspiracies.

A much more radical group was the Order of Illuminists, which provided the actual organizational plans of the revolutionary societies. This explicitly antichristian Order, founded in 1776 and modeled on the Jesuit hierarchical system (its various levels were given ecclesiastical names), was dedicated to the perfection and freedom of humanity apart from established authority in general, and the Christian faith in particular. Its ideals, though often expressed in Christian terms such as "regeneration" and the "rebuilding of Jerusalem," called for a recovery of ancient, pagan, "natural" religion and the destruction of the institutions of private property. The State was to be the sole owner, and man would be liberated from his slavery to God. More than just a secret fraternity, Illuminism was a militia, organized and disciplined for the purposes of world revolution, and using Masonic lodges as both a training camp and a cover for its activities. After about ten years of recruiting and social agitation, the Order of Illuminists was forcibly dissolved and its members dispersed by the government, Up to this point everyone is agreed. The disagreements are over what happened next. According to most conspiracy theorists, the Illuminate went under cover, using numerous fronts and surrogates to gain and retain control of world events ever since. In Billington's account, however, the Order of Illuminists died out institutionally, yet acquired a posthumous influence which was greater than that exercised during its actual existence. Fascinated revolutionaries, seeking the same mysterious allure held by the Illuminate, adopted its symbols, rites, structures, and principles. To a great degree, says Billington, the attraction of Illuminism was caused by its right-wing enemies, whose fear of an international Illuminist plot was so constantly expressed that the revolutionaries' interest in studying and imitating the movement never waned. Illuminism, Billington argues, was perpetuated (paradoxically) not by the Left, but by the *Right* (see pp. 96,99,106,118,141, 549). (At this point conspiracy buffs would probably point out, in hushed tones, that since Billington is Director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a card-carrying, high-ranking member of the Establishment himself, he is probably an Illuminist anyway-so of course he would try to cover up their actual history. . . .)

Revolutionary revelation was also sought in Pythagorean mysticism; prime numbers held a special fascination for occult revolutionaries. One theorist even "derived the entire structure of revolutionary history from the number 17" (p. 100). The desire for revolutionary simplicity revealed itself in a mad search for geometric harmonies within the Masonic movement, on the grounds that the occult mastery of circles, triangles, and mathematical laws would lead to the rational organization of society. The use of the term *circle* to describe a gathering of people came into popular use at this time; by drawing all men into the redemptive influence of the magic Circle, man would become God, democracy would become "deocracy" (p. 103). Revolutionaries such as Thomas Paine began advocating sun worship as an ideological alternative to Christianity; a popular song exhorted the faithful to study "Those truths of holy law/Given you by Geometry" (p. 105).

Geometric forms served practical purposes of organization as well. Just as the Circle symbolized the egalitarian objectives of revolution, so the Triangle represented a means of reaching those goals. Three-man triangles came into use in revolutionary circles, and have continued in use down to the present day. Triangular organization, apart from occult significance, had the practical results of decentralizing the revolutionary movement, keeping the various levels ignorant of each other, and foiling governmental attempts to infiltrate and control the movement. A variant on the three-man cell was the five-man cell, originating in mystical fascination with the pentagon; the most famous development of the five-unit organization was the Slavic "Black Hand" society, a member of which assassinated Archduke Ferdinand in 1914, triggering World War 1; the terrorist methods of the Black Hand were later adopted as a model by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Revolutionary occultism also looked to music as a source of illumination, seeing it as "the science of harmonic relationships of the universe" and mystical "conversation with the cosmos" (p. 116), a medium which would enable regenerated man to transcend human limitations. The Romantics were seeking, as they frankly admitted, "a politics of the miraculous" (p. 115), a new world with man as Creator. In all of this there is the old, pagan desire to be free of one's humanity, and to liberate oneself from language. One major difference between orthodox Christianity and paganism is the fact that *Christianity is a linguistic religion:* it stresses doctrine, content, the importance of linguistic communication; in short, the primacy of the Word. The Bible is a revelation in *words,* and calls for an intelligible (which is not to say only *intellectual*) response: "What shall we then *say* to these things?" Pagans, on the other hand, are always carping about the limitations of language, seeking a new knowledge through mystical experience. Revolutionist, like all paganism, is essentially the religious substitution of either rationalism or romanticism for the word of God. And at the core of revolutionary ideology is the self-conscious recognition of its own religious and idolatrous character. The same, of course, is to be said for non-Christian anti-revolutionary movements. A former revolutionary leader's perceptive observation reflects this in his advice to rulers on how to suppress revolution: Simply keep the people dazzled with "the magic of the throne" (p. 122).

