

CLIMAX OF HISTORY

"For he who, himself imbued with public teachings, yet cares not to contribute aught to the public good, may be well assured that he has fallen far from duty: for he is not 'a tree by the streams of waters, bearing his fruit in due season', but rather a devouring whirlpool, ever sucking in, and never pouring back what it has swallowed. Wherefore, often pondering these things with myself, lest I should one day be convicted of the charge of the buried talent, I long not only to burgeon, but also to bear fruit for the public advantage, and to set forth truths unattempted by others. . . .

"A hard task in truth do I attempt, and beyond my strength, trusting not so much in my proper power as in the light of that giver who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not."

Dante: *De Monarchia*. Bk. I, Ch. I.

CLIMAX
OF
HISTORY

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TO
THE GREATEST WORLD STATESMAN
OF THIS AGE

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Few would disagree that at the present time many developments, which have been proceeding for the last centuries, seem to be reaching a climax. Of the epochal crises through which mankind has passed this has its special features, which it is the object of this book to elucidate; but it would be impertinent to suggest that this is "the" culminating point of mankind's experience on this planet. So much for the title of this book.

I am indebted to a large number of friends, and not least to my publisher, Mr. Richard Harman, for encouragement and advice at many stages in the preparation of this book. I would also particularly like to thank Mr. Philip Leon, head of the Classical Department of Leicester University, for his constant suggestions and comments from the earliest formative stages of the book onwards, and for his translation of the passages from St. Augustine in Chapter 4; Professor Michael Lewis of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, for his help in reading and advising on an early draft; Mr. Lionel Jardine, late of the Indian Civil Service, for his revision of a passage in the final chapter; Professor Eiliv Skard of Oslo University, Professor Theophil Spoerri of Zürich University, and various other friends for their trouble in reading the manuscript and making many helpful suggestions. I am also indebted to Miss Margaret Stuart, Mrs. M. Gray, Miss Ivy Betts, Mrs. F. Lewis and Miss Dorothy Prescott, for their work in typing and proof-reading, and to the Rev. W. T. Bowie for his work on the index. And last but not least, I must thank my wife, since much forbearance as well as encouragement is expected from wives by husbands who try to write books.

Concerning the discrepancy between my position at Greenwich as printed on the jacket and on the title-page, the former implies no special seniority, since it is in the nature of a rank shared with many of my colleagues.

R.C.M.

Greenwich,
July, 1951.

Prologue

I am one of those thousands of Englishmen whose life span just reaches back into the days before World War I, who were brought up in the inter-war years, and who lived through World War II into the present era.

Like many of my contemporaries, I was brought up in a way which insulated me against the harsher realities of our world. Anyone who has passed infancy and childhood in a happy and cultured home can never be grateful enough for the heritage of sound values, decency and sanity which this implies. But there is also the insulation from experience of the darker side of life, its divisions, bitterness, exploitation, misery, about which it is necessary to learn in time.

These important lessons never came my way until manhood. From my home I was sent to a boarding-school which was a world on its own, even more secluded from the wider world in many ways than that home from which I regretted so much to be snatched for eight months of every year. The chief effect of these school years on my character was the strengthening of an almost fanatical individualism, my defence against the compelling tendency—which exists in every such society—to mould its members into conformity with its own patterns.

At school I accepted uncritically many views which were the product of the superficial optimism of the mid-twenties—the period of Locarno when an exhausted world was passive during a brief convalescence. The war to end war had been

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fought and won, and I congratulated myself on having been born into a new age. Civilisation had reached a higher stage; war and other barbarities had gone into a past as dead as the Roman Empire. I really believed this, so that I could not take seriously an institution like the Officers' Training Corps, which however one was obliged to take part in owing to a potent system of "voluntary compulsion". To avoid arms drill and other uninteresting activities, I entered the band, where I played the piccolo.

I remember being struck by pictures of Hitler's Brown-shirts on the march, in the *Illustrated London News*, probably in 1929. But world affairs made no real impact on me. The slump, mass unemployment, the abandonment of the gold standard and other historic events of the time were of purely academic interest. I was still, as Professor Toynbee puts it, "living outside history".¹ Contemporary history meant no more to me than the text-book history which was my "subject", but which rarely captured my imagination in spite of the able efforts of my teachers.

History only "took me by the throat"² when I ran up against a fact for which my existing comfortable philosophy had no answer—and that although it was a fact of the inner life rather than of the external world. Brought up in the atmosphere of an Oxford don's home, with all the facilities for gratifying literary and artistic interests, I had come to believe that "culture" was the main thing in life. My values were those of the Renaissance, the legacy of the Italian humanists. I believed in the all-round development of one's human endowments, with a special emphasis on the intellectual,

¹ A. J. Toynbee: *Civilisation on Trial*, p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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literary and artistic side, and I believed that the purest individualism was the best way of going about it. If I occasionally thought of some day making a contribution to society, I assumed that I would achieve that end by this process of self-development.

The fact which brought me up sharply was that this self-centred mode of life failed to give satisfaction. I became unhappy and restless—the common experience of people who, at the coming of manhood, are prompted to find some new relation between their hitherto sheltered lives and the claims of the wider world. And at this point in my career the wider world was at last breaking into my consciousness. The fabric of international relations, which had temporarily seemed secure, was evidently collapsing. The League of Nations was running into difficulties over Japan and Manchuria, and over disarmament; pacifist propaganda emphasised the possibility of another war. The hunger-marchers came down through Oxford bearing the message of the workless from the depressed areas. I felt goaded to see with my own eyes, to do something about it. History was there, and I had somehow to get into it.

Of the steps which I took in this direction no more need be said now. Enough that the adjustment in my thinking and in my attitude to life had to be fundamental. The harsh reality had overwhelmed me, that after all I was not living in a new and more highly civilised age in which war had gone to limbo with the relics of barbarism, but that war, economic misery, and the other evils were present or threatening. Like so many other Englishmen I often tried to fool myself during those years that this was not the case, that things were not really going from bad to worse, and that war was not just round the next corner; but in my heart there were deep forebodings which forced me to revise my whole philosophy of life.

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As I accepted living in history in the present, so the history of the past came to life for me. What is the meaning of this age, and what part must we play in it? These have been the questions constantly in the back of my mind; and my only justification for writing this book is that I believe I have lighted upon some of the answers.

Chapter One

Catastrophe and Civilisation

(a) *The meaning of catastrophe.*

OUR WORLD is on the edge of catastrophe. This is a fact which stares everyone in the face, however much we wish to conceal it. We probably think of the catastrophe in terms of atomic war, but there are other catastrophes which affect large numbers of people, in their way almost as disastrous as war—catastrophes such as revolution, the coming of a police régime, mass transportations; there are wars, famines and epidemics in Asia, and the shadow of slump and unemployment in Europe.

We have been born into a painful age, and we may regret that we have not been born into another. We are ever hoping that catastrophe will not come in our life-time, or at least that we will somehow escape it.

But if we have to live with catastrophe round the corner, we must come to some arrangement with it. If, acting through fear or with an eye to our personal security, we try to evade it, it will overtake us all the same; just as death, which is a kind of personal catastrophe, will overtake us one day, however much we look after our health and safety. To live with catastrophe we must face it, not try to evade it. Then we will find the purpose of catastrophe—to make us change. Catastrophe is a

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challenge to a superior way of living, and that is the spirit in which we must face it. With this spirit we shall achieve peace and happiness, even in the face of catastrophe. And that is what we all really want—peace and happiness in a changing, though catastrophic world.

(b) *The coming of civilisation.*

Catastrophe has been the challenge to change all down the ages. Catastrophic geological and climatic changes, during the half-million or so years of man's existence on this planet,¹ stimulated his mind and led him to discoveries whereby he increasingly gained control over the natural world. Such climatic changes were the three glacial epochs and the subsequent ages of rain and flooding. Men, suffering unaccustomed cold, or retreating before rising seas and lakes, had to adapt themselves to changing conditions. These rough interferences with an otherwise simple and static food-gathering life, forced men to develop new modes of hunting and living—living in caves, for instance, instead of in jungles. Though the changes of climate took place gradually over many thousands of years, they were catastrophic in their impact. Discoveries such as the use of fire were probably stimulated by them; also those

¹ There are wide variations in the estimates of anthropologists of the time man has been on this planet.

“A million years at least must be allowed for the career of mankind on the earth. It would probably be nearer the truth to say several millions.” (G. Elliot Smith: *Human History*, (Cape, 1930), p.72)

Compare the estimate of Grahame Clark (*From Savagery to Civilisation*, Cobbett Press, 1946), who places the origins of the first man-like creatures (“anthropians”) about 400,000 years ago and of those still nearer man (“hominians”) 180,000 years ago.

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changes, more difficult for the archaeologist to verify, in the realm of thought and religion.

The climatic changes following the last Ice Age stimulated the coming of civilisation.¹ The partial melting of the northern ice-cap led to the last rainy (pluvial) age, when vast areas, now desert, were fertile prairie, inhabited by game of every kind, where rivers ran well stocked with fish. Such in particular were the present-day deserts of North Africa, Western Asia, and the "Middle East". There men roamed in clans and families, as they had done for hundreds of thousands of years, following a simple life of gathering wild fruit, hunting and fishing.

The drying up of these areas, when the pluvial age ended and the rain belt moved further north, faced the clans who lived there with catastrophe—extinction through drought and famine. It was apparently in response to this challenge² that men descended into the jungle swamps of the river valleys, first the Nile, then the Tigris and Euphrates, later the Indus and the Yellow River, and experimented in an agricultural way of life which was to become the basis of civilisation.

Civilisation gradually expanded from those first growing points in the Nile Valley, Mesopotamia and elsewhere, until now it has become the normal, generally accepted type of society throughout the world. But today it is threatened with extinction by the catastrophe of atomic war. And even if this great calamity does not befall mankind, other catastrophes await us, mass destruction, mass death, and for many an equal tragedy, the stifling of freedom and the dehumanising of life under the iron rule of the police state.

¹ See Appendix A.

² See Professor A. J. Toynbee's theory of Challenge and Response in *A Study of History*, IV, 33, 34, and *passim*.

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The threat of catastrophe today points to the need of change, just as it has done all down the ages. But what kind of change? And how?

There have been many occasions in history when civilisations have suffered catastrophe. All those which history has known—Egypt, Sumeria, Ancient China, Greece and Rome and many others, have been torn apart by wars and class-wars, have weighed themselves down by powerful bureaucratic organisations and costly defence forces, and have in time tottered to decline and collapse. What is different in our case is that the fate not merely of one civilisation—"the West"—is at stake, but that of civilisation the world over. Rapid communications, mass productive industry and the world market have created one world. The collapse of Western Civilisation would only be part of a collapse of civilised living everywhere.

To overcome this crisis a change as far-reaching is needed as that which led on from savagery to civilisation six thousand years ago. The alternative to mass destruction or the police-state is some new order of society—let us call it "super-civilisation"—as different from civilisation as civilisation is from primitive tribalism.

(c) *Ideological change and the coming of civilisation.*

The change which brought in civilisation was as much one of ideas as of a way of life.

The ideas by which men live take shape in religions, or—as we now often call them—ideologies.¹

The ideas of the savage took shape in a type of religion

¹ See Appendix B.

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which still exists among the Australian aborigines and others, that of totemism. A spiritual force is conceived as pervading all things—the natural world, the heavenly bodies, and man himself. A particular clan has a special share in the divine essence along with some other animal or plant or natural object, which represents the totem. Because the same manifestation of the divine essence is shared jointly by clan and totem, the totem is sacred to the clan—its own totem but not another's. In this religion man and nature are intimately linked together, by virtue of the common participation of clansmen in the spiritual essence which is shared by some other part of the natural world. The entire mode of life of the savage is dictated by these beliefs.

These religious ideas played a major part in bringing about the change-over to civilisation. In the words of a well-known French anthropologist, "religion is like the womb from which come all the germs of human civilisation . . . The most diverse practices, both those that make possible the continuation of the moral life (law, morals, fine arts), and those serving the material life (the natural, technical and practical sciences), are directly or indirectly derived from religion".¹ It has been suggested that the domestication of animals evolved out of certain cult practices; so also the practice of agriculture.²

However these revolutionary economic changes occurred, they were connected with a new type of religion, which was part of the new social order. The new type of religion was represented by fertility cults, based on myths of the dying and rising god, and the new type of society which went with it was

¹ Emile Durkheim: *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, tr. J. W. Swain (Allen & Unwin, 1926), p. 223.

² See Christopher Dawson: *Progress and Religion* (Sheed & Ward), p. 106.

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represented by temple-states—an order of society organised for service of the god, the embryo from which grew those larger civilised societies of the kind we live in today. Such were the temple-states of Egypt and Mesopotamia, the early stage of civilisation.

The conclusion is clear: a change in ideology accompanied the change to a new order of society with a new economic basis. “Only a *belief* . . . could overcome the immense difficulty which men felt in giving up old habits and small liberties for the restrictions and discipline of a more highly-organised life; a belief, we may add, not destitute of reason, but based on the actual necessities of life.”¹

If a further change in human society is now destined to take place, it would seem that it too will only happen through some generally accepted belief or ideology; that the next step for humanity will be fundamentally an ideological change—a change in the realm of ideas accompanied by a change in the entire mode of living.

(d) *The rise and fall of civilisations.*

The crisis of 6,000 years ago bore fruit in a new type of society, which solved men's immediate problems. The particular crisis which had prompted these revolutionary changes was overcome, but other crises were destined to follow.

Western Civilisation, so imposing in its technical development, is no more immune than any other from crisis and catastrophe. Each civilisation continues to grow as long as it meets positively every fresh challenge. But in the history of every previous civilisation there has always come a point where crisis is not surmounted; and at this point a civilisation

¹ W. Ward Fowler: *The City-State of the Greeks and Romans* (Macmillan, 1893), p.46.

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enters on the path of decline. Some historians believe that the West has now reached this point, and that it is inevitably set on the downward path.

This view was plausibly expounded by Oswald Spengler in his monumental *Decline of the West*. He demonstrated that all known civilisations—Ancient Egyptian, Chinese, Greco-Roman, and several others—had passed through parallel phases of growth, zenith and decline, ending in most cases with extinction. Writing during World War I, he forecast the coming of the dictators or “Caesars” as a symptom that the West too had passed its zenith, and was entering on the period of imperialism, the first well-marked phase of its decline. When shortly Mussolini and then Hitler appeared, his view was deemed by many to be correct (though Spengler himself later modified his views about “decline” to suit the Nazi doctrines with which he compromised).

Since he wrote, other historians, notably Professor A. J. Toynbee, have criticised parts of Spengler's thinking and elaborated others. Spengler's pessimism is an affront to minds nourished on conceptions of progress and evolution which have long been dominant in the West. In viewing history as a succession of civilisations, each following the same cycle of growth, zenith, decline and fall, he leaves no room for any further development beyond civilisation, which is, for him, the final form of human society.

We can assume that Spengler was right in his statement of the symptoms which indicate a civilisation's decline. But the question which profoundly concerns us is whether our civilisation is necessarily bound by iron laws of fate to follow the well-beaten path of decline to the last tragic stage of collapse.

Chapter Two

Unity and Division in Society

(a) *Division between spiritual and secular.*

EACH TYPE of society, in its early stages, appears as a simple, closely-knit organism. As it develops it becomes more complex. Division of labour and differentiation of function tend to class-division and cleavage. These divisions in the society are accompanied by conflicts in the realm of ideas. Social and ideological conflicts, growing ever more bitter, undermine the civilisation, until it eventually collapses through exhaustion. No civilisation has yet found a uniting factor to enable it to maintain its vigour unimpaired.

In the most primitive type of society there is little division of function, apart from that dictated by the difference of sex, for the unit of society, the clan, is small, constituting an enlarged family group. So, too, in the realm of religion: the same man combines the offices of ruler and priest (the shaman or witch-doctor). There is in fact no division between the religious rites and the economic activities—hunting and food-gathering—which go with them. The life of the individual and society (the clan) is integral, and equally integral is the every day, economic life and the life of religion—worship and ceremonial. Religion and everyday life are inextricably mingled together; the tribesman's social life and its economic basis cannot be thought of apart from his religious beliefs.

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With the coming of civilisation, differentiation rapidly developed, in the economy (as between farmers and craftsmen), administratively (as between rulers and ruled). But in the realm of ideas differentiation came much more slowly.

The same is true of later civilisations, of Greece as of Western Europe. In their early stages they were comparatively simple societies, with a minimum division of function, and without division between the spiritual and secular sides of life. The increased security which civilised life gave against death through starvation or from wild animals resulted in a gradual increase of population. Population pressure—the recurrent “Malthusian”¹ crisis—was the challenge which prompted ever more changes on the economic and social plane; more intensive agriculture, more division of labour and the growth of craft industry, the development of trade, the foundation of colonies. But it also prompted wars of gain and expansion, and led to the sharpening of class-divisions between the well-off few and those who were unprivileged, or were below the poverty-line. As these divisions became more acute, class wars and revolutions took place.

The attempt to overcome the Malthusian problem has always led, not only to the elaboration of civilisation, but also to the growth in the power of states and to their expansion.

¹ Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) was successively Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, a country parson, and Professor of Political Economy at the East India Company's College at Haileybury. His *Essay on Population* (1798) attracted much attention, in stating what Malthus held to be an inevitable tendency for population—and indeed all organic life—to multiply to such an extent as to outstrip the resources on which it exists. This book inspired Darwin in the development of his theory of natural selection in the conditions of “the struggle for existence”.

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In the process "the big fish swallow the small";¹ large states or empires result, which eventually sink under their own weight and collapse.

The strains and crises which this pattern involves give rise to a progressive upheaval in ideas. When a civilisation has grown from its primitive agrarian beginnings to a more advanced urban phase, the generally accepted ideology is called in question—the ideology with which the civilisation came to birth, generally a religion whose myths centre in the fertility myth of the dying and rising god. The shattering of the original agrarian structure leads to a breakdown of faith in the ideas hitherto unquestioningly accepted, with which the social order is inextricably linked. An age of criticism begins, an age of "enlightenment", in which old ideas, along with the old social order, are "de-bunked".

This self-criticism within a society seems a necessary phase in the further development of ideas. Such ages are fertile in new beliefs and religions.

One feature of these "ages of enlightenment" is the divorce which begins between religion and everyday life. Hitherto society has been integral, religious and secular life mingled together, and with no clear distinction between church and state. But at a certain point the old religious sanctions and incentives cease to operate effectively. Society becomes secularised, in fact if not in theory, while religion becomes a thing apart, a matter of private conviction and an activity of individuals and groups. The old form of religion may continue to exist as the official religion of the state, providing the rites for its ceremonies—but few people believe

¹ Mohammed Aly, Pasha of Egypt (1805-49), to the Swiss traveller J. L. Burckhardt.

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in it with the fervour which the new religions and philosophies awaken in their adherents.

The old religion persists in the countryside and in remote districts, where the new phase of urban society has not become dominant. The old ruling class, too, often clings to it, for in common with other conservative elements in the population, it remains opposed to the new order and its accompanying ideas.

(b) *Division between "spirit" and "law"*.

The modes of thought which are typical of an "age of enlightenment" are two-fold. There is the critical free-thinking trend, which not only tries to explain the universe and its mystery, but tries to explain the mystery away, substituting rationalist philosophies for religion. The other mode of thought is also critical of the old order and its religious system, but instead of spurning religion altogether attempts to return to its true basis.

This tendency may be termed mystical or inspirational. People, dissatisfied with the old type of religion, try to penetrate to the source of spiritual things. They seek union with God, the well-spring of inspiration.

Every religion, however inspired in origin, tends to become crystallised after a time in forms, rites, observances and moral codes. This tendency develops as the group of spiritual pioneers which has originated it, or their successors takes shape as an institution.

Moses explained his mystical experience on Mount Sinai to those who could understand and appropriate the spiritual force of which he had become the channel. These were "Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation" (Exodus, 34, 31)—but to the others, the "children of Israel" as a whole,

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“ he gave in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him ” (v. 32). These commandments, written on the tablets of stone, formed the “ Law ” which the people had to obey, even if they failed to find the “ spirit ” which had inspired Moses himself.

Moses and those near him were the “ creative minority ”¹ who initiated a new phase in the Hebrew religion. So in all such movements, the Master and his immediate disciples are surrounded by many seekers of whom Jesus quoted the words of Isaiah—“ seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand ” (Mark, 4, 12).

For this wider circle, that which is spirit tends to be adapted as law, that which is attraction and spontaneity for the few becomes obligation and duty for the many. That which has no need to be written for the few because it is a “ law in their inward parts ” has to be written for the many and drawn up in regulations. Even apart from the written law, a wide variety of new customs, habits and rituals begins to operate with the force of law.

For the few the new impulse has the mark of first-hand spiritual experience; the wider circle of followers only attain a truly spiritual experience spasmodically, if at all. In an attempt at imitation they accept formulae and rituals which serve to crystallise² the spiritual experience.

A religion which has become so crystallised into codes of behaviour, rigid dogma and formalised cults may obscure the

¹ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, IV, 5, 6, etc.

² “ We represent religion . . . as the crystallization . . . of what mysticism had poured, while hot, into the soul of man.” Henri Bergson : *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Eng. trans.) p.203.

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dynamic element of inspiration. It may be followed because custom dictates it, or because of a sense of duty. Convention and obligation take the place of seeking and aspiration. "That which is aspiration tends to materialise by assuming the form of strict obligation."¹

Against the conventionalised form of religion the critics turn their shafts. But while the rationalist critics seek to discredit the religion (or religion in general) altogether, the "spiritual" critics try to probe down to its true mystical or inspired basis.

Critics of both schools have been at work in the West² for several centuries. The outcome is a period of intense ideological ferment. We can throw light on this aspect of our own era by comparing it with a somewhat similar period in the civilisation of Ancient Greece.

(c) *Division in Greek civilisation.*

In early Greek civilisation division of function was limited, and the distinction between spiritual and secular did not exist. The Greek city was as much a church as a state. Religion was closely linked with everyday life and penetrated it at every point: the "good life" for which the

¹ Bergson, *op. cit.*, 42, 45. The following quotation helps to explain his key idea:—

"Morality comprises two different parts . . . In the former, obligation stands for the pressure exerted by the elements of society on one another, in order to maintain the shape of the whole . . . In the second there is still obligation, if you will, but that obligation is the force of an aspiration or an impetus . . . Between the first morality and the second lies the whole distance between repose and movement."

² And since a somewhat later date, in Russia.

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state existed was a spiritual conception. All the festivals of the state were religious festivals, such as the annual dramatic performances in the state theatre.

The cultural and political achievements of this phase of Greek history, notably the type of democracy developed at Athens, have been a perennial inspiration for the West. But from the latter part of the 5th century B.C. the Greek world began to decline.

The city-state had ceased to be self-sufficient. The Greek world had become interdependent economically and culturally—to some extent dependent (notably in matters of trade) even on lands outside Greece and its colonies, such as the Persian Empire and Egypt.

Athens, the most successful of the city-states, itself pioneered the development which made the city-state obsolete. By the 6th century B.C. Athens was no longer economically self-sufficient—she could not grow enough food to support her increasing population. Like 19th century Britain, Athens came to depend on commerce to bring in the necessities of life which could not be produced at home. Again, like 19th century Britain in relation to the rest of the world, Athens in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. became the commercial and financial centre of the “world” of the East Mediterranean. To a greater or less extent all other states and countries in that area became dependent on one another. Just as, under Britain’s lead, the world of the 19th century was becoming economically interdependent, so the East Mediterranean “world” of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. was becoming economically interdependent under the lead of Athens.

In both cases this economic interdependence, though reflected in a growing diffusion of Greek culture, was not reflected in *political* interdependence. Both the world of the

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19th and 20th centuries A.D. and the Greek "world" of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. remained cut up into states: divisions which no longer accorded with the "one world" which economic enterprise and cultural penetration had brought into being. Though in both cases an expanding civilisation had so clearly become the sole self-sufficient unit of society, the city-states in the Greek world, like the nation-states in our own, found it impossible to transform themselves in accordance with this fact.

The same lesson was equally evident from the *internal* condition of the city-states as well as from their external relations. The succession of wars and attendant economic collapse had stimulated the class-war (known to the Greeks as *stasis*), which raged fiercely in Athens and other cities. Reforms and revolutions became simply manoeuvres either for the "have-nots" through so-called democratic régimes to mulct the rich and establish a class-tyranny, or for the "haves" (or former "haves") to stage *coup d'états* to maintain their power for amassing wealth. In the process the "middle class", those of moderate wealth and liberal though non-extremist views, were virtually squeezed out of existence by high taxation and by extreme political programmes of "right" or "left."

As in our modern age the whole conception of the state was becoming debased: it "came to be regarded more and more as an institution of maintenance, whose chief task was to assure the citizen of as easy and comfortable a life as possible and to organize for him many magnificent festivals."¹

The city-state was clearly not fulfilling the rôle of making

¹ U. Wilcken—*Alexander the Great*, trans. G. C. Richards (Chatto and Windus, 1932), p.124.

possible "the good life". Its limits had become too narrow. The very conception of citizenship began to change. Socrates (469—399 B.C.) spoke of duties and virtues which he must live up to even if they conflicted with those prescribed by the authorities of the state: some of his followers claimed to be "citizens of the world" and later philosophers developed the idea. Some thinkers took their stand on a basis of extreme individualism: as self-sufficient individuals they had no need of the aids to perfection afforded by the state—their community was no longer the state but the brotherhood of all mankind.

As a self-sufficient organisation for fulfilling men's economic and spiritual needs the state became less and less adequate. Thinking people voiced their dissatisfaction, criticising not only the state, but the religion with which it was associated. The "Age of Reason" had begun. The gods and goddesses, who behaved in the myths too much like ordinary mortals, could no longer claim men's belief. Those thinkers who were spiritually inclined, like Socrates, sought for reality behind the old religious forms. Others, the agnostics and rationalists, were inclined to reject them altogether.

At this stage the thinking few could find satisfaction in philosophy. The "sophists" or wisdom-purveyors set them on the road: Cynics, Stoics and Epicureans led them along it. These philosophies were in many respects of a high moral order, and could serve as religions for those who believed in them.

But less educated or intellectual folk could not breathe the rarified atmosphere of these high philosophies. As scepticism about the old religion and way of life spread downwards from the thinking minority, the masses were increasingly faced with moral insecurity and despair.

The alternative to hopelessness was for them—as for the

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“ spiritual ” school of thoughtful critics—to turn to the mystical, inspirational side of religion. This they sought in Orphism or other of the mystery cults of the day, forming groups of initiates around the prophets or teachers who held the secret of the mysteries. These religious societies were the predecessors in the Classical world of those groups or churches which the adherents of the most vitally spiritual religion of all, Christianity, were later to form.¹

(d) *Plato's views on division and integration.*

Christianity was eventually to supply a point of integration for men and for society, but not in time to prevent the collapse of the civilisation in which it grew up.

Division in the individual was described by Plato (428—347 B.C.) from his observation of Greek society in his day. He would have agreed with St. Paul that “ the love of money is the root of all evil ”, for money-making, in his view, stimulates the evil desires in a man, while controlling them to some extent in those cases “ where his reputation depends on his preserving the appearance of justice . . . Such a man would not be without discord in himself; he would be not one man but two . . . He would be more respectable than many men, but the true virtue of a simple and harmonious soul would be far beyond him.”²

As is the man, so is the state in which he lives: it is divided against itself. “ Just as a sickly body needs to receive only a small shock from without to make it actually ill, and some-

¹ For this entire evolution see Professor Gilbert Murray's *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (Watts, 1935).

² Plato: *The Republic*. Book viii. 554. (Everyman Edition),
tr. A. D. Lindsay, p. 250.

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times is at strife with itself even without external impulsion, even so does the city, which is in like condition, fall ill and make war on itself on the slightest excuse.”¹ “Such a city must of necessity be not one but two—the city of the rich and the city of the poor dwelling within the same walls, and always conspiring against one another.”²

The outcome of this condition is democracy. For democracy had no prestige in Plato’s eyes: it came about through a process of degeneration, and as a type of government was only one degree less pernicious than despotism. “A democracy . . . comes into being when the poor have gained the day. Some of the opposite party they kill, some they banish, with the rest they share citizenship and office on equal terms.”³

Plato was brought up during the long war between Athens and Sparta (431—404 B.C.) which marked the beginning of the Greek decline. A member of an aristocratic family, he was disgusted with the lack of consistency and principle in Athenian democracy, and even more disgusted with the tyrannous regime which temporarily took its place at the end of the war. He turned aside from an active political life in an attempt to discover and propound the true principles on which the organised life of society should be based.

His writings, as Sir Richard Livingstone says, have a special message for us, as they were the outcome of circumstances so similar to our own. “The crisis which Plato had to face was much more than political . . . It was the crisis of a civilisation, whose traditional beliefs had been destroyed by scientific thought, and whose fabric had been still further

1	Ibid.	Book VIII.	556.	p.253	(Everyman)	
2	”	”	”	551.	p.247	”
3	”	”	”	557.	p.263	”

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shattered by a great war. . . . It was an age of spiritual confusion and unrest."¹

About the mass of ordinary people Plato was pessimistic. He did not believe they could be regenerated. The best that could be done was to choose those who were capable of living the highest quality of life, give them a special training from childhood, and set them, as an ascetic fraternity, over the affairs of state. This ruling *élite* could construct and maintain a state that would keep the body social healthy and provide the best possible life of which its citizens were capable.

The system, as Plato outlines it, is totalitarian, reminding us of Soviet government, even extending as far as thought-control through censorship and propaganda. But he turns to mysticism and inspiration as the principle which should direct his ruling group. "We must obey the immortal element in ourselves, both in private and public life, and regulate our states and homes by it."² Those who do this are the true philosophers, alone worthy to rule over the state. They seek the vision of Reality (illustrated by Plato's famous parable of the cave), "a world . . . where doing or suffering injustice is unknown and all is governed by order and reason . . . The philosopher, associating with what is divine and ordered, becomes ordered and divine as far as mortal may." He is then able "to realise in individual and city his heavenly vision."³ It is the vision of a city "laid up in heaven as a pattern for him who wills to see, and seeing, to found a city in himself."⁴

¹ Sir Richard Livingstone: *Selections from Plato* (Oxford, 1940). From the Introduction, xii.

² Plato: *Laws*, 713 f. (Tr. Livingstone, op. cit) p.114.

³ Plato: *Republic*, Book vi. 500 (Everyman, 193).

⁴ *Ibid*: Book ix. 592 (Everyman, 295).

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The man who lives in the light of this vision is an integrated man, for responsive to this vision he performs those "noble actions . . . which put the wild-beast parts of the soul under the control of . . . the divine element."¹ As the man with a divided soul has his counterpart in the divided city, so a man whom the divine element has integrated can build a state that is at peace within itself.

¹ *Ibid*: Book ix. 589 (Everyman, 292).

Chapter Three

The Progress of Ideas

(a) *The effect of crises in civilisation on the progress of ideas.*

THE CRISES and catastrophes connected with the rise and fall of civilisations result in a gradual change in ideas.

The major crises which have occurred in the history of civilisations have followed a certain pattern. This is not to say that history has just been repeating itself. The symptoms of the crises—economic distress, the power-drive of greedy men and nations, fear and insecurity, war and class-war, revolution and destitution—have been much the same down the ages. Yet each crisis has not been quite the same as any previous one, and each crisis or catastrophe has had a special lesson for mankind—lessons which have sometimes been learnt, sometimes ignored, and sometimes forgotten. But, in so far as through history we have a kind of collective memory or experience, mankind has learnt something as a result of these crises. Our experience has been added to, and our ideas enriched and developed.

It is on this level, rather than on that of technique, that progress can be said to have occurred. For our technical advance itself is dependent on the progress of our knowledge and ideas. “The breakdown and disintegration of civilisations might be stepping-stones to higher things on the religious

plane . . . If religion is a chariot, it looks as if the wheels on which it mounts towards Heaven may be the periodic downfalls of civilisations on Earth. It looks as if the movement of civilisation may be cyclic and recurrent, while the movement of religion may be on a single, continuous upward line."¹

The great crises which led to the coming of the higher religions were provoked by economic expansion and imperialism. Since Christianity is still the dominant religion of the West, those crises are particularly significant for us which led to the coming of Christianity.

(b) *The development of Judaism and Christianity.*

Christianity grew out of the religion of the Hebrews, a religion which was forged between the hammer and anvil of clashing empires. The catastrophes which stimulated the religious development of the Hebrews were aggravated by the clash of civilisations: for Egypt, the mighty empire of the south, represented a different civilisation from that of Babylon and the other empires of the north. Later in Jewish history a third civilisation, represented by another empire, also intruded into their living-space—the empire of Alexander the Great, which spread Greek civilisation, and left as a legacy the Hellenistic kingdoms of the Near East.

Originally the Hebrews were a nomadic people, unbroken to civilisation properly speaking. They wandered with their flocks and herds among the sparse pastures of the desert and its more fertile fringe. When they enter history they are in that stage of barbarism which comes between the primitive food-gathering existence and the settled civilised life in

¹ A. J. Toynbee: *Civilisation on Trial* (Oxford University Press, 1948), 235.

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villages and towns. They are at the stage of those who have domesticated animals, but have not yet undertaken the life of agriculture.

This nomadic, pastoral life is accompanied by its own ideology. Being unconnected with agriculture, its religious ideas are not those of fertility rites, the dying and the rising god. The seasonal death and rebirth of vegetation strikes the imagination less in the desert than it does in the cornfields. In the desert the boundless space suggests one majestic transcendent deity: the desert is the home of monotheism, the worship of the One God.

After their escape from Egyptian territory and their wanderings in the region of Sinai, the Hebrew clans began to settle in Palestine, ousting the inhabitants (the Canaanites) from lands which they were cultivating. It was here that they took over agriculture as their principal livelihood; in so doing—and through imitation of the conquered Canaanites and their neighbours—they were attracted by the fertility cults or Baal-worship. The clash of these two types of religion parallels the clash of two peoples at different stages of social development; in the case of the Jews, these conflicts led to a purifying of their old religion, a work in which the Prophets, with their denunciations of the idolatry of the Baalim, played the leading part. The monotheistic trend may have been strengthened by ideological currents from the civilisations both north and south: the Zoroastrianism of the Persians and the short-lived Egyptian "heresy" of Ikhnaton.

Their religion developed not merely, however, by conflict with alien streams of ideas, or by enrichment from them. The challenge of catastrophe was an even more potent stimulus—the catastrophes of invasion, rebellion and deportation, which took place as a result of a series of imperialistic wars

(with the added intensity of being wars between civilisations), in which the Jews were unwillingly mixed up. They were obliged to find some explanation for the sufferings which overtook them, some reason why peace and prosperity were not their lot. Deprived in this world even of their state, an elementary human right which all other peoples possessed, some of them began to aspire to a state and a peace which were not of this world.

Their greatest prophets became conscious of the purpose for which their nation suffered. The glimpse which the Second Isaiah had of this in the 53rd chapter ("The Suffering Servant") makes an epoch not only for the Jews, but for the consciousness of mankind. Peace and prosperity are not automatically the rewards of righteousness, Isaiah saw; suffering and catastrophe are the means whereby a people is trained to be God's servant, to do His work in the world. The Book of Isaiah gives the answer to the problem which the Book of Job had posed. The righteous man suffers because it is the will of God, and He knows what is best: this conclusion was sufficient for Job. Isaiah went further: suffering is necessary for the righteous man, because only so can he be purified to fulfil the higher task which God has in store for him. And as God purifies the man, so also He purifies the nation.

With this consciousness was born a new philosophy of history. God had a plan for mankind, which unrolled in spite of catastrophe and suffering; which indeed in this world could only unroll *as a result* of catastrophe and suffering. Through Isaiah, Hosea and other prophets the Jews began to see God not merely as an awe-inspiring, terrifying Being Whose anger was always liable to blaze forth, and Who could scarcely be approached, but as a loving God, a Father Who loved and cherished His people Israel. Loving them, He trained them

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through suffering and catastrophe to fulfil a mighty destiny for humanity, to bring to all mankind a knowledge of Him as the waters cover the sea.

A further idea grew too, during this post-Davidic period when the Jews had their kingdom divided and occupied, when they suffered mass deportation and were invaded many times by different empires: the idea that peace and well-being were not inseparably connected with a given political and social order such as had been represented by the kingdom of David—that the perfect condition of peace and well-being for which they yearned was rather a *spiritual* condition independent of the material circumstances in which they found themselves at any time. The kingdom of the promise which God had made to them was not of this world: yet it was a real kingdom, to be ushered in by a great event, the coming of God's Messiah, His Son and the Saviour of His people.

This spiritual interpretation of their destiny was held by some—perhaps only a small minority—of the Jews, at the time of the birth of Christ. From the moment of His baptism in Jordan, Jesus (according to St. Mark) believed Himself to be the Messiah, with the task of ushering in the Kingdom of God, that new spiritual order of peace and well-being in which the Jews first, and through them all mankind, were called upon to share. He addressed Himself to that small minority, “the faithful remnant of Israel”, who earnestly awaited the coming of the Kingdom. So Jesus proclaimed, “The Kingdom of God is among you”, but it was only to a few, His intimate followers, that He expounded the inner meaning of His message. Even they did not fully understand until the great Event of the passion—Christ's rejection, Crucifixion and Resurrection—brought home to them the significance of the spiritual order which He had initiated. Then they realised

not only that Jesus was the revelation of God in man, but that He represented Israel as God's Suffering Servant in bringing God's message to mankind.

(c) *A new stage of consciousness for mankind.*

Suffering and catastrophe had prepared the Jews for this enormous advance in consciousness, in ideas. Suffering and catastrophe had similarly prepared the peoples of the Greco-Roman world for accepting the great truths which had been revealed to "the faithful remnant" of the Jews. Through St. Paul and other Apostles the new revelation spread to the Gentiles of the Empire and beyond; for people were broken by calamity and disillusioned by the meagre results of legislation and political striving in an age of high civilisation and material progress. They were hungry for truth about the spiritual realm which the life and passion of Christ had revealed.

But, as in the case of the Jews, so also among the Gentiles, only a few were to be found who fully grasped the significance of the great revelation. The core of Christ's message was that the Kingdom of God had come, and that His death and resurrection had ushered it in as a new order for mankind here and now. The vast majority of the Jews had rejected Jesus, supposing that the Messiah would however one day come. Among the Gentiles, those who accepted Christianity still placed their hopes and the hopes of humanity in some future event, usually thought of as Christ's Second Coming, when a new world order would really be established. And indeed the interpretation by the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus' teaching of the "last days" and "the Day of the Lord" or of Judgement, was in terms of some imminent Event. It was only when no catastrophic ending of the world took place in the years immediately following the Crucifixion that

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Christians began to grasp that the Kingdom of God was of the here and now, *while also belonging to the realm of Eternity*. It was a Kingdom in men's hearts which found expression in the way they lived together in this world; but it was a Kingdom which belonged to another dimension, beyond that of space and time, and one in which shared not only living men but the souls of all the righteous down the ages, besides those of generations yet unborn.