The Constitutional Revolutionaries

The first political youth movement of modern times occurred in the decade after 1815, in which liberal, constitutional revolutionaries mobilized for national goals. Often, the desire for a constitution was mystic and hazy, with no clear objectives; a peasant was asked what precisely the proposed constitution would mean, and he replied: "I don't know anything about it, but they had better give us one!" (P. 130).

The most important of the constitutional revolutionary organizations was a new Italian brotherhood. Abandoning the occult symbolism of the aristocratic Mason for the more democratic image of a "charcoal burner," the Carbonari quickly attracted over 300,000 followers. Professing to be simply a higher Christian fraternity, it made extensive use of Christian imagery in its structure and rituals: initiates would attain higher grades of membership by passing through a series of steps symbolizing the passion of Christ; and revolutionary organizers sometimes traveled as agents of the Bible Society (not the first or last time missionary organizations have served as a cover for revolution). The myth of "Nature" was also invoked: the Carbonari held their secret meetings in the forest, a loving brotherhood surrounded by unspoiled goodness. They preached three of the most basic revolutionary canons: 1) the Unfinished Revolution; 2) the authority of Nature over tradition; and 3) the necessity of secret, hierarchical organization. The Carbonari are significant, not

only for what they accomplished themselves as the first secret organization to lead a large-scale revolution in Europe, but because they were revered and imitated by other European revolutionary societies. Constitutional rebellions in the image of the **Carbonari** followed, in Greece (the only successful revolution) and other Balkan states, France, Germany, and Russia. The **Carbonari** era failed initially, but it left behind a widespread acceptance of conspiracy, violence, and political uprising–and an even stronger belief in the myth of the Unfinished Revolution.

Romance and Revolution

The period from 1830 to 1848 saw an increasing polarization between the romantic nationalist revolutionaries and the rationalistic socialist revolutionaries, pitting 'the nationalists' emotional love of the unique and organic against the socialists' intellectual focus on general laws and mechanistic analysis" (p. 147). For nationalists, revolution was seen in terms of regeneration and resurrection; for socialists, it was a scientific application of natural law and philosophical principle. Revolutionary nationalism, however, remained dominant until the closing quarter of the nineteenth century. This was not always recognized. Writing in *The Communist Manifesto,* Karl Marx triumphantly announced: "The workingmen have no country. . . . National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing. . . ." That was written in 1848, the year which saw more than fifty nationalist revolutions throughout the European countries. (An excellent study of the period is Priscilla Robertson's *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History,* 1952.)

The man who did most to incite the revolutions of 1848 was the Italian leader Giuseppe Mazzini, a veteran of the **Carbonari** revolts. He created an "international nationalism," a universal rationale for national uprisings which fired the imaginations of romantics across Europe. More than a philosopher, he founded an international federation of nationalist revolutionary clubs with names like Young Italy, Young Poland, Young Germany, Young France, Young Switzerland. The groups sported black flags and red shirts, and gathered regularly for nights of emotion-filled, patriotic singing.

Music took on an increasingly central role during the nationalist revolutions. As a revolutionary testified at his trial, "People have left the churches for the theaters . . . opera is a spectacle to ***awaken** and excite* the senses" (p. 152). Opera, folk dance, symphony, and march combined to become a powerful, cohesive force for mobilizing the masses through revolutionary propaganda. Chopin's mazurkas were aptly described by Schumann as "cannons buned in flowers"; Liszt called for a renewal of music's ancient power through a revived paganism; the music of Berlioz, Wagner, Rossini, and Verdi, which played on the recurring theme of national uprisings, sent their audiences streaming out of the theaters and into the streets, clamoring for revolution. A single operatic performance could set off a political explosion, and the theater became a favorite location for assassinations.