This truth came home only to a few. Christians have in general viewed the Kingdom of God either as a state of blessedness into which one enters in the after-life, or as a perfect politico-social order, a Utopia, which at some future date is to be established upon earth. Since Christ's ministry and passion, a new era has however been inaugurated, during which this higher consciousness of God's Kingdom on earth has been slowly gaining ground; the next era will be ushered in when it gains the general acceptance of mankind. This does not mean that in this forthcoming era everybody will succeed in living as a perfect citizen of "the Kingdom"; simply that to have it as a part of one's "ideology" and to try to live it out will be normal for people everywhere.

The main progress, in fact, during the era in which we are still living, inaugurated by Christ's life on earth, has been in the realm of ideas. It has lain in the growth of a higher consciousness among mankind. The astonishing *technical* progress which has been a by-product of this consciousness should not blind us to this vital fact. Similarly the next big advance of mankind must be ideological; progress to the point where this higher consciousness will be normal for mankind as a whole.

The significance of the present crisis in history, of the series of catastrophes which have come upon us and of those

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that still threaten, is that they may usher in this next stage of consciousness for mankind. Just as primitive man was prepared by catastrophe for the change to the higher consciousness which accompanied the coming of civilisation, just as the peoples of the ancient world were prepared for a further stage in consciousness, the beginning of the Christian era, by the catastrophes which *they* suffered, so we are being prepared for the next great forward move of humanity, the general acceptance by mankind of the truths which were proclaimed by the life and passion of Christ.¹

(d) The coming of a new world-ideology.

We have seen that every social order is accompanied by a particular ideology. This fact may also be expressed conversely: every ideology is accompanied by a particular social order.

The ideology which arose in the place of the primitive totemic religion was accompanied by the birth of the social order of civilisation. So also the message of the Kingdom which Christ both proclaimed and lived was accompanied by the birth of a new social order amongst His followers, which we may call "inspired democracy". Wherever two or three—or more—have grasped this message and lived accordingly, "inspired democracy" has come into being. We may therefore suggest that the social order of the next era of world history, when this message has been generally accepted, will be "inspired democracy" as the *normal* type of social order for mankind.

In the present era in which we live, which is one of transition from civilisation to "super-civilisation", a kind

¹ See Appendix C.

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of transitional order has come into being. It is an order which is a modification of civilisation as the pre-Christian or Asiatic civilisations knew it: civilisation modified in so far as the higher consciousness which the Christian message propagates has been partially accepted.

Another way of looking at the same evolution is expressed by Nicolas Berdyaev when he speaks of the growth of a certain "structure of soul".¹ Only a comparatively few Christians in each generation, among them notably the saints, may fully have grasped and lived the fundamental truth of the Christian revelation. Yet the influence of this whole-hearted minority down the ages on the mass of more or less nominal Christians around them has been to turn them in a more spiritual direction, to leaven them with their own outlook and ideas. This great educational work of the Church has never ceased during the last 1900 years, and its effect has been to develop first throughout Christendom, (i.e. the Catholic West² and Orthodox East),

¹ I may be fathering this phrase incorrectly on M. Berdyaev. In his *The Origin of Russian Communism* (Bles, 1937), he makes the point as follows (p. 206): "The best type of communist, that is to say the man who is completely in the grip of the service of an idea and capable of enormous sacrifices and disinterested enthusiasm, is a possibility only as the result of the Christian training of the human spirit, of the remaking of the natural man by the Christian spirit. The result of this Christian influence upon the human spirit, frequently hidden and unperceived, remains even when the people consciously refuse Christianity, and even become its foe".

² The phrase "Catholic West" is used to indicate Western Christendom in general, in contrast to Eastern Christendom; since, in spite of its modern divisions into "Roman" Catholic and Protestant (in the form of various churches and sects) Western Christianity still has certain characteristics which broadly differentiate it from Eastern Christianity.

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and eventually throughout the world, a mentality which reflected the Christian consciousness in the highest sense. It bred into people a certain "structure of soul", a certain mentality, which has modified human nature so far as it has gone. It has not radically transformed human nature, but in so far as men's consciousness has been influenced, their nature has begun to change.

It is true that man's *natural* endowment seems to have stayed the same since he emerged from primitive savagery.¹ His brain has not notably developed, and his basic instincts have remained the same. We have the same fund of natural goodness and the same tendency towards natural wickedness as our remote ancestors probably had. In this sense human nature may remain the same until the end of time. Where however it has changed, and where it may change still more, is in what we may term man's psychological superstructure: in his aspirations, ethics, moral standards, attitudes, beliefs, all of which are reflected, consciously or unconsciously, in his conduct and social life. It is in this sense that the training in habits and the instilling of ideas change each human being in each generation: in our civilisation men are so changed into "civilised men" with a partially Christian outlook and mode of conduct. In general they have a personal and "social" conscience; they have certain standards of truthfulness and behaviour (not always applied, it is true !), as in relations

¹ "If civilisation has profoundly modified man, it is by accumulating in his social surroundings, as in a reservoir, the habits and knowledge which society pours into the individual at each new generation. Scratch the surface, abolish everything we owe to an education which is perpetual and unceasing, and you find in the depth of our nature primitive humanity, or something very near it." (Bergson, *op. cit.*, 105).

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between men and women, and they have certain more or less unquestioned beliefs, such as the belief in progress towards a better order of society—a reflection of the Jewish-Christian belief in the Kingdom of God. It is this outlook, which is generally taken for granted, together with a certain mode of life and standards of behaviour, which constitute the mentality of Western man, as of those within the realm of Eastern Orthodox Civilisation and of all whom Christianity has influenced.

In those who have grasped the Christian message in its fulness a further change has taken place, a change brought about through the inflowing of "grace" or "spirit". It is the change described by St. Paul as the death of "the old Adam", prone to the sin which comes from selfish and animal tendencies, and the birth of "the new man in Christ".

A complete change in human nature and a complete change in human society will not take place until this spiritual and ideological change has become general. This will only happen "when the whole of society has come to consist of individuals of the new species which is represented by the Saints, alone in human history up to date . . . But the Saints who have appeared in the world so far have only been able to transfigure human nature in their own personalities and in those of the rare kindred souls who have risen to Sainthood through communion with the Saints by catching the divine fire. The Saints have not been able to evoke the creative change from Primitive Humanity to Sainthood in Mankind at large".¹

Nevertheless they have brought about a change, or at least a modification, in men's "structure of soul" in the Christian world. This change has been reflected in the type of

¹ A. J. Toynbee: *Study of History*, III, 372.

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civilisation which has developed in the West, more dynamic and more elaborate than anything that has gone before.

The present crisis of civilisation can only be understood in the light of the struggle which has been going on for nearly 2000 years, between the Christian type of consciousness and that inherited from paganism; between human nature as modified by paganism and human nature as modified by Christianity; and between the type of society which we know as civilisation and that created by the saints which we may call inspired democracy. The long-drawn struggle has produced a transitional type of consciousness, neither pagan nor fully Christian, a transitional human nature and a transitional type of society. The present crisis ushers in the next stage in the evolution of a more nearly Christian structure of soul, and with it, of a society which will follow more closely the pattern of inspired democracy.

Chapter Four

The Coming of Inspired Democracy

(a) *Inspired democracy and institutionalism in the Early Church.*

“INSPIRED DEMOCRACY” is the name we apply to the type of society which grew up around Jesus, and which remained and developed after His Crucifixion. Its nature was described by Jesus in His last words to His disciples before His arrest, as recorded, or interpreted by St. John.

Though in this world, it was “not of this world”: it was based on other principles than those which governed the “worldly” (or “secular”) society of the Roman Empire within which it grew up. Its members were not to live merely according to man-made customs or traditions: nor were they to be satisfied in living according to such “laws” as were generally accepted by the community, and which could be enforced by the secular society’s resort to physical power. While fulfilling the essential demands of these laws they were to live according to a higher “law”, the “law” of love. Living according to the law of love meant living according to the Spirit of God, through Whom they might be united—“that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us” (John 17, 21). In this community God would “guide them into all truth” and

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“show them things to come” (John 16, 13); they would “love one another”; and they would be God’s agents in “bringing forth much fruit” (John, 15, 5).

God’s Spirit is presented here as giving unity, direction and the power of growth to the community which Jesus founded. It differed from a political community in that it did not rely on force as the ultimate means of securing unity; also in that its leaders were to be the servants of the other members, not their rulers¹. It was not democratic, in the sense that Athens had been a democracy where there was not one ruler or a privileged group in power, but where the citizens as a whole took part in government. In the early stages of its history the problem of government hardly presented itself to the infant community which Jesus left on earth; when it was a question of reaching a decision which involved the whole community the direction of the Spirit was sought.² But it was assumed that every member of the community could and should seek this inspiration, that they all should “walk in the light” (I John, 1, 7). It was understood also that every member of the community was, as a soul before God, of equal worth: that the master was not above his servant, that in this sense there was no distinction between slave and free.

This is a far cry from the Athenian form of democracy, and the community in which these ideas came to birth was of a different type from Athens or any other political unit of those

¹ Hence the origin of the word “minister”, as in Prime Minister.

² “Inspired democracy” might be classified as a form of theocracy, i.e. rule by God. But “theocracy” like “religion” is a misleading word to use, since it has been applied to organisations and types of society whose principles and characteristics differ markedly from inspired democracy as here described.

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times. But we see here the germ of the most fruitful ideas of democracy as they have evolved in the past 1900 years—ideas which underwent an enormous development particularly in 17th century England, whence they spread to the New World and back to France, and so out again throughout the globe.

Looked at from our own standpoint to-day, we can call this community the prototype of a new kind of democracy, a democracy based on inspiration, on "Spirit" as opposed to "Law". The most fitting term we can find for it is therefore "inspired democracy".

It involved the highest *liberty* for its members—freedom under the direction of God, "in whose service is perfect freedom". It involved *equality* before God, which however existed alongside differences of role or function¹. It involved *fraternity* or brotherly love as the basis of the relationship of its members towards one another.

It was a community based not on race or class or geo-

¹ St. Paul expresses this perfectly in his famous simile of the human body.

"But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body: but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." (1 Cor. 12, 20-28).

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graphy, but on a faith, an ideology. It was a supranational community which transcended all others: in it there were "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free" (Colossians, 3, 11).

There is a picture of this society in the early chapters of Acts. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit . . . and all that believed were together, and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2, 4, 44-7).

The society continued to grow by virtue of the fact that it was open, that its relation to the outside world was not a closed or exclusive one, but an open or loving one. St. Paul was mainly responsible for ensuring that the Church was not a small society of which Jews alone, or those who had been converted to Judaism, could become members: he it was who took the lead in throwing it open to non-Jews and in pioneering its expansion among the Greek-speaking "Gentiles" of the Roman Empire. Far from excluding would-be entrants into the society, it welcomed them: it was in fact an obligation on all its members to win as many new adherents to the society as possible ("preach the gospel in season and out of season").

Membership of this community differed from that of any other free association. It was not enough that a would-be Christian accepted its aims, that is, its way of life: in addition, he was expected to receive a new spirit and to demonstrate its fruits. Neophytes had to go through a probationary period after they had notified their desire to enter the society.

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Similarly, if through sin a Christian failed to demonstrate these fruits he fell out of fellowship with his brethren in the fullest sense: but he was still a member of the society unless he refused to repent of his sin. In the latter case the one ultimate sanction of the society was applied: the erring brother was excommunicated and cut off like a dead branch from a tree.

As the new society grew it was faced with the need of organisation.¹ Administration gave rise to specialised officials, such as bishops and elders. The need for human authority was felt, as the authority of the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Church's members, was less clearly discerned. Men claiming to be inspired led some of the congregations astray. To correct this tendency the disciplinary powers of bishops and elders increased, who therefore grew into authorities with a power of coercion not unlike that of political rulers. The Church became institutionalised and divided into hierarchies. Because most of its members could not attain to living on the high level of inspiration, they had to be drilled into living the life of the Church—into accepting its ethics, doctrine, and way of life. A system of imitation or "social drill" (called *mimesis* by Professor Toynbee) came into existence: for such "mimesis" always appears when those who wish to follow a man or a minority whom they admire fail to do so through the inner

¹ "That which gave organisation its importance was the increase in size of the communities—the need of order thereby became more imperative; the work of administration had to be systematised and centralised: the officers who had the control of order and administration came inevitably to have a higher relative status than they had before." (1) Rev. Edwin Hatch: *The Organisation of the Early Christian Churches* (Bampton Lectures, 1880), p. 120.

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impulse of the spirit, and come to rely instead on the observance of external forms. Ritual worship organised by an ordained priesthood, and orthodoxy enforced by official authorities, took the place of the freedom and spontaneity of inspired democracy in its original form.

Not all those who became members of the Church, whether through conviction or heredity, could rise to the height of spiritual living which inspired democracy in the fullest sense implies. Institutions and "the short cut of mimesis"¹ had to take the place of the inner authority and direction of divine guidance. As Jesus had taught, the preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven had acted like a net which brought to shore fishes both good and bad, or like a field in which grew wheat but also tares. The Church was the field or the net—and since sinners existed along with saints, institutions, regulations, and "mimesis" were necessary to counteract their sin. Even among the "many" called to the Church, only "a few" were found able to accept the full message of Christ, and to rise to the new consciousness and way of life which it implied. Hence the Church became an organised institution in which the element of "inspired democracy" found a less obvious place.

In its external form the Church became an institution rather like the state, patterned indeed to a large extent on the Roman state within which it grew up, and taking over much of the Empire's functions as the latter grew decadent. An authoritarian system of Church government developed, whereby the big metropolitan churches of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch brought the local churches under the sway of their respective bishops, so that what had been a confederation of

¹ Toynbee, *Ibid.*, III, 245, etc.

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free, more or less democratic churches became a series of centralised, hierarchical institutions.

On the collapse of the western Roman Empire, the Church of Rome became in its place the unifying political institution of Western Europe. The barbarian states which rose upon the ruins of the Empire were linked together by the centralised ecclesiastical commonwealth under the Bishop of Rome. This unifying rôle, as well as its other tasks of educator, preserver of culture, administrator and legislator, the Church was able to perform, since its institutions, covering almost every sphere of life, had come to parallel those of the now defunct western Empire.

(b) “*Inspired democracy*” and the State in St. Augustine’s “*City of God*”.

With the passage of time an ever larger number of “nominal” or only partial Christians had come to be counted among the members of the Church—especially since the proclamation by the Emperor Constantine (306-337) of Christianity as the official religion of the Empire, and the banning of paganism. When, nearly a hundred years later, St. Augustine composed his *City of God*, it had become more difficult than in Apostolic days to identify the Church with those who, while pilgrims upon earth, were fellow-citizens with the blessed in the Kingdom of Heaven.

St. Augustine sometimes seemed to make this identification, though his thesis really depends on distinguishing the “true” members of the Kingdom of God on earth from the false. “Therefore in this wicked age, wherein the Church works for her future glory through present humility, and is being trained through the goads of fears, the torments of sorrows and the dangers of temptations, rejoicing

only in hope when its joy is sound . . . many reprobate are mingled with the elect. Both are gathered into the gospel's net, and both swim undivided in the sea of this world, until they shall reach the shore, where the bad may be separated from the good, and amongst the good, as in His temple, God may be all in all".¹

The problem which the *De Civitate Dei* deals with is not fundamentally the relation between Church and State. It is the relation between the State and those who are "in faith and in truth" members of the Kingdom of God while still on earth. As "sojourners among the wicked" their concern is not with the organisation of society, but with "that most glorious city of God", which exists partly "in the passing of these times" and partly "in the steadfastness of the eternal home" (Preface). These "sojourners" are obliged to live in the organised society of the world, which for St. Augustine was represented by the Roman Empire. Yet their attitude is not to be merely neutral or hostile, as it would be if the state were the direct opposite of the Celestial City. The "earthly city"² of which St. Augustine speaks was not identical with the Roman State: it existed as an *organised* society no more than did the members of the heavenly city on earth, but represented all those unregenerate souls, living and dead, who have not abandoned love of self for love of God.

The state as a worldly society has its place in the "natural order" of things; it aims at peace and harmony, at least on a certain level—and St. Augustine always connects these bless-

¹ *De Civitate Dei*. Bk. XVIII, Ch. 49.

² "Two loves have given origin to these two cities: love of self, to the point of despising God, the earthly city; love of God, to the point of despising self, the heavenly." (*Civ. Dei*. Bk. XIV, Ch. 28).

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ings with those of order, the natural order ordained by God. "Peace of men is an orderly harmony; peace of a home an orderly harmony of command and obedience among those who dwell together; peace of a city an orderly harmony of command and obedience amongst the citizens; peace of God's city a most orderly and harmonious partnership in the enjoyment of God and of each other in God; peace of all things is a tranquillity of order". (Bk. XIX, 13).

The member of the celestial commonwealth must respect and even foster this natural order while on earth, paying first attention to his own family. In caring for the peace of his family, he will strengthen the peace of the state, for "every family then being part of the city . . . it follows evidently that the family's peace is connected with the city's, that is the orderly harmony of command and obedience of those dwelling together is connected with the orderly harmony of command and obedience amongst the citizens". (Bk. XIX, 16).

He will not, however, foster this earthly peace *for its own sake*: his business, and that of the "inspired democracy" of which he is a member, is to refer or relate the earthly peace to the heavenly. He is to use it as a stepping-stone to this higher peace "which really is peace".¹ "Therefore the

¹ Compare Prof. A. J. Toynbee's translation of parts of the following passage: "The heavenly commonwealth, too, in its pilgrimage here, makes use of this earthly peace; and (as far as may be possible without conflicting with the duties of Religion) it cherishes and ensures that mutual adjustment of human wills in regard to things pertaining to man's mortal nature; but it orients this earthly peace towards the heavenly peace which really is peace—the only peace worthy of being regarded as such, and of being called by the name, for creatures endowed with Reason. This heavenly peace is a perfectly organized and perfectly harmonious common participation in the enjoyment of God and of one another in God." (*A Study of History*, VI, 367).

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heavenly city rescinds and destroys none of those things by which earthly peace is attained or maintained: rather it preserves and pursues that which, different though it be in different nations, is yet directed to the one and selfsame end of earthly peace—provided it hinder not religion, whereby we are taught that the one highest and true God must be worshipped. Therefore, the heavenly city also uses earthly peace in this its sojourning: it preserves and seeks the agreement of human wills in matters pertaining to the mortal nature of men, so far as is allowed with due regard to piety and religion; and it relates that earthly peace to the heavenly peace, which truly is such peace that it should be accounted and named the only peace of the rational creature at any rate, being as it is a most orderly and most harmonious partnership in the enjoyment of God and of each other in God.” (Bk. XIX, 17).

St. Augustine speaks but little of the society which the “elect” must form while on earth. But he does indicate the distinction between the principles underlying what we have called inspired democracy and those of the “worldly” state. The earthly city “glories in itself,” the heavenly city glories in God. “That is obsessed by the lust for domination exercised by its princes upon the nations it subjugates; in this all serve each other in charity, the rulers in planning, the subjects in obeying. That loves its own virtue in the persons of its mighty men; this says to God, “I will love Thee, O Lord, my virtue” (Bk. XIV, 28). The heavenly city is “ruled by God . . . so that thereby in it the soul may rule the body and reason rule the vices” (Bk. XIX, 24).