The Romantic nationalist movements created the myth of the ***People*** as an infallible source of legitimacy. Revolutionaries began to speak of the People as God, and looked back to the French Revolution as "His Incarnation of '89" (p. 161). The messianic nationalism of the day centered around the fantasy of the pure, unspoiled people as liberating force. Like many romantic myths, it was an ambiguous concept, used by all sides, as it is today by "constitutional" anarchists in the U. S., Central American Marxists, and demogogic politicians of every party. Subtly, however, a change was taking place at mid-century. Already in 1848 the nationalist tricolors were being struck in favor of the red flag of socialism; and revolutionary rhetoric began to speak of *workers* instead of ***people***. By the 1860s, with the widespread failure of nationalist movements and the rising consciousness of economic class as a social dynamic, national revolution began to give way to social revolution.

An important step in the development of the social revolutionary tradition was the growth and refinement of the idea of a revolutionary dictatorship. The failure of previous revolutions began to be attributed to the lack of strong leaders; revolutionary power, the theorists claimed, must be entrusted to a dictatorial elite. The "people" themselves were obviously unable to perfect the Unfinished Revolution; the task must be given over to a "vanguard." Even after the revolution, the people would need continuing "education"; hence continuing dictatorship, terrorism, and secret police surveillance would be required.

While these theoretical developments were taking place, the social revolutionary movement was receiving aid from an unexpected source: the revival of romantic Christianity *(not* to be confused with orthodoxy) in the 1840s. Terms such as "the Brotherhood of Man" struck a responsive chord in the hearts of many, who were making the simultaneous discovery that they belonged to a monolithic aggregate of like-minded people called "the proletariat." New organizations such as the Communist League, which had progressed from national to universal social perspectives, popularized the use of Christian terminology to influence followers toward egalitarian socialism. Food cooperatives were used, then as now, to create a sense of "solidarity" and serve as an outlet for class-warfare propaganda in the name of protecting the poor against exploitation. Increasing envy-manipulation, often in the name of Christ, led to an acceleration of strikes and violence, preparing the way for the thoroughgoing atheistic secularism of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

Antidote for Revolution

At this point Billington poses the question: Why didn't it happen here? What prevented the countries of England, the United States, and Switzerland from going the way of France, Italy, and Poland? Billington's answer is an apparently reluctant resurrection of certain aspects of what used to be called the "Whig interpretation of history," the very mention of which will cause any self-respecting associate professors lip to curl derisively. (We should not be too quick to condemn such a reaction, for it is merely an involuntary reflex due to intensive programming.) The key differences, according to Billington (and Lord Macaulay before him) are *Protestantism* and *Pariiamentarianism* –essential antidotes to both stagnation and upheaval.

The differences between the American Revolution and the French Revolution are dramatic and radical; to call them both *revolutions* is somewhat like calling Presbyterianism and Satanism *denominations*. The American War for Independence was essentially *republican; the* French Revolution was essentially *democratic*. Republics resisted the revolutionary trend toward simplification of structure and centralization of power; they succeeded through a stubborn commitment to complex political systems, involving competing sovereignties and diffused power. And the basis for this was their theological commitment to (basically presbyterian) Protestantism, which sought a harmony of unity and diversity, leaning neither toward unitary statism nor anarchistic fragmentation. Political, social, and economic health flowed from a Spiritual and religious center in the Protestant faith.

(To Be Continued)

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Preface 12

Ecclesiastes 12:12

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(Part 2)

by David Chilton

The nineteenth-century revolutionary movements were dominated by a new class which came to be known as the *intelligentsia* -young, often lonely students driven by a vision of themselves as an intellectual elite directing and transforming all of culture. In terms of this vision they developed a new form of religious faith: *ideologies.* The nineteenth century was, of course, rife with ideologies of various kinds, but the really modern varieties were genuinely, consistently, and self-consciously secular religions, "all-inclusive in scope, universal in application, historical in focus" (p. 209). As such they provided a definite philosophy of history: a clear idea of how history works, what forces are shaping it, where it is going, how to discover one's own place in the cosmic unfolding of the great Plan, and what practical steps to take at every point.

Saint-Simonians and Young Hegelians

One of the most important of these new young intellectuals, and a primary source of modern revolutionary ideology, was Henri de Saint-Simon, an aristocrat of the *ancien regime* who had spent close to a year in prison during the Reign of Terror. The experience left him with a lifelong fear of revolutions, and the consuming passion of his life became the attempt to create a completely rational order for society. He aligned himself with a scientistic group of scholars who worked for the development of a new science of humanity as a means of social control. For these ideologues, "all thinking and feeling were physical sensations, in the strictest sense of the word." As some of his associates put it, "ideology is a part of zoology"; 'The brain digests Impressions and secretes thought" (pp. 211f.). Saint-Simon even became married, for a time, in order to increase his opportunities for "studying mankind." On the basis of this thoroughgoing materialism–in *order to bring an end to* all *revolution,* it should be remembered – Saint-Simon and his colleagues authored and popularized the most revolutionary concept of modern times: the idea of a scientific understanding and control of human behavior which would bring about perfectibility through rational, secular progress. His Science of Man had a vast influence on sociology (the historical function of which has been to lay the theoretical groundwork for totalitarianism); and, as Engels was later to point out, he developed the embryonic class analysis which prepared the way for Marx — indeed, for "almost all the ideas of later socialists."

The primary attraction of Saint-Simonianism (styled for a time as "the new Christianity") was the bright promise it held out for its followers–the hope that the intellectuals would provide an elite leadership for the social transformation of the entire world. Saint-Simonian futurism was always vague, however, and tended to degenerate into an Irrational, psycho-sexual cult. What changed it was its fusion with the ideology of the leftist adherents of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the Berlin philosopher hailed by university students as "the new Christ bringing the word of truth to men" (p. 225). In many ways, Berlin was the natural place for the student religion of "Left Hegelianism" to develop, for Berlin boasted the first really modern university: an institution created by the state, commissioned with the self-conscious ideal of training an elite for the service of the state. In the heady atmosphere of a university which was breaking with tradition and giving students and their professors the freedom to discover "new truths," the young intellectuals were captivated with the notion of the dialectical nature of history, the revolutionary direction of its flow, and its "inevitable" outcome. In all this, of course, it was assumed that the philosopher's mind has the absolute capacity to comprehend the entire scope of human history. This is strong stuff, calculated to produce in any believer's mind and heart feelings of grandeur, of sheer awe and joy in the blissful contemplation of his own omniscience—which, with intellectuals, translates very easily into omnipotence as well.

Under the influence of Hegelian dialectics, conflict was seen more and more as the engine of historical change. The term *intelligentsia* came into use to describe the lonely intellectual elite, suffering from "alienation," cut off from tradition, and dedicated to worldwide revolution, proclaiming that all things from the past must be torn down. "The joy of destruction is a creative joy," enthused radical Hegelians Bakunin and Proudhon (p. 233). This was not just youthful indulgence in graphic metaphors. They knew they were calling for violence, that their much-lauded "flow of history" was to be a river of blood. It is just this doctrine of *creative destruction* which is at the core of the modern revolutionary faith.

The Rise of the Social Revolutionaries

While the national revolutionaries had an essentially romantic vision of their cause and issued an emotional appeal to join a brotherhood of love, the social revolutionaries preached the more abstract, rationalistic gospel of the restructuring of society. What thus came to be known as *communism* originated, not with the workers, but with intellectuals. It is a fact that *not one* of the communist theorists, including Marx and Engels, was from the proletariat. All were from the bourgeoisie, and few ever even visited a factory in their lives, much less did any hard work.

The first communists, taking their cue from Saint-Simon,

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developed three major pillars in their worldview: first, that the French Revolution originated from the inescapable opposition of *classes;* second, that the purpose of education should be universal social engineering (to be overseen by the intellectual elite); and, third, that ideological purity and discipline were of central importance in the revolution. Radical unity and simplicity were required. No deviations could be allowed, for communism was "unitary," and there would ultimately be one language, one universal nation, and even one form of labor. *Real* communists, those who were true to the faith, could never disagree. Dispossessing Christianity, communism would become "the egalitarian church, *outside of which there can be rro salvation"* (p. 252).

An important but forgotten apostle of this "holy communist church" was John Goodwyn Barmby, the man who first popularized the term *communism* in England. Barmby set out to capitalize on the pseudo-Christian undercurrents running through socialism, declaring in his revised Creed: "1 believe . . . that the divine is communism, that the demoniac is individualism. . ." Calling himself "Pontifarch " he announced that he had joined Judaism and "Christianism" to produce the synthesis of the Communist Church. He devised a four-staged baptismal rite (to symbolize the four stages of history leading to the paradise of universal communism), followed by an anointing with oil. The subtitle of his journal is indicative of his general approach: *The Apostle of the Communist Church and the Communitive Life: Communion with God, Communion of the Saints, Communion of Suffrages, Communion of Works and Communion of Goods* (pp. 255 ff.).