The great truth to which the *De Civitate Dei* points is that inspired democracy is a by-product, not something to be

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aimed at directly. It is a by-product of those who live seeking the true peace of a "common participation in the enjoyment of God and of one another in God", with their eyes fixed on that "final peace", that ultimate state of blessedness which can never be attained here on earth. It is a by-product of those whose values are the spiritual values of eternity, not the materialistic values of the temporal world. These therefore live in touch with this higher Reality, Who is God; for man "must have divine instruction, to which he is to give definite though free obedience" (Bk. XIX, 14).

Inspired democracy is a community of those who live by "divine instruction" here and now. They are already members while here on earth of the "heavenly city", which has its realm in the here and now while also being of eternity and the Beyond. Inspired democracy is not a future type of society or world-order which some revolutionary event is to usher in; it is a society which exists here and now, and of which we are members immediately, as soon as we abandon the "love of self", and accept instead living according to God's will.

If we set our will in line with the will of God, we find that it cannot be done by us merely as individuals. We must relate the peace of the heavenly city to our neighbour as well as to God, "since the life of the city is a social one" (Bk. XIX, 17).

There is, of course, intensely satisfying personal experience which we may find alone—and there may be occasions when we are alone that it seems to come to us most completely. But there is also the *corporate* experience of great living, an experience which we share with others: experience which may be ours in the family when some occasion—it may be Christmas Day—or some crisis, prompts everyone to live unselfishly

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and for the whole; or it may be a like experience of harmony and mutual happiness in some larger group. Such a family or such a group becomes, while living this life of harmony and peace, a part of the Kingdom of God. In such a home or such a group is the embryo of what the wider society of humanity should become.

(c) *The Rôle of Inspired Democracy.*

We create this society here and now as we live with others in accordance with God's will; and our hope is that eventually it may be created in the temporal world as a whole. It is the hope we share with St. Paul that the whole "creation as well as man would one day be freed from its thralldom to decay, and gain the glorious freedom of God's children". (Romans 8, 21, Moffatt's Translation.)

This idea of St. Paul's expresses the thought of the Prophets and of Jesus Himself, that a "Day of the Lord" would come which would not merely bring in a new dispensation for men, but which would in some way transform the whole created universe, the sun, moon and stars, as well as the natural order on earth.

The Church, in St. James' phrase (I, 18), represented the "first-fruits" of this new creation. It also represented, as St. Paul put it, the mystical "Body of Christ", and thereby shared with Him in the labour of bringing the new world to birth. The sufferings of the Church, and of each of its members who "die daily to sin", are conceived of as linked with the sufferings of Christ, whereby is continued His work of changing the world and all created things.

Such was the vision of the Early Church, the vision that the "great brotherhood" of which Christ was the "first-born" (Rom. 8, 29) should be the means whereby God

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should lift His whole creation, including mankind, to an entirely new level of being.

On this basis the Fathers of the Church built their majestic philosophy. Of them St. Gregory of Nyssa (335—395 A.D.), who lived a generation before St. Augustine, is one who expressed these conceptions in beautiful language with all the subtlety of Greek thought. A member of one of the most remarkable families of his time (both his famous brother St. Basil and his sister St. Macrina took a leading part in the monastic movement), Gregory at first sought a life of contemplation in one of the monastic communities which his brother had founded at Annesi in Pontus, not far from where his sister presided over the neighbouring community for women. In this peaceful spot Gregory was able to satisfy his delight in nature, a delight which underlay his view of the harmony willed by God between the realm of nature and a redeemed mankind.

From this retreat Gregory was dragged by his imperious brother to the work of administering an obscure bishopric, “not to have honour conferred on him by his Sec, but to confer honour on it”, thence into the hurly-burly of theological disputation then raging, in which the true faith was defended against the heretics and rationalists of the day. As a protagonist for the faith Gregory so distinguished himself as to become one of the most trusted bishops at the court of the Emperor Theodosius at Constantinople, and was closely concerned in formulating the faith at the Councils which the Emperor summoned.

He viewed mankind as created by God to be the link between Himself as pure Spirit or Intelligence and the material world which is perceived by the senses; through this link God worked to infuse the material world ever more with His

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Spirit, "that thus the earthy might be raised up to the Divine, and so one certain grace of equal value might pervade the whole creation, the lower nature being mingled with the supramundane". But man had turned away from this rôle. "By a motion of self-will we contracted a fellowship with evil, and . . . mixed up this evil with our nature like some deleterious ingredient spoiling the taste of honey . . . We have been viciously transformed." Therefore God had to begin a new creation, of which Christ was the first-born, in Whom a new nature was manifest, and through Whom man could find again his original rôle. For in Christ is expressed anew for man the purpose or plan of God; in Christ, as God incarnate, the universe is united with God, because through the Cross Christ "came so far within the grasp of death as to touch a state of deadness, and then in His own body bestowed on our nature the principle of the resurrection, raising as He did by this power along with Himself the whole man" (i.e. the whole of mankind). Man thus raised or regenerated is able to pursue again his original rôle through sharing in the resurrection of Christ Who "brings to one harmonious agreement the diverse natures of existing things."¹

The concrete expression of this change, which is to bring God, man and nature (or the universe) into a new harmony, is the change in human nature itself. What this change means is carefully explained by St. Gregory:

"For that change in our life which takes place through regeneration will not be change, if we continue in the state in which we were . . . And yet human nature does not of itself

¹ Cap. 32. (Translation from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5, trans. W. M. Moore and H. A. Wilson, Oxford and New York, 1893, pp. 499, 500).

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admit of any change in baptism; neither the reason, nor the understanding, nor the scientific faculty, nor any other peculiar characteristic of man is a subject for change. Indeed the change would be for the worse if any of these properties of our nature were exchanged away for something else. If, then, the birth from above is a definite refashioning of the man and yet these properties do not admit of change, it is a subject for enquiry what that is in him, by the changing of which the grace of regeneration is perfected. It is evident that when those evil features which mark our nature have been obliterated a change to a better state takes place.

“If, then, by being “washed”, as says the Prophet, in that mystic bath, we become “clean” in our wills and “put away the evil” of our souls, we then become better men, and are changed to a better state. But if, when the bath has been applied to the body, the soul has not cleansed itself from the stains of its passions and affections, but the life after initiation keeps on a level with the uninitiate life, then, though it may be a bold thing to say, yet I will say it and not shrink; in these cases water is but water, for the gift of the Holy Ghost in no way appears in him . . . ; whenever, that is, not only the deformity of anger, or the passion of greed, or the unbridled and unseemly thought, with pride, envy, and arrogance, disfigure the Divine image, but the gains of injustice abide with him, and the woman he has procured by adultery still even after that ministers to his pleasures. If these and the like vices, after as before, surround the life of the baptised, I cannot see in what respects he has been changed; for I observe him the same man as before . . . Let such an one, therefore, who remains in the same moral condition as before and then babbles to himself of the beneficial change he has received from baptism, listen to what Paul says: “If a man think himself to be something when

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he is nothing, he deceiveth himself . . ." If, then, you have received God, if you have become a child of God, make manifest in your disposition the God that is in you, manifest in yourself Him that begot you."¹

Here is a complete expression of the Church's philosophy, that God created man as a means of changing or remaking His entire creation; and that the condition of man's fulfilling this rôle is our change to a life based on absolute moral standards through the inflowing of His Spirit.

This is our hope for humanity, our vision for a world remade. Its eventual coming to pass may be expected as the by-product of right living by all the saints and righteous of the past, and by our right living (as we enter into their labours), and by the right living of future generations. How and when precisely it will come to pass is not our business. Our business is to take our part as "fellow-labourers", not only with the saints and righteous of the past, present and future, but as fellow-labourers with God Himself. By so doing we play our part in that greatest revolution of all time whereby God, working through man, is remaking the world.

The human instruments in bringing about this world-transformation are the members of the "City of God" during their pilgrimage on earth. These may be a scattered or "invisible" society, but wherever two or three such are gathered together, they become a visible expression of the Kingdom of God on earth. They demonstrate that type of society which we have called "inspired democracy".

All examples of inspired democracy which have appeared in history have had their imperfections, because human nature is always prone to sin, whence come corruptions of the pure

¹ Cap. 40. (Trans. p.507).

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ideal. Even in the primitive Church, that most vital of inspired democracies, such imperfections soon appeared in the shape of dissensions among the widows who received a share of food in the daily distribution (Acts 6). This trouble gave rise to the first institution of officials in the Church, the "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom", who were appointed "over the business" (Acts 6, 3).

Institutions are necessary, because the shortcomings of men are such that we cannot do without them; quite apart from the need for administrative arrangements and division of function in any society beyond a certain size. Inspired democracies like other societies—like the state itself—have to develop institutions; and there is always a danger in these societies, as in the state, that institutions and the framework of laws, customs and moral codes which go with them, may become top-heavy and stifle their essential vitality. The essence of an "inspired democracy" is inspiration; such a society may become organised or institutionalised and still be an inspired democracy, provided that inspiration is allowed to flow freely through every member, even the youngest and humblest, and that this inspiration is the source of direction and government of the society.

Every such inspired democracy that has appeared has had an enormous influence as "leaven" on the society around it or on the state within which it has grown up. The Early Church, the Monasteries, the Franciscan Brotherhood, the movements and sects of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, have all played an immense part in orienting the society of their day, its outlook, culture and institutions, in a spiritual direction.

Through this leavening influence a new "structure of soul" has developed among the peoples of Christendom. But although Western Civilisation possesses certain features and

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institutions which accord more with Christian standards than is the case with any previous civilisation, yet the West is still a civilisation essentially the same as its fore-runners and contemporaries. It is subject to the same evils, perpetrates the same crimes, is reft by the same dissensions and suffers the same catastrophes.

The possibility is that out of the present crisis in history, and as the fruit of the series of catastrophes of our time, the new higher consciousness which came to birth two thousand years ago will find expression in a new type of world society. This type of society, which we have called "super-civilisation", will accord more nearly with the pattern of inspired democracy.

It follows that in bringing to birth this higher consciousness and the super-civilisation which accompanies it, some inspired democracy (or democracies) must be the instrument under God.

Such an inspired democracy, to succeed in leading humanity to its next mile-stone, must maintain its essence, that is its democratic and inspirational basis, until this goal is reached.

For there is a two-fold development in the growth of an inspired democracy. It grows as does leaven, multiplying itself throughout the world in which it works, and so leavening and changing it. But it also grows like a plant or tree, which increases in size while maintaining its own essential nature until it overshadows the entire area around. From small beginnings it grows like the "seed" mentioned in St. Mark's Gospel (IV, 32), until it becomes "the greatest of all herbs", shooting out "great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it". In order to bring about a deep change in mankind, an inspired democracy must grow until it is big enough to overshadow or embrace in some measure the entire world.

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Taking the Early Church as the prototype of inspired democracy, we may say that the action of such a society is accomplished through *spiritual revolution*. This is a non-violent revolution, which begins through change, effected by the miracle of grace, in individuals. People so changed make up the nucleus of the new society, an inspired democracy. Their action is first on other people, to change them in the same way, and consequently on the general outlook or climate of thought, on culture and on institutions.

(d) *The action of inspired democracy in the Greco-Roman world.*

The action of inspired democracy on civilisation was first demonstrated in the "world" in which it came to birth, that of the Roman Empire. What was the relation of the Early Church to the Empire, and what was its influence on the Greco-Roman civilisation of its day?

At the time of the birth of the Early Church the Classical civilisation was already long past its prime. It was moving towards its decline, a decline precipitated by ferocious wars and class wars, and only arrested temporarily by the establishment of the Roman Empire.

At first the Church had been neutral, or even hostile towards the Empire. Though St. Paul had exhorted Christians to respect the state authorities and the state's ordinances, this precept had been difficult to follow at subsequent periods when the state had persecuted the Church. When Christians were being martyred—drowned, thrown to the beasts in the theatre, or sent to the mines blinded in one eye and paralysed in one leg—it was difficult to respect the ordinances of the state and its "peace". There was indeed a tradition of outright opposition to the state going back to the days when the Romans, agents of a hostile power and an alien civilisation, had placed

the Imperial Eagle in the Holy of Holies of the Temple at Jerusalem. This was the tradition in which the author of Revelation had identified Rome with Babylon, the earlier oppressor of the Chosen People, and had spoken about her as the Beast or the Great Whore.

But when Constantine adopted the Church and proclaimed Christianity as the official faith of the Empire, the situation changed. From being hostile or neutral, the Empire became intimately associated with it.

This was the moment when it might appear that the prophecies of old were being fulfilled. The Church, as the successor of "the poor", the "remnant of Israel", had "inherited the earth" in the sense of the Roman world.

Formerly, when the Christians had still been subject to persecution, there had been a living conception of the Church, as an organism growing up within the Empire with institutions which paralleled those of the state and might even supersede them. To Origen (185—254 A.D.), an Egyptian of Alexandria, one of the greatest of the Fathers, it had not been stretching too much the bounds of possibility to suggest that "certain councillors of the Church are worthy to rule in the City of God, if there be any such city in the whole world". For he saw the Church as a family of local churches; each local church was an "assembly"¹ of God, existing "alongside of the assemblies of the people in each city"; and these local assemblies of the Church "when carefully contrasted with the

¹ The Greek word *ἐκκλησία* (ecclesia) was originally applied to the whole of the citizen-body or *assembly* of the citizens, e.g. in Athens, and was later taken over to describe the assembly or congregation of the Christians in a given locality as well as being applied to the Church as a whole.

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assemblies [or citizen bodies] of the districts in which they are situated, are as beacons in the world; for who would not admit that even the inferior members of the Church, and those who in comparison with the better are less worthy, are nevertheless more excellent than many of those who belong to the assemblies in the different districts?"¹ This conception was however but dimly grasped by the Christians of the "Christian Empire". Origen himself had died almost a century before the practical question arose of how exactly the Church should embrace the Empire. How could the spiritual society of the Church adapt itself to the secular society of the state?

In the earlier view, it had been rather the question of how the Church could permeate the state to the point where the Empire began to approximate to the Church (for this would be the effect of the "beacons" which the churches represented irradiating with their light the mass of the citizens in every place). But when the Empire espoused the Church it was far from being so irradiated. "In uniting itself closely to the State, the Theodosian Church did not make a good match; it was wedding a sick man, soon to become a dying one."² So moribund did the Roman Empire become that a few decades later, after it had split into two halves, the Western half succumbed to moral and administrative collapse within, and to the barbarian invasions from without.

In spite of this "marriage", the tradition of neutrality on the Church's part persisted. Besides certain passages from St. Augustine's *City of God* which indicate a positive rôle for the

¹ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, III, 29, 30. (Ante-Nicene Christian Library, (Clark, Edinburgh, 1872), Vol. XXIII, p.111).

² "Elle épousait un malade, qui devint bientôt un moribond." Mgr. Louis Duchesne: *Histoire de l'Église Ancienne*, III, 1.

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Church, there are far more which suggest that to a large extent Augustine himself was dominated by the conception of neutrality: that the rôle of the "pilgrims" of the heavenly society while on earth was to pass through this vale of tears as best they could without being too concerned about the Empire, as representing the earthly society, even though living as sojourners in it.

In any case the activity of the Church in the direction of orienting the Empire "towards the heavenly peace" was neither impressive nor strikingly effective. Christians most worthy of the name scarcely thought it possible to "give a moral character to the old Roman machine",¹ and tended to keep out of public affairs, even to the point of avoiding ordination, since they thought that the clergy themselves were too much mixed up with the affairs of this world. The old Empire continued to fall to pieces, although many of its functions, notably that of justice, had begun to be taken over by the clergy before its western half actually dissolved in 476 A.D.

It would seem that the Empire was doomed anyway before Constantine arranged the marriage between the Church and the moribund Empire. Moral rot, bureaucratic tyranny and incompetence, the inflexible, unwieldy forms of obsolete but venerated institutions, the dead hand of "law" which everywhere stifled the "spirit", and the domination of a *fainéant* Senatorial class, who accumulated ever more wealth and estates in their hands while the masses became correspondingly poor and desperate—all these evils were so deep-

¹ "Moraliser la vieille machine romaine." *Early History of the Christian Church* by Louis Duchesne, Vol. III, p.5, tr. by Claude Jenkins, (Murray 1924.)

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seated as to make it virtually impossible for the Empire to survive without a radical change in every area.

On the other hand, supposing such change were still possible, the Church was not in the best condition to bring it about. For the Church as a whole had long ceased to be a shining example of an "inspired democracy". Its disunity, its hierarchical control, its dependence on the sanctions of the state, all pointed to its decline from its earlier high ideals.

Instead of transforming the Empire into the likeness of inspired democracy, the Church as a whole increasingly approximated to the pattern of the Empire. St. Clement holds up in one of his letters the Roman army, with its splendid discipline and rigid grades of authority, as the model to be imitated by the Church.

"Let us consider those who serve under our generals, with what order, obedience and submissiveness they perform the things which are commanded them. All are not prefects, nor commanders of a thousand, nor of a hundred, nor of fifty, and so forth, but each one in his own rank performs the things commanded by the king and the generals."¹

This swing away from inspired democracy towards the pattern of a "worldly" society brought certain consequences in its train. Instead of the equality of all members as sharing responsibility and as potential channels of the Spirit, an in-

¹ The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, XXXVII, 2-3. (Trans. Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Additional Volume, p.240). The writer is possibly the same as the Clement who was Bishop of Rome, approximately A.D. 88-97. He was almost certainly the Clement referred to by St. Paul in Phil. IV 3. Quoted in B. H. Streeter: *The Primitive Church*.

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creasing prestige came to be attached to the higher offices of the Church. Ambition and self-seeking came to play a larger part as motives impelling men to attain these positions, to the point where strife and even violence took place between the parties of rival claimants. In 366 A.D. the election of Pope Damasus was disgraced by riots and bloodshed in the streets of Rome, followed by the massacre of 137 of the supporters of the rival "anti-Pope" in a church where they had fortified themselves¹.

Nevertheless, though the Church as a whole ceased to be an inspired democracy, there were at every stage men and women within it who were true to the highest ideal. These sometimes retreated from the towns to live as hermits or in monastic communities, but many stayed on "in the world", forming groups known as *spoudaioi* or *religiosi*, connected with various churches. Not infrequently through their own merits or through popular acclaim, such men were promoted to the highest positions in the Church.

So that, although by the time of Constantine the mass of church members "was Christian . . . only superficially and in name",² there was always enough vitality and creativeness in the Church for it to have a profound influence on the society of its day. Before the Empire in the west collapsed, its influence began to be felt on legislation. Two of Constantine's earliest edicts encouraged the freeing of slaves and prescribed the keeping of Sunday as a day of rest "in all tribunals, public offices and workshops of the cities".³ A century later the dramatic intervention of the hermit Telemachus, coming

¹ Duchesne, *op. cit.* II, 363-4.

² *Ibid.* III, 4.

³ *Ibid.* II, 52.

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direct from his retreat to hold up a show in the arena, resulted in the suspension of gladiatorial combats.

But there were far deeper levels on which the new spirit was felt. The originality of the way of life for which the Church stood was demonstrated in the new culture which it created, in art, literature and philosophy—all of which was the expression of a new quality in the lives of individual people.

This culture was in large measure based on the finest achievements of the Classical world. The philosophy of the Fathers of the Church owed much, for instance, to the great thinkers of Greece, especially to Plato. But where the old forms of Classical culture were inadequate for the new wine, original modes were created. In painting and sculpture the Classical forms of representation, illustrating things concrete and bodily (of which the archetype was the human body itself), were ill-adapted to expressing the ideas of the Early Christians—ideas like the Incarnation or the Trinity, or qualities like sanctity and purity. Early Christian art therefore originated a new symbolism to express its own themes, and developed in the process, to a remarkable degree, the already existing medium of mosaic. The early Christian basilicas, which were adorned by those mosaics, gradually set a new style of architecture in striking contrast to that of the Classical temples.