Barmby's explicit infusion of Christian terminology with socialist ideology was adopted by communist propagandists throughout Europe. Communism was touted as the means of bringing to fruition the Christian call for brotherly love. Christ was portrayed trampling the serpent of "egoism" beneath His feet, surrounded by an army of angels sporting the red caps of the French Revolution. It was under the Christian banner that communism was successfully sold to the masses of France, Poland, and Germany; as Billington points out, "communism probably would not have attracted such instant attention without this initial admixture of Christian ideas" (p. 258). Soon, however, came the replacement of Christianity for the more pliable and politically amenable religion of democracy. In fact, the more authoritarian the leaders' pronouncements became, the more use they made of the word *democratic.* As William E. H. Lecky pointed out in his monumental study of *Democracy and Liberty (2* vols., *1896 [1981]),* nothing is more characteristic of a democracy than its toleration of, and positive demand for, coercive governmental interference in every area of life. There is nothing even slightly inconsistent about the "authoritarian democracy" of communism.

Karl Marx

The one whose name we all associate with the rise of social revolutionary thought, of course, is Marx. But Marx probably would have sunk into obscurity as just another abstract intellectual had it not been for the collaboration (and lifelong financial subsidizing) of the wealthy, bourgeois radical Frederick Engels. The two were introduced by one of the more shadowy figures in revolutionary history, Moses Hess, who can be credited with inventing two of the most effective movements of modern times—Communism (Engels called him "the first Communist in the party") *and* Zionism (cf. pp. 263-65)– a fascinating connection which Billington does not develop further. Marx's ideological contribution to communism— his ideology to end ideology—was based on three attitudes which had characterized the Young Hegelians: *negativism* (the doctrine of "creative destruction"), *materialism* (the view that history was determined or predestined *by* material forces), and *atheism* (rationalistic, "scientific" socialism, as opposed to mystical, quasi-Christian socialism). For Marx and Engels, Communism was "the developmental stage which makes all existing religions superfluous and abolishes them" (p. 271)—a backhanded way of acknowledging that Communism is, after all, as much a religion as any other opiate.

There were significant differences emerging in the 1840s between the old socialism and the new communism, although this did not become official doctrine until the Communist International of 1928. Communism was more clearly totalitarian than socialism, demanding a greater degree of social control. Partly in justification of this demand, communism professed to be more "scientific" than the older, more romantic socialists had been. The idea of "scientific socialism" was not entirely new with Marx, having been championed previously by Charles Fourier, who held that the planets are living beings which regularly engage in copulation (the northern lights are actually nocturnal emissions!), and that the seas and oceans will taste hke lemonade in the socialist millennium. Marx's "science" was not always as harebrained as Fourier's; but, as an eminent RussIan mathematician has observed: "With almost perverse consistency, most of the projections of Marxism have proved to be incorrect. A better percentage of correct predictions could probably have been achieved by making random guesses" (Igor Shafarevich, *The Socialist Phenomenon, 1980,* p. *206; see Preface 3).* Nevertheless, the idea of "scientific" communism made for good public relations in an age captivated by the cult of scientism. The notion that communism was "objective," that it harmonized with universal laws, not only lent it an aura of respectability but made its future victory absolutely inevitable. And the communist doctrine of inevitability (which is now often believed by Marxists and non-Marxists alike), in turn, both encouraged and legitimized the use of violence—the "final" act of revolutionary violence in order to end the "violence" of capitalism.

One of the most important of the new communist dogmas was Marx's myth of the Proletariat as the new force of salvation in history. Allied with his slogan-as-h istoriography, that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle," the myth of the Proletariat provided both a simple program and a messianic calling. It was not, however, the *real* proletarians who were divinely called, but the communist party, the group which *represents* the proletariat "as a whole" (although none of its members are necessarily proles themselves).