The originality of Christian culture was partly due to the blend which it represented of diverse cultural streams. Particularly it sprang from the marriage between the Classical culture of Greece and Rome, and that of the "Syriac" world,¹ notably its Hebrew element. Apart from theology, this union of the two cultures found its most creative expression in the Church's liturgy—in that of the Western or Latin

¹ To borrow Professor Toynbee's terminology.

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Church as in that of the Churches of the Hellenic East. For in matters of liturgy the old Classical forms of poetry, drama and rite were unsuitable; to this end Oriental modes and melodies were adapted. In the Byzantine East "the greatest of liturgical poets, Romanus the Melodist . . . endowed the new spirit of the new Christian culture with a new music and a new rhythm". In the West, Venantius Fortunatus (c.530—601), a bishop in the Dark Age which succeeded the fall of the Western Empire, "seems at first sight the typical representative of a decadent culture, a literary parasite who makes his living by composing laborious compliments and panegyrics to flatter his barbarian patrons. But the moment he is touched by the liturgical spirit, his tired rhetoric is miraculously transformed into the mighty music of the *Vexilla Regis* and the *Pange lingua gloriosi*"¹

This liturgy is the expression in an "almost dramatic form"² of the spiritual life which nourished and saved from despair hundreds of thousands of people, bewildered by the experience of a world crashing to ruins about their ears: people who, as a leaderless mass, were shut out from the privileges of the wealthy few, fleeced by tax-gatherers or oppressed by landlords and barbarian chiefs. To these people the Christian message brought life and purpose, the sense of belonging to a new community, of creating a new society. No wonder that the paeans of praise and songs of thanksgiving, and the celebration of the mysteries of redemption, issued in a rich and original culture where poetry, music and drama all found their rightful place.

¹ Quotations from Christopher Dawson: *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (Sheed & Ward, 1950), 37.

² *Ibid.* 40.

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This strong creativeness in culture can only be understood in relation to the change in people; for it is in its effect on people that the action of inspired democracy must be ultimately evaluated. Stories of change or conversion abound, but none more impressive than that of St. Augustine as related in his *Confessions*. It was this conversion of a highly educated member of the old Classical civilisation (the equivalent of a university professor), which made of St. Augustine the most significant thinker of the new era, so that his great work, the *De Civitate Dei*, marks the watershed between the old world and the new. "There are two men in St. Augustine—the antique man of the old classical culture and the Christian man of the new Gospel. This is what makes the work one of the great turning-points in the history of human destiny; it stands on the confines of two worlds, the classical and the Christian, and it points the way into the Christian."¹

When eventually, after his long inward struggle, Augustine, on his day of decision, went out into the garden and threw himself down under a fig-tree in an anguish of sobbing,² a new world came to birth in his heart. To the foundations of that new world he was to add many an important stone, for his work formed the basis of Western thought for a thousand years to come. It is not as the representative of a fading civilisation but as the pioneer of a new that St. Augustine is to be remembered, a heroic figure labouring to the last, only laying down his pen in 430 A.D. with the Vandals at the gates of his episcopal city.³

¹ Sir Ernest Barker in the Introduction to *The City of God*, St. Augustine (Everyman), p.viii.

² See St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Book VIII.

³ Hippo, now the modern Bone in Algeria.

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With the birth of Western Civilisation the first phase of the spiritual revolution initiated by Christianity is over. Beyond the wars and destruction, the crises and terrors—the death-spasms of the Classical world—this silent revolution was proceeding, more profound than those other revolutions whereby new men seized power and one class wreaked vengeance on another. Revolutions of violence herald, rather than bring about, the profound changes in the life of mankind. These are the work of spiritual revolutions such as that of the Early Church.

Because non-violent and based on change, not destruction, such revolutions do not abolish the old order, its outlook and institutions, but transform them, so that the new order *grows out of the old*.

The result of this revolution in the Classical world was the birth of a new civilisation. It was a change “as phenomenal as if a sleeper on waking should see other stars shining above his head”.²

² Ferdinand Lot: *The End of the Ancient World*, tr. by P. and M. Leon, (Kegan Paul, 1931), p.186.

Chapter Five

Creative Minorities, Spiritual and Secular

(a) *Spiritual creative minorities of the West.*

WITH THE disintegration of the Western Roman Empire the sunset rays of Classical civilisation faded away and society throughout most of Europe relapsed into a Dark Age. But the passing of the Western Empire did not close the period of decline. It emphasised the vacuum into which war-bands and migrating barbarians continued to pour. After the Goths and Vandals had settled in the derelict territories of the Empire, they were followed by the hordes of Huns and Magyars from the East, the Scandinavian and Saxon war-bands from the North, and the conquering armies of Islam in the South. The efforts of Charlemagne, King of the Franks, to restore the Western Empire in 800 A.D. fared no better than the hollow victories of the Eastern Emperor Justinian in the 6th century, aiming to reunite the shattered territories of Rome. Such temporary respites were gained at the expense of overstraining the recuperative powers of the infant Western Civilisation, which in the 9th century was all but extinguished.

At that time Western Europe touched its lowest point. With the cutting of the sea-ways and trade routes, commerce

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vanished, and society reverted to a primitive agricultural type based on the self-subsistent village or manor. The towns were either derelict and ravaged, sometimes serving as fortresses whither the peasantry retreated at times of invasion, or at best as the seats of the bishops. The standard of living was miserably low, with little security against war-bands, brigands, wild animals, starvation and disease.

But gradually the constructive forces of society asserted themselves, and the elements of a new order became visible. As in the case of every growing society this was the work of what Professor Toynbee has called a *creative minority*; or rather it was the work of several creative minorities, both secular and spiritual.

The basic agricultural order was built up by the peasantry, often members of war-bands turned colonists; its growing-points were the communal settlements which they established in the ravaged countryside or the hitherto uncleared wastes.

Gradually more elaborate political forms developed, and the system of feudalism came into being. In that chaotic age everyone was either attacking somebody else, or was in need of protection against being attacked or pillaged. Under feudalism local lords were able to afford a measure of protection to the peasants who became their vassals. On this basis rudimentary states grew up, equipped with primitive institutions of government. These depended on a hierarchy of nobles and lesser lords, responsible for giving advice to the king in matters affecting the state as a whole, for looking after such local administration as there was, and for furnishing the forces of defence.

The "creative minority" who built up this social and political superstructure on the basis of the self-subsistent villages, were the kings and local chieftains or landowning lords. But they were assisted by another "creative minority",

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who gave the new civilisation, as Christendom, its distinctive characteristics. This was formed by the heroic few among the Christians who laboured wholeheartedly during that grim epoch to lay the foundation of the City of God on earth.

The vitality of the "creative minority" of the Church was shown by its success in converting the invaders—the Moslems excepted—to the Christian faith, thereby including them within the new order which grew out of the ruins of the old. In the case of the Scandinavians, the work of conversion and integration into the new society took some three centuries, from the time when the first missionaries were sent to the Nordic north by Louis the Pious in 831 A.D. In other ways too the disintegrating effect of warfare was diminished, notably by the new conceptions of chivalry, sanctified by the Church, into which was transmuted the violent tradition of the war-bands.

The "spiritual creative minority" which accomplished these things found its strength in the monastic movement. Monasticism developed without strict forms or rules, often giving rise to abuses, till St. Basil (329—379 A.D.) reformed it in the East, and a century later St. Benedict of Nursia (480—543 A.D.) in the West. St. Benedict was the son of a wealthy family, which belonged to the old governing class of the Roman Empire. He abandoned his studies at Rome, disgusted with the sterile instruction of the schools and with the vicious and degrading atmosphere of the city, and—not much more than a boy—sought the spiritual life by the lakeside at Subiaco. His fame grew so rapidly that leading Roman families turned to him during those times of turmoil, placing their sons under his care. In this way twelve monasteries came into being under his direction.

St. Benedict, like St. Augustine, inherited from his Roman background a bias for orderliness and respect for law, combined

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with good sense and understanding. The Rule which he framed for his communities, after establishing the most famous of them all at Monte Cassino, was gradually adopted, in whole or with modifications, by monasteries throughout Western Europe; it was so moderate and sensible that it served to reform the monastic movement which till then had tended towards the two extremes of self-immolation or wild indiscipline.

The Benedictine Rule set the standard for the monasteries of the West from the Dark Ages onwards. Certain features distinguished the life within their walls from that of the "prototype" of inspired democracy as manifested by the Early Church. Their organisation was essentially authoritarian, primary insistence being placed on *obedience* to the Abbot or senior members (though St. Benedict laid it down that in weighty decisions the Abbot should consult all the monks, even the youngest). There was little attempt at seeking collective inspiration or guidance as the basis of communal living. But the monasteries stood for an intensely spiritual life on a corporate basis, a life in which all shared without individual claims for special rights or personal property—and a life which, in spite of the wealth which almost always came the way of the monasteries, was for the most part hard and lacking in physical comfort.

It is impossible to assess the enormous contribution of the monasteries towards fostering a new Christian attitude among the brutalised, despondent masses of the former Roman provinces and the barbarian invaders who settled amongst them. The monasteries formed the creative minority which, more than any other element, developed the "structure of soul" distinctive of Europe. The monastic ideal has been scorned by later generations, but in its day the monastery was the master-institution of Europe, not merely on account of

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what the monks and nuns wrought and taught, but because of their examples as people who left all for the love of God, and by virtue of the spiritual power granted to the infant civilisation through their ceaseless prayers.

“ There is no life that is not in community,
And no community not lived in praise of God.
Even the anchorite who meditates alone,
For whom the days and nights repeat the praise of God,
Prays for the Church, the Body of Christ incarnate.”¹

These communities were oases of orderly and civilised life in a chaotic world, the growing-points from which civilisation spread over the surrounding country. Since under Benedict's rule labour was sanctified as an essential part of the life of prayer (which he stressed as the main aim of a monk) he provided a new incentive for production, so that considerable tracts of land cultivated by the monks were quickly restored from their derelict condition to fertile fields and gardens.² By the time of Charlemagne the typical monastery was no longer a colony of self-supporting ascetics; “ it was a great social and economic centre, the owner of vast estates, the civiliser of conquered territories, and the scene of a many-sided and intense cultural activity. The great German monas-

¹ T. S. Eliot: *Collected Poems 1909-1935* (from “ Choruses from the Rock ”) (Faber, 1936), p. 164.

² “ The mere glorification of toil—‘ laborare est orare ’—the religious significance which Benedict wished to give to all work, was not all . . . ” For the monks' toil “ was toil from which they had eliminated the gain of the individual; from first to last it was toil for others . . . The toil of the monk was socialistic both in method and aim; though its socialism, it is true, did not look beyond the corporation.” (H. B. Workman: *The Evolution of the Monastic Ideal* (Epworth Press, 1927), p. 158.

teries of the Carolingian period, whose origins were due directly or indirectly to the work of Boniface, were like the ancient temple states of Asia Minor, and played a similar rôle in the life of the people . . . We possess in the famous ninth-century plan of St. Gall a picture of the ideal Carolingian abbey—a kind of miniature city which includes within its walls churches and schools, workshops and granaries, hospitals and baths, mills and farm buildings.”¹

While the new culture which Christianity had originated was having a hard struggle for existence in the world at large, it was sheltered and fostered in the monasteries. “In them there was developed the traditions of learning and literature, art and architecture, music and liturgy, painting and calligraphy, which were the foundations of mediaeval culture”.²

The best of Classical literature was also preserved, of inestimable value for nourishing Mediaeval and Renaissance thought. This achievement was a by-product of St. Benedict's instructions as to the useful labour which the monks should perform, for he laid down that the copying of manuscripts should be among their tasks. One of his contemporaries, Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus, (468—562), also gave a great stimulus to this work. A member of another ruling Roman family, he retired from politics in 540 A.D. after serving Theodoric (the Gothic ruler of Italy) and his successors for many years, and founded the monastery of Viviers.

“As minister of the Goths he had watched, with the bitter grief of the Roman, the splendours of antiquity falling into hopeless decay; as a private man he would do what he could to save what he might. So while on the summit of the

¹ C. Dawson: *The Making of Europe* (Sheed and Ward), p. 231.

² Dawson, *op. cit.*, 231.

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mountain he built a home for his hermits, at the foot there sprang up, under his guidance, a colony of cenobites devoted to learning—a spectacle almost unique in that age of darkness. This colony he endowed with a fine library, at the same time training the monks to the careful transcription of manuscripts.”²

Many of the greatest pioneers who constructed the new social and political order of the West were members of monastic communities, and it was usually only under the stress of “the world’s” urgent need that they left their retreats to become missionaries, administrators and statesmen. Such was St. Gregory the Great (546—604 A.D.), also of a leading Senatorial family, who, after experience of diplomacy and politics, had vowed himself to the spiritual life, founding several monasteries on his ample family estates. So little did he wish to return to “the world” that, when chosen Pope, he petitioned the Byzantine Emperor to annul his election, and is even said to have had himself smuggled out of Rome in a basket.

But once installed as Pope he grappled manfully not merely with the spiritual duties of his office but with the administrative and economic problems of the city of Rome, which the failure of the imperial authority and the incapacity of the barbarians left in the care of the Church. From the wide estates of the Church he ensured the feeding of the destitute proletariat of Rome. He directed the government of the city, negotiated with its titular sovereign, the Byzantine Emperor, and by persuasion and the force of his personality safeguarded it from the attacks of the Lombards. He administered the estates of the Church so well that their yields increased in an age of declining agriculture; to this end he carried on a

² Workman, *op. cit.*, p.159.

voluminous correspondence, and kept detailed accounts which were long preserved in the Vatican library.

Besides governing the Church and regulating its services he wrote a number of pamphlets, and books on theology and Church administration. His *Regula Pastoralis*, or *Rule for Bishops*, was most influential in raising a reformed body of bishops (later translated into Anglo-Saxon by King Alfred and his scholars), and his writings popularised much of the thought of the Fathers, especially of St. Augustine. Perhaps the most heroic act of the time was when he gathered a small band of missionaries for the conversion of England (he had actually been three days on the road with them when he was recalled to Rome as indispensable to the city). The rest of the party went on, led by St. Augustine (not to be confused with St. Augustine of Hippo), and by converting King Ethelbert of Kent and his subjects took the first step towards re-integrating the British Isles in Latin Christendom. By this initiative Gregory threw out the frontiers of the Church, and therefore of civilisation, at a time when lesser men would have been preoccupied with salvaging what little was left of security and order in Italy itself. "The conquest of Britain," as Gibbon says,¹ "reflects less glory on the name of Caesar than on that of Gregory the First. Instead of six legions, forty monks were embarked for that distant island, and the pontiff lamented the austere duties which forbade him to partake the perils of their spiritual warfare."

Gregory is a fine example of those latter-day Romans in whom the best values of Imperial Rome were revitalised—values which became a potent legacy for the new civilisation so painfully coming to birth. "To his rulership of the Church

¹ See *Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, (London, 1813), Vol. 8, p.166.

he brought something of the technique of the old imperial administration, and all the best of the Roman tradition: fidelity to law, respect for rights, impatience of disorder, whether from insubordination or injustice, and the courtesy of business regularity.”¹

Among the many great spiritual statesmen of these ages who were inspired by the monastic ideal, one other may be mentioned. St. Boniface (680—755), or Winfrith, to give him his Anglo-Saxon name, began his career in a Benedictine monastery at Exeter. A few years later he was caught up in the movement for evangelising the heathen peoples of Central and Northern Europe. Here he laboured incessantly for many years, baptising thousands, organising new bishoprics, establishing monasteries, and acting as counsellor to kings and clerics until his martyrdom by the Frisians. By bringing Christian civilisation to the heart of Europe, Boniface laid the foundations of a new age. Through this achievement he “had a deeper influence on the history of Europe than any Englishman who has ever lived. Unlike his Celtic predecessors, he was not an individual missionary, but a statesman and organiser, who was a servant of the Roman order . . . It was through the work of St. Boniface that Germany first became a living member of the European society . . . The Anglo-Saxon monks and, above all, St. Boniface, first realised that union of Teutonic initiative and Latin order which is the source of the whole mediaeval development of culture.”²

Boniface, besides being a missionary, was a scholar and a poet: his foundations, especially the great abbey of Fulda in Germany, were centres of learning which brought the arts to

¹ Philip Hughes: *Hist. of the Church*, Vol. II (Sheed & Ward, 1948), p.80.

² C. Dawson, *op. cit.* pp.210-13.

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the surrounding peoples. A generation later another famous Englishman, Alcuin of York (735—804), was chosen by Charlemagne as head of his Palace School, and in this capacity played a leading role in transmitting the rich cultural tradition of England to Central Europe,¹ thereby stimulating the revival of learning and the arts (the “Carolingian Renaissance”) which took place at the imperial court.

In such ways the “spiritual creative minority” within the Church played a major part in building West European culture. And though the monasteries did not always keep the highest standards, often suffering corruption through increasing wealth, yet the monastic movement was renewed generation after generation by ardent men and women who joined its ranks. In some monasteries the spirit of St. Benedict would be rekindled, as at Cluny at the beginning of the 10th century, or at Cîteaux a century later. Soldiers, nobles, and lawyers deserted the world for the cloister, often returning to it, like St. Bernard of Clairvaux, as statesmen who set their imprint on an entire era.

When the great days of the monastery were over, the fire blazed up again in other forms. The Franciscan brotherhood, the preaching orders, the mystical groups of the later Middle Ages, were succeeded, after the split within the Church, by similar spiritual creative minorities, both Catholic and Protestant.

While humble and unknown Christians, like Chaucer’s

¹ A tradition reaffirmed a century later by Alfred the Great (871—901) who found time, while repelling repeated Danish invasions and reorganising the Kingdom of Wessex, to translate many Latin works (including some of St. Gregory the Great) into Anglo-Saxon, with the aid of Continental scholars.

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“poor parson”, laboured to keep alive their faith and way of life among the masses, this creative minority played a special part down the ages in fostering the steady growth of Western Civilisation. Through its reform of the clergy and its example to the laity, it built a framework of unity for the West. It propagated a faith accepted by everybody, by rich and poor, by the learned and unlettered, and bequeathed a sense of community to our civilisation which—however weakened—has survived strife and schism until the present day.

(b) *Secular creative minorities of the West.*

Today when Western Civilisation is in danger of being destroyed, we look for the creative minority which may bring a new order to birth. The existing type of society is not adequate to meet the challenge of the age. But if we feel the need of a new and more vigorous order, we must be realistic in examining how it could come into being.

Every new type of society *grows out of the old*. It first appears, as it were in embryo, so hidden in the midst of the parent society that its significance is not at first noticed. Eventually, becoming stronger, it does battle with the old order, and, if successful, supersedes it as the society of a new era.

According to the Marxist “dialectic”, the future society acquires new characteristics in the course of its struggle with the old, so that when it becomes dominant it represents a synthesis between the old and the new, combining elements of both in a way which marks an advance on either. Without assuming the universal validity of this pattern of history, it provides a useful clue as to the way in which the successive phases of civilisation follow one another.

The struggle has the *appearance* of a struggle between

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classes, since each phase of society, both the old and the new, is presided over by a particular class, these classes standing towards each other in the relation of oppressor and oppressed. But class-struggles as such do not necessarily provide the dynamic of progress : their outcome has often been the decadence of the civilisation within which they take place, decadence marked by the political bankruptcy and mutual destruction of the rival classes.

The dominant element in the old Roman society was the wealthy senatorial class. With the disappearance of the Roman society its place was eventually taken by the new society of Christendom whose leadership was shared by the feudal nobility and the "spiritual creative minority".