This led to another significant insight by Marx, one which became apparent to him after the revolutions of 1848. All of Europe erupted in violent revolutions that year, none of them successful. If the revolutions can be said to have had any result at all, it was merely the strengthening of reactionary and conservative forces. Various theories were spun to account for the failure of the revolutions; Marx's explanation centered on the lack of strong leadership. His counsel for future actions was that "every provisional state set up after a revolution requires a dictatorship, and an energetic dictatorship at that" (p. 282). Marxist regimes have ever since followed his advice, with minor modifications: dictatorships are less "provisional" and more "energetic." The "dictatorship of the proletariat" (which, again, has nothing whatever to do with control of anything by real proletarians) was originally pitched as a transitional phase leading to the perfect, classless society. But, as Uncle Joe Stalin observed in his classic *Foundations of Leninism (1939),* these transitional phases are tricky; they can take a long, long time.

Marx did not go unchallenged by other socialists. In particular, he became engaged in a lengthy feud with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the anarchist who made a career out of

his gift for creating snappy aphorisms: "Property is Theft," "God is Evil," and (my favorite) "All ideas are false" –eminently balanced by his solemn assertion that "All ideas are true." Marx derided much of Proudhon's rhetoric as just so much sentimentality, which of course it was, but the rub was the fact that Proudhon, and many who agreed with him, were real, live proletarians, the non-hypothetical workers of the world, who were emphatically *not* uniting behind Marx. The Proudhonist revolution was largely apolitical and nonideological, a working-class movement based on union organization and cooperatives. Proudhon was always deeply suspicious of abstract theorizing, and his suspicions were confirmed when he met Marx. Each considered the other a hopeless utopian, and both were correct: Proudhon was the mystic speaking to the emotions, Marx the rationalist speaking to the intellect. In the end, Marx won, his '(scientific socialism" appealing to the scientistic spirit of the age, and finding a ready audience in the rising generation of intellectuals, "the first generation ever to experience near universal primary education in secular state schools" (p. 304). Proudhonism made a brief comeback in the New Left agitations of the late 1960s, that revival of anti-intellectual, anti-technological, pro-"natural" mysticism, much of which seems to have been based on the subtle recognition that the social studies and liberal arts majors were facing a job glut of mammoth proportions, while the fuddy-duddy engineering students were going to get away with all the (microchips. Two ways were open to the 60s radicals: either smash the machines, or find a cushy government job where you can regulate the technocrats. The latter option eventually proved more profitable, especially when the radicals considered that Life As We Know It just isn't pos*sible* without *some* technology. Not everyone can be a Gandhi (not, apparently, even Gandhi: see Richard Grenier's *The Gandhi Nobody Knows, 1983).*

Journalism: The Revolutionary Vocation

We have already seen something of the importance of journalism in the activities of those who brought about the French Revolution (see *Preface 77).* Its significance did not end there, as Billington demonstrates: "Journalism was the most Important single professional activity for revolutionary Saint-Simonians and Hegelians" (p. 308), The power of the press became so central for revolutionaries, in fact, that just as Christians look forward to the millennial day when "everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree" (Mic. 4"4), the revolutionaries pined for "the day when every citizen shall be able to have a press in his home'" (p, 311).

Both Marx and Engels, like many other revolutionary leaders, began their careers as journalists. Revolutionary writers tended to see themselves as an ideological apostolate, detached from the past, free from traditional loyalties. They were possessed by a religious fascination for their art: "Editing my daily article became my daily sacrament," one wrote, Another enthused that the printing press had replaced Christ as the locus of authority, as journalism increasingly took on a priestly, as well as prophetic, function. Marx wrote that journalists had the responsibility, not to express the thoughts of the people, but to "create them or rather impute them to the people. You create party spirit" (p. 318), (For the story of how a revolutionary organization of somewhat different stripe exerted its influence by creating public attitudes through control of powerful newspapers, see Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope· A History of the World m Our Time,* 1966, and *The Anglo-American Establishment*, 1981)

Journalists became–in their own minds at least–the vanguard of the revolution; the staff was seen as the prototype for the truly communal revolutionary society of the future, in which artisan and intellectual worked together harmoniously. The early vision of the journal staff as one unitary community did not last long, but journalism has remained the most typical profession of the revolutionary, down to this day.

Ironically, "journalism produced by working people has almost always been non-ideological, and only rarely revolutionary" (p, 335). Real proles tend not to be interested in the theories spun about them by bourgeois ideologues writing in Op-Ed columns (or pontificating on *Nightline* or 60 *Minutes).* The working-class journals constituted a major and effective rival to the ideologically oriented radical papers, and the revolutionary press was outdone by the competition. In addition to the nonrevolutionary press, the *anti*revolutionary, chauvinistic and patriotic press made important advances during the later decades of the 19th century. An outstanding example cited by Billington is William Randolph Hearst's creation and manipulation of the Spanish-American War in order to expand his newspaper empire (p. 345). Thus, just as it was waning as a revolutionary ideal in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, nationalism was co-opted by the reactionary Right and transfigured into imperialism. The nationalist revolutionary slogan of *fraternity* came into disrepute, as it became more and more obvious that nationalism was too often simply the repression of one people by another. True, all men were brothers – "but some are Abels and some are Cains," as one socialist revolutionary crisply put it in a blistering attack on nationalism.

From National to Social Revolution

The last of the great nationalist uprisings was the so-called Paris Commune, a revolutionary "alternative government" set up in Paris and lasting for two months in the Spring of 1871. It was a watershed in many ways, providing heroic myths and radical examples for revolutionaries for decades to come. While at first the revolution was nationalist and patriotic in nature (as a protest against the French government's surrender in the Franco-Prussian War), it soon acquired a leftist, socialist character; Engels and Lenin looked back to it as the model for a dictatorship of the proletariat. When the Commune was finally crushed by regular French forces, the reprisal was the most severe of the century: about 20,000 people, including women and children, were slaughtered; 13,000 more were sent to prison or into exile. Nationalism had been defeated, first in the Prussian victory over France, and then in the repression of the revolution by France itself. The ideals of liberty and fraternity were gone, and all that remained was the socialist goal of equality. The Paris Commune marks the turning point, the definitive transition from revolutionary nationalism to revolutionary socialism.

With the destruction of the nationalist mentality the romantic, heroic mentality died as well. Revolutionaries, reeling from the shock of the Paris Commune's bloody demise, abandoned their emotionalism and became much more prosaic, even businesslike, in their attitude toward the struggle. They became disciplined and militaristic, adopting a hardened, grim, and more pragmatic attitude toward violence.

At the same time, music was undergoing a change, moving away from romance and revolution. Where operas had once stirred mobs to attack representatives of wealth, authority, and nobility, music increasingly was created for the service of the state, preaching a message conducive to the aims of reactionary Imperialism, It was the age of Of fenbach, of Gilbert and Sullivan, of light operas for the amusement of the ruling class and the diversion of the masses.

Another deathblow to the romantic woddwew was the rise of Industry It looked like the whole world was becoming mechanized; indeed, the "alienation" spoken of by Marx had much to do with the perceived inequities brought about by the machine and the factory system. Mechanization ended

the romantic dream of a paradisical, pristine natural order to be revived by revolution. Ironically, the model for revolutionary organization and activity—especially in the German Social Democratic movement, the first significant political expression of Marxism, and the primary means of spreading Marxist ideology in the nineteenth century-changed from the structure of the Masonic orders to the machine and the factory, Communism, in many ways, is simply the substitution of bureaucrats for owners and managers, except that the "factory" is now more brutal and dehumanizing than ever. And it doesn't produce.

Revolutionary **Violence**

Billington begins his major discussion of violence with a close look at the Russian tradition, observing that just as "the machine symbolized the German revolutionary movement, the bomb symbolized the Russian" (p. 387). The bomb served the revolutionary goal in several ways: it was more "democratic" (access to explosives was relatively easy) and more terrifying than other methods. Chemicals became the new object of worship in the revolutionary religion; the assembling of bombs was the new activity which unified the revolutionary community.

Billington characterizes the Russian revolutionaries in terms of a cluster of words which emerged, in popular usage, in the nineteenth-century revolutionary tradition. The term *intelligentsia* was revived, again with its connotations of a young, intellectual elite which would be the moving force of history to bring about *pravda* (a word meaning both *truth* and *justice*). The intelligentsia saw themselves also as *populists*, the educated advocates of the common people, particularly the peasants. The Russian peasant, with his agrarian lifestyle, simple values, and close familial relationships acquired a romantic aura about him, becoming both the symbol and the mystic source of social regeneration. "So intense was the intellectuals' desire to establish identity with the peasantry that Jewish students accepted baptis - not out of conversion to Christianity but out of a desire to share this part of the peasant experience" (p. 404). If this had been all there was to Russian revolutionary activity, it would have been harmless and even silly. But there were deadlier elements in the brew, which combined to create the most violent tradition in revolutionary history.