So with Christendom itself. Its early phase of the Dark and Middle Ages, presided over by feudal nobles and Churchmen, gave way to a new phase, presided over by the commercial *bourgeoisie*. The new order grew out of the old, and its growth was characterised by the struggles of the townsfolk against the feudal lords and the bishops.

It was the ending of the period of invasions and the consequent reopening of the trade routes which led to the coming of *bourgeois* society. In the 10th and 11th centuries bands of travelling merchants began to appear at conveniently situated towns with wares, sometimes of distant origin. Before long some of the merchants settled down, either within the walls of the town, or, more usually in Northern Europe, outside in a suburb or *faubourg*. Here, in their own quarter they could organise their own way of life, untrammelled by the feudal restrictions which operated in the old town.

These commercial towns were the growing points of the urban society which was to become dominant in the Western world. They could never be assimilated to feudalism. The

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way of life of the merchant, based on trade and money, was quite different from that of the feudal society in the midst of which they formed their settlements. Feudal society was based on status, their society was based on contract. "Feudal society was entirely based on the ownership and possession of land, and had no regard for personal property which they represented. It was adapted to a sedentary population, and they were mobile, to a servile population and they were free."¹

It was a highly integrated society, embracing all aspects of the citizen's life. In spite of certain tendencies towards individual freedom, we might almost call it "totalitarian" (though this solidarity, marked by an ardent local patriotism, was freely accepted by the citizens in general, not enforced by a dictator or a hierarchy). The freedom which it gave was freedom from feudal burdens—even for the serf—as long as he could prove to have lived within the city walls for a year and a day. But once within the city he had, like all the other inhabitants, to live under the elaborate system whereby the life of the community was organised. The burghers "had to provide for the subsistence of a sizeable population obliged to get its food-supply from without; to protect their workmen from foreign competition; to make certain of their supply of raw materials and to insure the exporting of their manufactures. They accomplished it by a system of regulation so marvellously adapted to its purpose that it may be considered a masterpiece of its kind. The city economy was worthy of the Gothic architecture with which it was contemporary. It created with complete thoroughness—and, it may well be said, it created *ex nihilo*—a social legislation more complete

¹ H. Pirenne: *Mediaeval Cities*, tr. T. D. Halsey (Princeton, 1925), 217.

than that of any other period in history, including our own."¹

The first concern of the merchants was to secure liberties or privileges guaranteeing the conditions in which they could carry on their trade. These involved freedom from the various feudal dues and restrictions, from obligations of service, and from the feudal courts.

In Italy urban life had never wholly ceased. There the citizens gained or maintained their freedom, sometimes by diplomatic bargaining, often through bloody and recurrent conflicts. In Northern Europe the later eleventh century saw numerous risings of the townsfolk against the local feudal authorities, usually the bishops.

This marked the revolutionary period when the rising *bourgeoisie* established their right to exist as a new order outside the feudal structure. By the twelfth century this right was generally recognised, and charters securing the *bourgeoisie* their liberties were most often accorded by peaceful purchase. Often the townsfolk gained the support of the greater lord or king—in Germany and Italy the Emperor—against the local "lord of the manor", whether ecclesiastical or lay. But if circumstances pointed another way they were ready to join with the barons in exacting their charters of liberties from the king, as the burghers of London combined with Church and barons to force from King John a guarantee of their own rights in Magna Carta.

By such a charter the town concerned was recognised as a community whose members lay outside the feudal system proper, a community often known on the Continent as a commune. Many communes gained complete independence,

¹ Henri Pirenne: *Northern Towns and their Commerce*, Cambridge Mediaeval History, Vol. VI, p.515.

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in fact if not always in name. But even if it recognised the authority of a sovereign, each town remained as an *enclave* wherein a different kind of society existed from the predominant feudal and rural society around. "The city formed a legal state, a real immunity, in the midst of the country surrounding it. As soon as the gates were passed one found oneself in quite a different legal sphere, just as today on crossing the frontier of another state."¹

With the revival of trade, the demand grew for imported goods, such as fine cloth, articles which could not be obtained through barter, but for which money was necessary. The lords became less satisfied in receiving their dues in kind (for example, agricultural produce) or in service, and preferred instead money payments with which they could buy the luxuries they desired. If a villein or dependent knight was able to pay a lord a money-rent instead of the accustomed service or dues in kind, he was usually willing to accept it.

So the institutions of feudalism began to decay, and the solvent of money, the hall-mark of the *bourgeoisie*, began to operate with effect throughout the entire social order. War and disease speeded the process. The Black Death, by killing between one-third and a half of the population of England in 1348-9, also largely killed the feudal relation of serf and villein to lord, since in the prevailing labour-shortage serfs and villeins could easily find work as wage-labourers on estates to which they fled. The Crusades were expensive operations, and some of the costs, such as ransoms, could not be met through the old-fashioned exactions. Money-taxes were resorted to, one of the most famous being that raised in

¹ Pirenne: *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, Vol. VI, p.521.

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England to redeem Richard Coeur-de-Lion from the Emperor, into whose hands he had fallen while returning from the Holy Land. The Popes too found their expenses continually out-running revenue, in spite of being supplied by the best-organised tax system in Europe. These demands were often met by loans. Great banking houses first grew up in Italy, but before long were established also in Germany and elsewhere. Several families of international financiers well-known to history appear in the latter part of the Middle Ages; the Medici in Florence, the Welsers and Fuggers in Germany.

Their principle was to make money without particular regard to any special moral code or scheme of ethics. The career of the Fuggers, which reached its highest point during the Renaissance, illustrates how the moral and religious safeguards erected by the Church during the Middle Ages to prevent what was considered a wrong use of money were fast becoming a dead letter.

“The Fuggers, thanks to judicious loans to [the Emperor] Maximilian, had acquired enormous concessions of mineral property, farmed a large part of the receipts drawn by the Spanish Crown from its estates, held silver and quicksilver mines in Spain, and controlled banking and commercial businesses in Italy, and, above all, at Antwerp. They advanced the money which made Albrecht of Brandenburg archbishop of Mainz; repaid themselves by sending their agent to accompany Tetzels on his campaign to raise money by indulgences and taking half the proceeds; provided the funds with which Charles V bought the imperial crown, after an election conducted with the publicity of an auction and the morals of a gambling hell; browbeat him, when the debt was not paid, in the tone of a pawnbroker rating a necessitous client; and found the money with which Charles raised troops to fight the

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Protestants in 1552. The head of the firm built a church and endowed almshouses for the aged poor in his native town of Augsburg. He died in the odour of sanctity, a good Catholic and a Count of the Empire, having seen his firm pay 54 per cent for the preceding sixteen years.”¹

With the rise of the great banking families another phase of Western society was heralded, for the coming of capitalism laid the financial basis for the Industrial Revolution.

Long before the end of the Middle Ages the *bourgeoisie* had become recognised as a privileged class, the “Third Estate”, who ranked alongside of the other two privileged “estates” of lords and clergy. No one could afford to ignore them, and kings summoned their representatives to Parliaments, Estates-General and *Cortes*, largely to persuade them to part with some of their money in taxes or grants to the Crown.

Not merely as a class, but as representatives of a new social order, the *bourgeoisie* were destined to oust both the other estates, the feudal lords and the mediaeval clergy. From their first rough settlements on the river banks their way of life had expanded, until by the end of the Middle Ages it was fast becoming the dominant element in Western Civilisation.

¹ R. H. Tawney: *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Murray, 1933), p.79.

Chapter Six

Unity and Division in the West

(a) *The integration and division of Mediaeval Europe.*

WEST EUROPEAN civilisation originally found its point of unity in the Church. It was then a simple type of society in which there was little division of function and no clear dividing line between the spiritual and secular life. Christianity became the generally accepted religion—for the masses, a “religion of obligation” reinforcing the framework of custom, law and morality on which society rested.

But within “Christendom” there were lines of cleavage which came to undermine its original unity. Western Europe was always haunted by the ghost of the defunct Roman Empire, and attempts were made to regulate the relations of Church and State in the same way as had been done in the Empire’s final phase.

Under Constantine and his successors the Empire was a state within which the Church existed as a separate religious society. Hence a division of authority had been necessary between the Emperor, charged with secular affairs, and the Pope, whose sphere was the spiritual side. At the end of the fifth century Pope Gelasius I (492-6) laid down the classical

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definition of the division of the two spheres of authority between Pope and Emperor who bore the "two swords", spiritual and secular.

But already when Pope Gelasius pronounced his doctrine the Western Empire had collapsed, and society was returning to a more primitive condition where the distinction between secular and spiritual was impracticable. The Pope, notably in the person of St. Gregory the Great, was obliged to assume secular as well as spiritual responsibility and was, for a time, the chief authority in Western Europe, both as spiritual and secular head.

This mingling of secular and spiritual authority was shown in the tendency to give spiritual powers also to the local lords. Sometimes it happened that an attempt was made to strengthen the representative of the secular authority by endowing him with the spiritual authority of the Church. When the Gothic war-bands were penetrating into Auvergne, the population insisted that the local "Lord of the Manor", Sidonius Apollinaris (430—483), became their bishop. So it happened that this member of a wealthy senatorial family, who until then had passed his time in the usual empty social round of his class, and in composing carefully phrased letters and verses, found himself forced to play an energetic part as the shepherd of a bewildered flock. For two years he was a prisoner of the Burgundians "and thereafter adored by them, a little to his own embarrassment—

" They do not come to you at dawn,
Breathing out leeks and ardour,
Great friendly souls with appetites
Much bigger than your larder— "

holding at Clermont the last stronghold of Roman culture in

Auvergne, and dying at last in his Cathedral, with the wailing of the people in his ears".¹

With the growth of feudalism the great barons were often bishops. Relatives of rulers were made bishops: Odo, the half-brother of William the Conqueror, became Bishop of Bayeux; after the Conquest of England he became Earl of Kent. It was not unusual for bishops to lead their men in battle, like the secular lords. The administration of the feudal states could not have been carried on without the secular activities of the higher clergy. The Archbishop of Canterbury often was also what we would now term Prime Minister, and in the absence of state salaries the only way in which the higher grade of officials could be remunerated was by appointing them to bishoprics.

Society, during this early phase, was unitary. As a unitary society it was best served by one supreme authority, which until 800 A.D. was the Pope. But the leaders of the Church, having taken over so much of what the Empire had left, in the way of ideas, laws and institutions, were reluctant to believe that these could well exist without the Emperor himself.

So little could they do without the familiar institution of the Empire that, after the collapse of the Western Empire, the Popes turned to the Emperors of Constantinople as rulers of Italy, and supported their attempts to extend their authority as a reality instead of a shadow over the West. But as Byzantine influence waned west of the Adriatic, it became necessary to turn elsewhere. At the end of the eighth century Pope Leo III was spurred to the decisive step by his need of a protector against the factions in Rome who opposed him. He called

¹ Helen Waddell: *The Wandering Scholars* (Constable, 1938) p.13 (poem translated from Sid. Apol. *Carm. XII ad Catullinum*).

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to his aid Charlemagne, the most powerful sovereign of the West, and—harking back to the relationship of Constantine as protector to the Popes of his day—raised him to be head of a resurrected Empire.

The result was a dualism in Christendom that was never really resolved. Charlemagne responded to the needs of the situation by making himself virtually the supreme authority over things spiritual as well as secular, assuming many of the prerogatives of the Pope. He resembled closely the Caliphs of Islam, who at the same period were ruling over a similar unitary society.

The needs of European society for a supreme head could be met as long as the ultimate authority was placed in either Pope or Emperor. But the question who was the ultimate authority could never be settled. Though the Pope's position as spiritual head of Christendom was seldom challenged, there was continued dispute throughout the Middle Ages as to the position of the Emperor, and as to the relation between the two authorities.

This mattered little as long as Pope and Emperor held to a "gentleman's agreement" not to trench on the other's province—which demanded tact and goodwill on both sides, since it was impossible to mark the boundaries of their spheres. But as soon as either Pope or Emperor began to exert his full claims, trouble broke out. From the end of the eleventh century onwards there took place a long-drawn struggle—often passing into open warfare—from which neither party emerged victorious.

The most successful period of co-operation between Pope and Emperor took place during the first half of the eleventh century, and culminated in the partnership between the Emperor Henry III (1039-1056) and Pope Leo IX (1048-1054). Harmony between the two authorities was the outcome of

unity of aim. Both Henry and Leo were ardent reformers, determined to eradicate abuses such as simony (the sale of clerical offices) and other types of corruption, and to impose discipline, notably celibacy for the clergy. Their programme of reform was the starting-point of a far-reaching movement which enhanced the spiritual quality of the clergy and thereby leavened the entire life of Christendom. This reforming movement drew its strength and inspiration from the reformed monastic orders, particularly that of Cluny, which were playing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries a major rôle as the creative minority for Europe.¹

The reforming movement, like similar previous movements within the Church, continued to develop the unity of Christendom on every level. It strengthened the organisational framework of the Church, whereby the Pope and the cardinals at Rome co-ordinated the activities of bishops, monks and clergy throughout Europe. It leavened with a Christian spirit the idea of knighthood, consecrating it in terms of Chivalry. It sought to restore peace and order, or at least to restrict the evils of feudal warfare (not without success) in fostering the "Truce of God" and establishing "Leagues of Peace". It was able to kindle the enthusiasm which set on foot the early Crusades, demonstrating the expansive power of Western Europe in a form similar to the conquering wars of Islam. The crusading orders of knights (Templars, Hospitalers and others), drawn from all nations of the West and united in obedience to the Papacy, mark the highest point in the consecration of knighthood in the service of the Church, while expressing the unity of Western Christendom for which the Church, at its best, stood.

¹ See Chapter 5.

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The momentum of the reforming movement, with positive consequences for the unity of Western Europe, continued long after the great era of partnership between Pope and Emperor. This era ended when the fifty years' reign of Henry IV (1056-1106) saw growing discord between the two authorities, culminating in the excommunication of the Emperor by Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand), and the outbreak of those wars, alternating with conflicts on the diplomatic level, which undermined the unity of Western Society.

This conflict not only split Western Europe in two; it aggravated the division of social groups and classes. Kings, feudal lords and cities had to decide which rival they would support. A disgruntled lord would choose the party of the Pope against his overlord the Emperor; a commune striving to gain freedom would support the opposite party to that of its feudal overlord. War and civil war became endemic.

This conflict hastened the division within the West between the spiritual and secular sides of life. In order to carry out his reforms, Gregory VII during his time as Pope (1073-1085) exerted claims to a far-reaching control of the higher clergy, by virtue of being their spiritual head. Attempts to reform abuses such as simony were fraught with difficulty. Since Church offices were feudal, secular offices as well, there was a strong argument for the feudal over-lord receiving a due as part of his normal revenue from the incumbent entering office. Related to this was the question of the right of appointment to the higher clerical positions: the Pope claimed it to be his as the spiritual authority, the secular ruler claimed it as administrative head whose bishops and higher clergy served him as government ministers and officials.

The Emperor and kings rebutted the papal claims and increasingly withdrew control over their affairs from the

Church. In this way feudal kingdoms began to grow into self-sufficient states, many of which, during the period of the Reformation, rejected the Church of Rome altogether. They looked for a new type of secular official as civil servants in the place of the clerical office-holders.

The Popes too, in prosecuting the struggle, were forced to behave more like secular rulers. They used spiritual weapons such as excommunication to vanquish their rivals, and set on foot wars under the name of Crusades. For the latter purpose their need of money increased, so that they were forced to adopt the ways of the "world" in compromising with the secular standards in finance and business which had developed in *bourgeois* society.¹ Humiliated by the secular rulers (the Popes for nearly seventy years were kept at Avignon virtually as prisoners of the French kings), the Papacy lost prestige as the centre of integration for Western Europe.

The deep divisions which these conflicts engendered split Western Society in every sphere, and made increasingly difficult of attainment the vision of an order in which every person and every social group had its rightful place. Though this ideal was never attained in Western Europe as a whole, it was to some extent attained locally in the cities, especially during their early period.

This flowering of civilisation within cities, whose people formed a united community, had a spiritual root, and was largely nurtured by the reforming movement. It was often under the leadership of reformist preachers that the townsfolk were inspired to struggle against feudal control by bishops or secular overlords. Religious enthusiasm pervaded the entire life of these cities. "It was the religious confraternity or

¹ See Chapter 5.

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'charity'—the free association of individuals under the patronage of a saint for mutual aid, spiritual and material—which was the seed of the great flowering of communal life in the Merchant and Craft guilds . . . In the life of the Church and in the extension of the liturgy into common life by art and pageantry . . . the community life of the mediaeval city found its fullest expression, so that the material poverty of the individual man was compensated by a wider development of communal activity and artistic and symbolic expression than anything that the more materially wealthy societies of modern Europe have known. In this, the mediaeval city was more completely a *commonwealth*—a full communion and communication of social goods—than any society that has ever existed with the exception of the Greek *polis*, and it was superior even to the latter, inasmuch as it was not the society of a leisured class supported by a foundation of servile labour."¹

The decline of the reforming movement and the increasing divisions in society, aggravated by the conflict of Pope and Emperor, meant that little was left to hold in check the latent centrifugal forces in the towns. The lines of division—the papal versus the imperial party—ran through the towns; it became ever easier for the rich to find themselves on one side and the poor on the other, so that the struggle of classes began to rend the towns in two.

Parallel to the division of classes and parties went the division between spiritual and secular. Religion in the *bourgeois* outlook became less intimately connected with ordinary life: it tended less and less to mix with business—except in so far as ecclesiastical affairs (such as monastic endowments and property, or the needs of the papal treasury for

¹ C. Dawson: *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, pp.203, 207.

liquid funds) still provided an excellent sphere for money-making. Eventually religion in *bourgeois* society became divorced from ordinary life: society became essentially secular, religion existing as a thing apart, a question of the observance of Sundays and feast-days, or of pious benefactions and church-building. The commercial towns, by the end of the Middle Ages, represent in microcosm the secular society which was destined to expand until it embraced the entire civilisation of the West.

In the later Middle Ages the guilds merchant or market guilds—associations of small tradesmen—gave place to the craft and commercial guilds. These were dominated by the wealthy citizens. Instead of being associations of all those in the town engaging in trade or in certain crafts, in which all members participated equally, they became organisations for securing a privileged position to the wealthy merchants and bankers, and to the capitalists who organised the rudimentary division of labour whereby cloth and some other goods were produced.

The small men—journeymen, artisans and shopkeepers—were squeezed out of the privileges of guild membership and tended to sink in the social scale. Class-conflicts developed as they found themselves increasingly in the position of a proletariat at the mercy of the richer citizens.

The religious aspects of guild life correspondingly decayed, though many guilds had originally been established almost as much for religious and social reasons as economic. In earlier days all members of the English guilds took part in the periodic “times of drinking”, and observed corporate religious ceremonies or participated in the miracle plays. But by the end of the Middle Ages the social side had been reduced to banquets for the wealthy members, while the semi-religious

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solidarity of the earlier period had given way to plutocratic privilege. The secular tendencies of *bourgeois* society were clearly showing through the old religious forms.

(b) *The Franciscan synthesis.*

Italy in the thirteenth century illustrated the divisions which were already overtaking Western Society. It was a microcosm of what Europe was to become: the battleground for the "great powers" of Empire and Papacy, under the shadow of whose conflicts the lesser "states" (the cities and duchies) carried on their rivalries and minor wars. Parallel to the conflicts between these various groupings within Italy were the conflicts of party and class within each "state".