The most significant aspect of the Russian revolutionary tradition was *nihilism*. The Russian revolutionaries were captivated by negativism, the rejection of tradition, and the idealization of violence By a curious twist, negativism was not merely an expression of disillusionment, but of a positive goal. One influential student activist wrote·

> Everything is false, everything is stupid, from religion to the family. . . . a revolution, a bloody and pitiless revolution must change everything down 10 the very roots . . . we know that rivers of blood will flow and that perhaps even innocent victims will perish. . . (p. 395).

Perhaps the most striking example of revolutionary nihilism discussed by Billington was the secret organization called, appropriately, *Hell*. Members were sworn to celibacy, secrecy, an utter separation from family and friends– and the twin goals of assassination and suicide. "Immediately prior to the deed, he was to disfigure his face beyond recognition; immediately after, he was to take poison — leaving behind only a manifesto from 'the organization,' which would be assured thereby an impact that peaceful propaganda could never have" (p. 396f.).

Terrorism soon began to dominate the revolutionary movement. Numerous secret societies sprang up, modeling themselves after the late-eighteenth-century hierarchical conspiracies. The bomb became the ultimate in radical simplification, the completely final and satisfactory instrument of justice. Terrorism served another important function, as a "baptism in blood" for the intellectual. For baptism marks the point of no return, Once the educated, bourgeois, inhibited intellectual threw his first bomb, there was no turning back, He had made a lifelong commitment to violence.

Billington goes on to discuss the role of women in the revolution, and the different parts they played within the differing revolutionary traditions. At first, in the French Revolution's antifeminist period, the duty of women was to "stay home and knit trousers for the *sans-culottes*." Later, the mystical Saint-Simonians held that the coming social revolution would be led by a "feminine messiah" from the East, and several pilgrimages were organized to find her (one highly successful revolutionary leader claimed that he actually *did).* The search for the revolutionary feminine messiah is one of the primary sources of another modern tradition: *feminism* (a term invented by the mad socialist Charles Fourier).

The women of the French revolutionary tradition brought to it a passion for pacifism and nonviolence. But their counterparts in Russia, in marked contrast, were the *most* violent and bloodthirsty in the movement. The Russians created a mythology of the female bombthrowers, whose violent actions, like their virginal bodies, were pure and saintly. It was the women who took the lead in the terrorist tradition, generally sealing their act, and thereby confirming their moral authority as martyrs, by committing suicide.

Demons in the Library

Lengthy as this review has been, I have merely skimmed the surface of Billington's vastly important work. While preparing it, I came across another review of the book in the latest issue of a conservative magazine. Writfen by a professor under the apparent direction of the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments, it archly dismisses the book as a rehash of the old Wagner-led-to-Hitler argument, breaking no new ground, a hefty but irrelevant antiquarian study. The real message of the review is subtle, but clear: *P/ease, don't read this book!* (The reviewer at least seems to have taken his own advice.)

You must understand, particularly if you are a university student grappling with these issues, that Billington's book *officially does not exist,* any more than do the works of Nesta Webster, Carroll Quigley, Otto Scott, or R. J. Rushdoony—to cite an admittedly diverse group, but a group which, nonetheless, has exposed the religious roots of the modern revolutionary worldview—and of the "establishment" worldview as well. Gary North pointed it out in another officially unknown work, *Marx's Religion of Revolution: The Doctrine of Creative Destruction (1968;* now out of print, but to be republished soon): "Unquestionably, there is a religious element in Marxism. But to classify him as an Old Testament prophetic figure is to miss the essential nature of the Marxist message. *What Marxism represents is a secular throwback to the chaos cults of the ancient world,* and not a modern school of the prophets" (p. 84).

It can be fairly demonstrated that numerous scholars have used these works in their own research. But you will search in vain for the footnotes. (There is some small degree of justice here. Billington, who conceals his considerable debt to Webster, has now himself joined the ranks of the Great Unfootnoted.) A major cause of the official hostility to the findings of these scholars is that, with more or less clarity, they point to the religious nature, not only of revolution, but of all history, of life itself. *Life is covenantal.* Our thoughts and actions exist in terms of our relationship to God—or our attempt to flee from Him. Nothing frightens the modern rationalist more than the reminder that he is not his own, that he has sold himself mto bondage (to the *losing* side, no less), and that something—or *someone–is* lurking in the shadows just ahead smacking its lips.

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