Typical of the cities of second rank was Assisi. With the development of trade and industry a flourishing *bourgeoisie* had grown up, the great ones of the city, the *majores*. A sharp division of class separated these *majores* from the lesser folk, the *minores*. The *bourgeoisie* were attempting not merely to dominate the city proletariat: they were eager to make good their independence against their overlord, and bring into subjection the nobles whose estates were in the surrounding countryside.

The overlord of Assisi at the end of the twelfth century was a German count, the representative of the Emperor: he was expelled by the simple decree of Pope Innocent III. The townsfolk, being unwilling to exchange one overlord for another, demolished the feudal castle, the *Rocca*, whose remains still look down on Assisi, and with incredible speed used the stones for building a wall around the city. The *bourgeoisie* then embarked on a war to bring the local feudal nobility under their control, in the course of which some of the latter allied with the neighbouring town of Perugia.

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In this petty warfare Francis (1182-1226), son of the rich merchant Pietro Bernadone, took part: he was captured and passed a year as a prisoner in Perugia. The experience of prison life seems to have played a part in turning him towards his vocation.

While still the acknowledged leader of the gilded youth of Assisi, "the unction of God came upon him", as his earliest biographer Thomas of Celano says, "and strove first to recall his erring senses by the infliction of distress of mind and discomfort of body according to the Prophet's words "Behold, I will hedge thy way with thorns and will compass it with a wall'." ¹ He retired from "the world", not merely metaphorically but literally also, for considerable periods, spending much time meditating in a cave. The turning-point in his life came when "one day he was walking by the Church of St. Damian, which was almost ruinous, and was forsaken of all men. Led by the Spirit, he went in to pray. He fell down before the crucifix in devout supplication, and, having been smitten by unwonted visitations, found himself another man than he who had gone in. And, while he was thus moved, straightway—a thing unheard of for ages—the painted image of Christ crucified moved its lips and addressed him, calling him by name: 'Francis,' it said, 'go repair My house, which as thou seest is wholly falling into ruin'." ²

Step by step Francis was led to reject entirely the way of life in which he had been brought up, in spite of the brutal efforts of his father to force him to conform. He applied with an utter lack of compromise, with complete logic, what he understood to be the teaching of Christ, leading like Him a

¹ I. *Celano*, Ch. 2 (3). tr. A. G. Ferrers Howell, (Methuen, 1908).

² *Ibid.*, II. *Celano*, Ch. 6 (10).

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life of poverty and chastity, the better to preach the Gospel and so fulfil the command of rebuilding His Church.

He rejected all rules and conventions not merely of "the world" but of the accepted religious life of his day. His one law was Christ's law of love. His "Rule" was not the conventional Rule of a monastic order, such as St. Benedict's with its carefully elaborated discipline and principles, but a few verses from the Gospel which came to him with the force of a trumpet-call, and which gave him direction and an aim. "Wherever ye go, preach, saying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, neither shoes nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat" (Matt. 10, 7).

Just as Jesus attracted to him a few chosen souls when he embarked on his mission, so did Francis. This first small group, the original band of the Brothers Minor (a name whereby they identified themselves with the lower class, the *minores*) was a rebirth of the "inspired democracy" of Jesus and His disciples. Its members worked for their living, and when they earned insufficient they begged. They possessed nothing save the clothes they stood up in (and even these they often gave away). Such food as they had was shared in common. Far from Francis claiming any superior position, he showed himself as the servant of all the brothers, eventually handing over the administration of the movement to others when it had become so large as to necessitate a firmer organisation.

The mainspring of Francis' life, as of that of his friend and disciple St. Clare who founded the parallel sisterhood for women, was a deep and personal relationship to Jesus Christ. This sometimes expressed itself in picturesque ways: "even

towards little worms he glowed with exceeding love, because he had read that word concerning the Saviour: 'I am a worm and no man'. Wherefore he used to pick them up in the way and put them in a safe place, that they might not be crushed by the feet of the passers-by".¹ In prayer, when he had withdrawn himself to a solitary place, "there he would make answer to his Judge, there entreat his Father; there he would converse with his Friend, there rejoice with the Bridegroom. And in order that he might make of the whole marrow of his being a whole burnt-offering, in manifold ways, he would set before his eyes in manifold ways Him who is supremely simple . . . And so the whole man, not so much praying, as having become a [living] prayer, concentrated his whole attention and affection on the one thing which he was seeking from the Lord".²

Francis was what St. Paul called "the new man in Christ". As his biographer, Thomas of Celano, says, he achieved the complete conquest of himself.

This "new creation" in himself was the basis of the new integration or synthesis which he brought to Christendom, fast becoming divided. He believed in changing men through preaching the Gospel to them, and so liberating that love in their hearts which could bind all men together.

The friars were a product of the emerging *bourgeois* society. St. Francis as the son of a wealthy *bourgeois* had a special concern for the towns, his own first of all. He called those who wished to lead a whole-hearted life of evangelical poverty, but who were not content to retire to the rural peace of a cloister. He put them not in a retreat but on the road.

¹ I. Celano, Ch. 29 (80).

² II. Celano, Ch. 61 (94).

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The Brothers Minor abandoned the world in spirit, but returned to it as examples of Christ in His poverty and humility: especially they returned to the "world" of cities which represented the coming phase of civilisation.

They broke with the old-time monasticism which had been a movement of the countryside, where the large estates of abbeys and monasteries formed a recognised part of feudal agricultural society. The friars, Dominicans as well as Franciscans, who settled in the towns, "were not merely a normal development arising from the new orientation which religious fervour took. The principle of poverty which they professed made them break with the demesial organization, heretofore the support of monastic life. By them monasticism was found to be wonderfully well adapted to a city atmosphere. They asked no more of the burghers than their alms. In place of isolating themselves in the centre of vast, silent enclosures, they built their convents along the streets. They took part in all the agitations, all the miseries as well, and understood all the aspirations of the artisans, whose spiritual directors they well deserved to become".¹

In this they entered into the inheritance of the earlier reforming movement, bringing back to the towns a spirit of unity, and orienting their culture and institutions in a Christian direction.

St. Francis' own birthplace, Assisi, though it rejected him at first, soon became an example of this development. Through his influence the truce of 1202, ending the war in which he had been captured, was converted to a durable peace. In 1210 a solemn document of "civil peace" was signed between the conflicting parties, Francis acting as the arbiter: in it they

¹ H. Pirenne: *Mediaeval Cities*, tr. F. D. Halsey, (Princeton, 1925), p. 173

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pledged themselves, with the help of "the supreme grace of the Holy Spirit" to "do everything by common accord which will be for the honour, the security and the advantage of the commune of Assisi".¹ In this spirit the lords, for a small compensation, renounced their feudal rights: the inhabitants of the villages surrounding Assisi were given full rights of citizenship: strangers were protected and the rate of taxation was fixed. So real was the peace that the exiles of the civil war were able to return in perfect safety and settle down in the city.

At Arezzo peace was restored "at a time when that whole city was so shaken with intestinal war that its destruction seemed imminent". After a vision of devils exulting over the city and "inflaming the citizens to their mutual destruction", St. Francis called Brother Sylvester to go before the gate of the city "and on behalf of Almighty God to command the devils to go out of it as speedily as possible . . . Soon afterwards peace was restored to the city, and the laws of good government were observed in great tranquillity".²

Another outcome of the early Franciscan movement was the creation of a society in which the secular and spiritual sides were once more brought together, but on a higher level than before.

There were many people whose lives had been changed through the Franciscans' message but who could not leave their family or their responsibilities for the life of the mobile "Knights of the Lord". One such was Donna Giacoma, widow of the Roman patrician Graciano Frangipani, who on

¹ P. Sabatier: *Life of St. Francis*. Eng. tr. (Hodder & Stoughton, 1905) p. 118.

² Thomas of Celano, *op. cit.* II, 108. (translation, p.246).

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her husband's death had two infant sons to look after, as well as the Frangipani estates (which, being family and not personal possessions, could not be alienated). Others were the retired merchant Luchiesio and his wife. Under the influence of the Franciscans such people vowed themselves to following as nearly as possible the way of life of the brotherhood, while continuing to live in their own homes.

In effect this was a way of life quite different from that of the feudal nobility and the *bourgeoisie*. Being based on poverty it involved reducing expenditure to the minimum necessary for subsistence and giving the rest away in charity. It involved having no dealings in usury and other methods of making money which were a vital part of *bourgeois* economy. Sometimes it involved collective efforts, such as administering hospitals, as well as private almsgiving and charity.

At first these lay "Brothers of Penance" followed the Franciscan way of life without submitting to any authorised "Rule". But, as the Franciscans became organised, they, like the Brothers Minor, were provided with a Rule by the Papal Court (1220-1), and became known as the "Third Order" of the Franciscans.

This Rule cramped the spontaneity of the Third Order and its influence dwindled. But, taken as a whole, the influence of St. Francis and his followers in all spheres of culture was immense, and continues until the present day.

His influence oriented in a spiritual direction the purely secular culture of the courts and the troubadours which spread throughout Europe from Sicily, Provence and Spain in the twelfth century. It has been suggested¹ that this culture was the child of the Moslem civilisation of Spain, at its height

¹ C. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 182.

before and during this period. A culture rich in poetry and music, its spirit was hostile to the ascetic and other-worldly values of Christendom. "Love and honour, wealth and liberality, beauty and joy—these were the true ends of life in comparison with which the joys of heaven and the pains of hell were pale and shadowy".¹

The mediaeval ideals of Chivalry owed much to this exotic culture. Its conception of courtesy and honour, its forms of poetry and song, were taken by St. Francis and infused with a profoundly Christian spirit. "The Lady Poverty became the mistress of his heart. His friars were sometimes his 'Knights of the Round Table', sometimes 'minstrels of the Lord' . . . 'Let the friars,' he said in an injunction incorporated in the early Rule, 'take care not to appear gloomy and sad like hypocrites, but let them be jovial and merry, showing that they rejoice in the Lord, and becomingly courteous'. 'Courtesy is one of the qualities of God Himself, who, of His courtesy, giveth His sun and His rain to the just and the unjust: and courtesy is the sister of charity, and quencheth hate and keepeth love alive'. Francis himself was courteous to all alike, even to thieves and robbers. He never felt himself superior to others, was never condescending. 'More than a saint among saints,' says Thomas of Celano, 'he was among sinners as one of themselves'."²

As "God's Troubadour" he sang new songs in the style of Provence—love songs indeed, but songs of the love of Christ; songs of gratitude for all things in heaven and earth, praising with them their Maker.

¹ *Ibid*, 185.

² *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, VI, Ch. 21, p.728. (A. G. Little, *The Mendicant Orders*.)

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“ Love sets me all on fire.
Love sets me all on fire.
Into Love’s fire I’m cast
By my sweet Bridegroom new . . . ”¹

At the end of his life, after he had been suffering much and his spirit had been clouded with sadness, he broke into his last and greatest song of joy, singing it frequently and having it sung to him on his deathbed. “The Canticle of the Sun” marks a fresh beginning in the vernacular poetry of Europe. It is a song in praise of God and all his creatures, beginning with the highest, Brother Sun, and continuing through the moon and stars and the elements—Brother Wind and Air, Sister Water, Brother Fire, to Mother Earth “who governs and sustains us”, and all her fruits and herbs. He praises men who pardon wrong, endure sorrow and bear their woes in peace, and ends in praise of Sister Death “from whom no living soul escapes”.

Here in one inspired song is the philosophy of St. Francis, which re-expressed the mediaeval conception of the universe—“the vertical which begins with God and comes down through all created things and goes as far as death”.² His philosophy was one of feeling, not of intellectual theorising. All things *were* brothers and sisters to him, because God was their Father just as He was his Father. For him the universe was one “great family”.³ Therefore it was normal for him to talk

¹ The opening lines from St. Francis’ canticle *In foco l’Amor mi mise* (translation from *Works of St. Francis of Assisi*, Washbourne, 1890, p.147).

² Professor Theophil Spoerri, in a lecture to the College of the Good Road, December 1949.

³ *Ibid.*

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with the birds and the animals, to preach sermons to flowers, and to treat "brother body" (or "brother ass" as he sometimes called it) with the strictness and respect which was its due.

In St. Francis is triumphantly vanquished that fear of the natural world, the world of demons and occult forces, which had haunted man from earliest times. Modern man has "conquered" Nature by measuring and analysing, and by exploiting her physical forces. But Francis made friends with the natural world, so that fierce beasts became tame on his approach, and wild animals who encountered him would not go away. Inanimate nature shared equally in the divine fellowship: water meant much more than a chemical compound or the means of slaking thirst—it was "Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste".

In St. Francis is seen a person through whom the great vision of St. Paul begins to be realised, that "creation as well as man would one day be freed from its thralldom to decay and gain the glorious freedom of God's children".¹ He lives out the rôle which St. Gregory of Nyssa had described as that for mankind, so to share in the resurrection of Christ that "the earthy might be raised up to the Divine, and so one certain grace of equal value might pervade the whole creation, the lower nature being mingled with the supramundane".²

This vision provided a new synthesis at the earliest dawn of the Renaissance, giving a spiritual foundation and a unity to that tremendous flowering of Western man's creative forces. It set new styles in literature and art,—in vernacular poetry, of which St. Francis' "Canticle of the Sun" is the

¹ *Romans*, 8. 21 (Moffatt trans.).

² St. Gregory of Nyssa, *op. cit.* Cap. 32, p.499 (see above, Chap. 4 (c).)

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earliest example in Italian, and the new painting pioneered by Giotto and Cimabue. But as this vision waned another orientation came into Renaissance thought and feeling. Art from being the art of a God-centred universe becomes the art of a man-centred world. Its principle of integration is lost, so that art and literature increasingly reflect parts of the world and not the whole, appearances rather than reality—until art itself ceases to be something enjoyed by the whole community and becomes instead a luxury for the wealthy few.

The late Middle Ages were attended by the sunset radiance of a splendid vision, the vision of spiritual reality as it appeared to St. Francis, Joachim of Fiore, Dante and others. The vision lingered, but the ideals which it inspired seemed ever further from fulfilment.

This vision had never been more completely presented to the world. Those dwellers in the cavern who, in Plato's myth, found their way into the light, were so blinded by the true reality that it was some time before they could see clearly. Eventually they returned to the world, and strove to awaken men to what they had seen. Plato's guardians were to form the element in the community who attained this vision and lived in its light, and governed the community according to its inspiration.

In Mediaeval Europe the friars took over from the monks a similar rôle to that of these guardians, as a supranational element who gave all to bring spiritual reality to the community.¹ Their strength lay in their unity as a dedicated force,

¹ Plato's "communism is an anticipation of the ideal of the religious order, and has no relation to modern communism." Sir Richard Livingstone: *Selections from Plato*, 95. (In fact the Communist Party attempts to play the part of "guardians" for the communist world, see Ch. 9).

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and in the degree to which as a body they maintained their spiritual quality.

St. Francis himself almost certainly was influenced by the writings of Joachim of Fiore. His was an apocalyptic view of history, which had come to him as he meditated alone in the mountains of Calabria, whence it went forth to the generation of St. Francis with the power of prophecy. He proclaimed that a new period of humanity was beginning, when men should no longer live, as in earlier epochs, in fear or under "the law", but that they should live by the Holy Spirit in fulness of love. Three epochs divided the history of mankind—"in the first they lived in fear; in the second they rest in faith; in the third they shall burn with love. The first saw the shining of the stars; the second sees the whitening of the dawn; the third will behold the glory of the day".¹

In their early enthusiasm St. Francis and the Brothers Minor believed that they were called to usher in a new era for mankind, when the truths of the gospel should be realised in practice; and before he died (1202) Joachim had acclaimed them as those chosen by God for this task.

Everywhere, in the northern lands as well as in the south, saints and mystics, men and women, were arising who castigated the sins of the Church while proclaiming an era when "spring-time and peace shall reign over a regenerated world".²

These hopes were not destined to be realised during the following centuries. The Franciscans, who did so much in leavening the society of their day, gradually lost influence as they became internally divided, disputing about the way in which their founder's teaching should be applied. The main

¹ P. Sabatier op. cit., p. 49.

² St. Hildegarde (died 1178), quoted *ibid*, 52.

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point at issue was the question of poverty, for the extremists followed literally the example and teaching of St. Francis, while others compromised. And as in the case of the Third Order, their spontaneity was cramped by the rules and regulations whereby they were converted into an Order under papal control—though as such they are still a living force.

Starting as a group who despised book-learning, the Franciscans, along with the Dominicans, became the intellectual leaders of the day, supreme in the newly-founded universities. It was a Dominican, St. Thomas Aquinas (1227–1274), who produced the greatest masterpiece of Mediaeval philosophy. But his picture of a well-ordered community directed towards spiritual ends was of an ideal with which the facts were coming into ever sharper conflict.

(c) *Dante's vision of unity.*

Dante (1265–1321) died a century after St. Francis. He came from a similar background, the son of a well-to-do family in Florence, one of the greatest mercantile cities of that age. In spite of the efforts of the Franciscans, the Italian cities had not found peace. Florence was divided into opposing camps: these divisions reached the point of open war in the year 1300, when Dante Alighieri was, for two months, one of the six elected members of the Priorate, the highest governing authority of the town. During his term of office the Priorate passed a decree banishing the leaders of both sides, a decree for which Dante was therefore in part responsible. Sixteen months later one of these parties, aided by the French prince, Charles of Valois, gained the upper hand in Florence, and Dante, among others, was banished for life.

He spent the rest of his days finding "how salt doth taste another's bread, and how hard the path to descend and mount

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upon another's stair"¹. Hardship, if not actual poverty, was his lot, and though (unlike St. Francis) he had not sought the experience freely, the loss of most things that he held dear brought about a profound change of outlook. Dante, like Plato a thousand years before, was forced by the degeneration and divisions of his city and his world to think out anew the basis for personal, social and political life.

The outcome was the *Divine Comedy*, perhaps the greatest poem in the literature of Western Europe. On one level it is the story of Dante's pilgrimage, from the time when, on the pinnacle of power, in Florence, he was lost "in the middle of the way of our life . . . in a dark wood"², beset by the wild beasts of sensuality, ambition and greed,³ through his time of testing and purifying in "Purgatory", until his attainment of the beatific vision in "Heaven". On another level, it is a treatment of the problems of society and politics, with particular reference to the troubles of Florence, Italy and Europe; while on yet another level the highest metaphysical and theological themes are woven into the story and the splendid imagery.

¹ ". . . Come sa di sale

lo pane altrui, e com' è duro calle
lo scendere e il salir per l'altrui scale."

—*Paradiso*, Canto 17, 58 (tr. Temple Classics, 213).

² "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita

mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
che la diritta via era smarrita" (mf. Canto, I, 1).

³ Sensuality, lust and greed, according to Prof. Theophil Spoerri (*Einführung in die Göttliche Komödie*, Zurich, 1946,) p.54. The beasts also have a political signification.

For "sensuality" the Temple Classics have "worldliness".

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Guided by reason—the best in the newly-awakened humanism—represented by Virgil, Dante is led to understand the meaning of Hell, that condition in which the lost soul has turned away and separated itself from God. Revelation or divine wisdom, symbolised by Beatrice, his boyhood love, takes over when reason can bring him no further ; face to face with the divine love, he is ashamed and repents of his sin, experiencing a change of heart. “The nettle of repentance here so did sting me, that of all other things, that which turned me most to love it, became most hateful to me”.¹

Through this change he is made ready for the beatific vision. In its light the mysteries of the universe, of life, of God, are explored, their essences seen as one united whole; reason is illuminated by the flash of spiritual intuition in which the ultimate mystery of the Incarnation, the union of the divine with man, becomes clear.

In this vision of Dante's all is light and flame. The blessed in heaven, ranked in their thousands, irradiated by the divine love, are like the petals of a rose, among which move the angels “with faces all of living flame”.² The vision of the unity of all things in God is of one mighty flame, the Eternal Light. The flash of understanding which illumines the ultimate mystery comes from the Light. Words fail to paint this vision, nor can imagination rise to it; but he who is illumined by it understands the divine ordering of all things and accepts God's will for himself.

¹ “Di penter sì mi punse ivi l'ortica,
che di tutt' altre cose, qual mi torse
più nel suo amor, più mi si fe' nimica.”

(*Purg.* Canto 31, 85. All translations from the Temple Classics).

² “Le facce tutte avean di fiamma viva.” (*Par.* Canto 31, 13.)

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“To the high fantasy here power failed; but already my desire and will were rolled—even as a wheel that moveth equally—by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars”.¹

This vision illumines the way for right living on the personal plane. In its light one can also see the right ordering of political and social life. Dante slashes the evil which has divided the twin authorities in Church and State, the political ambition and greed since the days of Constantine when the Church assumed territorial power, and the corruption of the papal court in his own day, culminating in its enslavement to the Kingdom of France.² His own hopes that the Empire should bring unity to Europe, through some great Emperor who would assume the lead as a reformer, had been sadly dashed by the failure and death of the Emperor Henry VII in 1313. Because of the failure of these authorities the Earthly Paradise was empty; men had failed to construct a well-ordered society which should reflect the perfect order and harmony of heaven.

Dante's cry is for others to seek this vision, for in this vision they will see the right relation of all things, both in heaven above and in the earth below; *seeing* what is right they will *love* what is right, and so strive to create that perfect order, the city “laid up in heaven”. This is the true light in which self and the universe must be seen.

¹ “All' alta fantasia qui mancò possa;
ma già volgeva il mio disiro e il velle,
sì come rota ch'egualmente è mossa,
l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle”.

(Final verse of the *Divine Comedy*.)

² *Purg.*, 32, lines 124 seq.

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“There is no light unless from that serene which never is disturbed, else is it darkness or shadow of the flesh or else its poison.”¹

The glory of this vision reminds us of the resplendent colours in which a friar of the 15th century, Angelico, presented the same high theme in paint.

But by the 15th century the Renaissance has arrived. Fra Angelico's colours are those of the sunset sky. The vision of St. Francis and Dante gave way before an entirely different view of life. The vision did not disappear: it was regained by men and women, mystics, saints and poets; in its light flourished many fervent groups and sects.

After the Reformation which split Christendom in two, it became increasingly difficult for any leader, however saintly, to recruit a supranational force like that of the Franciscan brotherhood. For a short time in the sixteenth century it seemed as if the Jesuits led by Saint Ignatius had recaptured the ideals and spirit of the Franciscans—a company of soldiers of Christ dedicated to the task of changing the world. But the “world” of Europe had become too divided, class against class, nation against nation, creed against creed. Their greatest successes were in the heathen world overseas, where the Jesuit fathers were among the boldest pioneers of that astonishing expansion of Europe which initiated a new historical era.

(d) Division in Renaissance Europe.

Division in Western Society has steadily increased since the Renaissance. The West has lost its common faith and the

¹ “Lume non è, se non vien dal sereno
che non si turba mai, anzi è tenebra,
od ombra della carne, o suo veleno.” (*Par.* Canto 19, 64).

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universal framework of the Church which went with it. The supranational orders of crusading knights and preaching friars have either disappeared or seen their influence weaken. Although a European "republic of letters" continued to exist, the universities lost their international character. Erasmus (1467-1536) was the last great man of letters who belonged to no one nation but to all.

Loyalty to the Catholic Church, to feudal overlord or to commune gave way to loyalty to the nation-state. The nation-state was the heir of the Mediaeval feudal duchy or kingdom, but many of its typical features were developed in the city-state or commune. Its keen sense of patriotism, thorough administration, bureaucratic tendencies and totalitarian claims are to be found first in Venice, Florence and other Italian cities, later in those of Flanders and Northern Europe.

Its good features as well as its bad were passed on to the nation-state. The free sharing in the life of the community and the value accorded to each individual were principles which clashed with feudal privilege and aristocratic exclusiveness, and sometimes won. The demand of the cities in France, England and elsewhere, to be consulted when the state used their money, led to the representational principle in those Parliaments, Estates-general and *Cortes* which were the forerunners of our democratic legislative assemblies.¹

The commune brought to the nation-state its high quality of administration, its efficiency—and since the nation-state was so much larger than the city, it became the new Leviathan, the most powerful organisation in the world. It only needed a military promenade of the army of Charles VIII of France (1495) to brush aside the resistance of the city-states of Italy,

¹ Ref. back, Ch. 5.

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and dislocate for ever the balance of power between them which their statesmen and diplomats had so carefully constructed.

The *bourgeoisie* incorporated themselves into the nation-state. Great financiers and merchants like Jacques Coeur built up the state's power in France¹; in England the commercial *bourgeoisie* were in the ascendant from the Tudor period onwards.

This new type of state arrogated to itself the powers and the universal claims of both Empire and Papacy. It claimed to be morally self-sufficient, providing the good life for its citizens. Its philosophy was based on the pre-Christian theories of Aristotle, and indeed reflected a situation like that of the Greek city-states which were Aristotle's model. For him the city-state had been the final self-sufficient institution of society —“that association which is supreme and embraces all the rest”.² This was the view held by Venetians or Florentines about their cities; it was held later on by French, Spaniards and English about their states.

With the decline of Empire and Church as supranational institutions, the state assumed complete sovereignty both in the political and religious spheres. The states which turned Protestant at the Reformation established state-churches, and went the whole way in assuming control over religion. Even where rulers remained faithful to the Catholic Church they made efforts to turn it into a department of state.

¹ “By helping to reorganise the finances of the realm he brought the Crown and the *bourgeoisie* in all parts of the country into much closer relations, and contributed to the remodelling of economic life and to the rise of one great nationality.” *Cambridge Modern History*, I, 503.

² *Politics*, Bk. I., Ch. 1.

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The change in outlook is illustrated by the gulf between the theories of St. Thomas Aquinas and those of Marsilius of Padua (1270-1343). St. Thomas built on Aristotle, but modified his views of the state as a self-sufficient body, because he recognised the need of "guidance provided for the faithful" in pursuit of the aim of a virtuous life; and this guidance or government, he maintained, is delegated to the priests "and in particular . . . to the High Priest, the successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ, the Roman Pontiff; to whom all kings in Christendom should be subject, as to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself".¹ But for Marsilius the spiritual aim was entirely secured by the state itself, in which the clergy are priests from one aspect, but merely state officials from another; they are controlled like the other officials by the governing body of the state.²

Religion ceased to provoke a loyalty to Christendom; instead nationalism roused an even fiercer loyalty to the nation-

¹ *De Regimine Principum*, Ch. XIV. (From Prof. A. P. d'Entrèves: *Aquinas, Selected Political Writings*, tr. W. J. G. Dawson, Blackwell, 1948).

² "One mediaeval publicist there was who dared to project a system logically elaborated even unto details, wherein the Church was a State Institution, Church property was State property, spiritual offices were offices of State, the government of the Church was part of the government of the State, and the sovereign Ecclesiastical Community was identical with the political Assembly of the Citizens. He was Marsilius of Padua." Gierke, O.: *Political Theories of the Middle Age* (tr. F. W. Maitland, Cambridge, 1922), p. 94.

For other excellent summaries of the thought of Marsilius of Padua see A. P. d'Entrèves, *The Mediaeval Contribution to Political Thought* (Oxford University Press), and the article on late Mediaeval Political Thought in the *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, Vol. VIII, by Prof. H. Laski.

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state. "We are Venetians first, Christians afterwards", was the response of Venice to a papal embassy asking for aid.

Instead of the state being conceived of as a divinely-ordained, organic community, the idea grew that it was a man-made institution. Macchiavelli (1469-1527) was a patriotic Florentine and a conscientious servant of the state. The aim of the state, he believed, was good government, and all means were open to the ruler in securing that end, whether they squared with morals and religion or not. He is only concerned with religion in so far as "worldly events" are partly "governed by fortune and God".¹ The state is a secular institution, the creation of a ruler or a line of rulers. The attitude of the ruler towards his state should be like that of the artist towards his material. The state is "a work of art".²

These principles—that the will of the ruler is law, and that the end justifies the means—lead Macchiavelli to glorify the successful conqueror or "dictator". His hero was Caesar Borgia, an ambitious, immoral adventurer, the type of "strong man" leader who has many times made his appearance in the modern world. Caesar, the son of Pope Alexander VI, by cunning and ruthlessness tried to build up the states of the Church in Central Italy as the nucleus of an Italian Kingdom. Macchiavelli cites as an example of statecraft his action in placing the "cruel and able" Remirro de Orco as ruler of a province which had to be reduced to order; when order had been established, to remove the hatred which Remirro had aroused, "he had him cut in half and placed one morning in the public square at Cesena with a piece of wood and blood-

¹ *The Prince*, Ch. 25.

² J. Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, part I.

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stained knife by his side. The ferocity of this spectacle caused the people both satisfaction and amazement".¹

Macchiavelli marks the swing away from the Christian approach to politics, until to-day it is generally accepted that religion does not mix with politics, and that there are two different standards for public and private morality. The division between spiritual and secular is clear. Macchiavelli is quite frank about his abandonment of the Christian basis of morality. "How we live," he wrote, "is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good. . . . He must not mind incurring the scandal of those vices without which it would be difficult to save the state, for if one considers well, it will be found that some things which seem virtues would, if followed, lead to one's ruin, and some others which appear vices result in one's greater security and well-being."²

As the English philosopher Hobbes (1588-1679) pointed out, the state had to be all powerful in order to hold together the individuals of which it was composed. For, by the time he wrote, individualism had taken a firm hold of people. The sense of belonging to an organic community was giving way to a belief in standing on one's own feet and struggling to achieve one's will in competition with others.

Individualism entered all spheres of life. Its ideal in the Renaissance era was the self-sufficient many-sided man, typified by Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), or Leonardo

¹ *The Prince*, Ch. 8 (tr. Ricci; World's Classics, p.31).

² *Ibid*, Ch. 15 (World's Classics, pp.68, 69).

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da Vinci (1452-1519). Alberti was scholar, mathematician, architect, writer, painter and sculptor. He was also renowned for his bodily strength and gymnastic skill—he could jump over a man's head with his feet tied together. He wrote a treatise on domestic life, the self-sufficient life of the suburban or country villa, divided from its neighbours by its hedge, with its orderly garden and perfect arrangement of possessions.

For the Franciscan protest against possessions had been forgotten. Whatever the practice, theory had formerly held that possession of goods was a stewardship before God; now absolute right of possession, favoured by the revived Roman Law, was the accepted view. Money-making, with a stress on the virtue of thrift, became the keynote of *bourgeois* civilisation. The amassing of vast amounts of capital eventually made possible the Industrial Revolution, but it also emphasised the cleavage between rich and poor. The state itself came to be considered primarily as a means for securing their property to its citizens.

The self-sufficient individualism of the Renaissance is a similar attitude to that of the Greeks. This helps to explain that aspect of the Renaissance which was a "re-birth" of Classical learning, culminating in a new interest in the thought and literature of Greece. For the Greeks "man was the measure of all things". They were attracted by what was finite, symmetrical, measurable. Man was the centre of the universe, and the finite, symmetrical, measurable human body was the basic subject of their art. Renaissance man, like the Greek, gloried in his sense of power and discovery; he gloried too in the attributes of his body, his beauty and skill. The other-worldly view of the universe faded, in which men were linked with God and therefore with one another.

The great age of Greek thought and philosophy was an

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age of criticism, whence another affinity with the Renaissance. The Renaissance attitude was in conflict with the Mediaeval order at every point: to express itself it had to overthrow the old order. Every theory, every institution came under attack—the scholastic philosophy, the claims of the Church, the position of the Pope, the basis of the State, the accepted morality of the Middle Ages.

Criticism is healthy, if it leads to a firmer grasp on truth. The springtime exuberance of the Renaissance was the outcome of a sense of liberation. Man stood up in his own strength, and the old ideas which he swept away were often found to be illusions. One could snap one's fingers at the Papacy when critical investigation revealed that the documents on which it rested its claims to temporal power were forgeries. Galileo could prove by critical thought that the old views of the physical universe, upheld by the Church, were unsound.

This critical, scientific view of the world made possible the discoveries and inventions which have been such a feature of Western history. Through measuring, weighing, analysing, men began to lay bare the forces of nature and to control them. The demons and occult spirits which had always previously haunted the minds of men could be dismissed as unscientific superstitions. But it was a different way of vanquishing the demons from that of St. Francis, who had made friends with all created things by accepting them as members of the family of God.

The Franciscan spirit helped to free men from the fear of nature, but the Renaissance spirit was one of pride in the power and cleverness of men. This attitude has eventually led to our present-day materialism and atheism—the rejection of the spiritual basis of the universe.

This process began when criticism was directed not only

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against the Church as an institution, but against its teachings. The Reformation was the outcome of a deep desire to cut away what was rotten in the Church, to purify it and establish it on sound foundations. Criticism was effective in eventually clearing away abuses, such as those connected with the sale of indulgences. But the reforming movement was too much marked by the individualism of which it was, in part, the expression.

Coming before God as individuals, men felt themselves to be priests, who no longer needed an ordained priesthood to mediate between themselves and their Maker. Religion became a question of choice; one could accept or reject dogmas and institutions through trial and error or the critical faculty. One no longer accepted the Church as part of the divinely ordained scheme of things. Instead there was freedom to accept or reject what one pleased, to adhere to the old Church or found a new.

The schism in the Church and the splintering of the sects reflected deep urges in Renaissance man. These schisms reflected his individualism, but they also reflected his keen desire to probe to the truth as he personally could discover it. Many groups of "spiritual reformers" arose who held that there is an element in man (often referred to as a divine seed or the inner light) which tends towards the regeneration of human nature: that this "seed" could respond to the Spirit of Christ and let Him enter more and more into the heart. They believed that man's nature is perfectible, and that in its perfected state—made perfect by the indwelling Spirit of Christ—it achieves the condition in which God meant it to be.¹ Luther

¹ See R. M. Jones: *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Macmillan, 1914), pp. XXXI, XXXII, 54, and passim.

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(1483-1546) did not share this view, but it stimulated many important movements of the type of inspired democracy, notably among the English Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

But these movements, like that directly initiated by Luther, failed to revive the spiritual unity of Europe, which became ever more deeply divided. The religious wars of the Reformation era, which have many analogies with the ideological conflicts of our own times, sharpened the frontiers between states, and even drove frontiers through states, as between Catholics and Huguenots in France.

In time persecution and conflict gave way to the principle of live and let live. No side could prevail against the other, and the leaven of Christian charity that remained worked in favour of tolerance. The principle was admitted that each state, through its ruler or government, could choose its own form of religion, and gradually individuals were allowed to worship as they pleased—or not at all.

The eighteenth century saw warfare limited to definite territorial gains, not to unlimited religious or ideological objectives; wars lost their "total" character, being moderated by rules and courtesies. But this period of comparative peace and equilibrium was ephemeral. The divisions in Europe had gone too deep, the division between classes as well as between nations, and between the secular and spiritual sides of life. With the coming of the industrial era these divisions were to issue in the bitterest struggles of all time.

Chapter Seven

The Crisis of Civilisation To-day

(a) *The need for world unity.*

SINCE THE Renaissance Western Civilisation has undergone a unique two-fold development. It has spread across the globe, colliding with every other civilised society, and penetrating to the remotest corners where men still lived in primitive savagery. Secondly it has seen the coming of the machine.

Religious idealism and the desire for gain, reinforced by the quest for adventure and discovery, contributed to this unprecedented expansion. Friars, Jesuits, missionaries of all Churches, merchants and explorers, formed the spearhead of Western civilisation, while at the same time building up the world-market, the framework for an economically unified world.

The growing wealth of Europe, fed by this trade, led to the accumulation of capital. This capital needing to be invested, together with an expanding market waiting to be supplied, provided the conditions in which the new scientific techniques could be turned to account in industry.

The Industrial Revolution stirred new hopes in mankind. A Golden Age was predicted of wealth and happiness for all.

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The fruitful intercourse of trade would lead on to world-wide harmony and peace.

Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) were only echoing Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Robert Owen (1771-1858), and many others, when they painted this optimistic picture. "In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have exchange in every direction, universal interdependence of nations . . . The *bourgeoisie*, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation . . . National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the *bourgeoisie*, to freedom of commerce, to the world-market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto"¹.

What Marx and other 19th century optimists overlooked was the immensely dynamic force of nationalism. The creation of the world-market, the growth of industry and trade, might all point towards the need of a world where the old political and cultural divisions had ceased to exist. But national feeling among the states of the West, and the mutual antagonism between the West and the civilisations and races with which it collided, worked equally strongly against unity.

Nationalism had been a powerful force for imposing unity on peoples in limited areas. It also strengthened the drive of these peoples—Spanish, French, Dutch, English and others—along the road of imperialism. The unity of the new empires was precarious enough, while the conflicts of the nations were aggravated by their imperial rivalry.

¹ *Communist Manifesto* (Eng. trans., Centenary Edition), pp. 5, 18.

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Free trade, in peaceful conditions, throughout the world-market, was essential if the increase of population and the demand for a rising standard of living were to be supported. For a short period in the 19th century Britain, with her industrial, commercial and naval supremacy, succeeded in leading the world into the paths of comparatively free and peaceful trade. But this development soon came to a halt.

Unification is perhaps the supreme test of history. In previous cases—Egypt, China, the Classical World—the process of unifying the economic or cultural area of a civilisation took centuries of wars and upheavals, the period of the “contending states” as Spengler¹ called it. So disruptive and so exhausting is this process that it drains the civilisation’s vitality. This era of strife has ushered in the period of decadence for civilisations—the era of “decline and fall”.

* * * * *

The situation has analogies with the ancient world at the time of Alexander the Great. The growth of population in the Greek city-states had prompted the development of industry and overseas expansion through trade and colonisation.² But instead of the Greek states taking advantage of this expanding market through a peaceful system of trade, they continued with their old-fashioned antagonisms. Some attempts were made to bring about unity, particularly the creation of the Delian League by Athens (478 B.C.), of which the underlying idea was a voluntary confederation similar to our modern League of Nations or U.N.O. But this broke down, since

¹ Oswald Spengler: *The Decline of the West*, Vol. ii. Ch. 9, etc.

² See Ch. 2 (c).

Athens soon converted the League into an instrument of her own imperialism, coercing the other members into following her policy and forcibly exacting tribute from them. There ensued the formation of an opposing camp of states who feared Athenian imperialism, under the lead of Sparta, a militaristic state not unlike Prussia or Nazi Germany. These opposing blocs embarked on the disastrous Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.) which so weakened Athens and Sparta that they were virtually reduced to the rank of second-rate powers.

This left on the borders of Greece proper two great powers, Macedon (which though in reality a Greek kingdom had developed somewhat differently from the other Greek states), and Persia, which (though many Persians had adopted Greek culture and science) was a completely alien state. This situation has analogies with our own world where the former "great powers" of Europe are reduced through their wars and disunity to comparative weakness and poverty, and remain in a kind of no-man's land between the giant of America on the one hand (which bears to Europe the same relation as Macedon to Greece, being closely related while yet distinct), and on the other hand the giant of Russia (which, while borrowing much Western technique, yet represents, as Persia did to Greece, an alien civilisation).

The question was, could the Greek states find *freely* a basis for unity, and work out an adequate political framework for the economic and cultural interdependence of their "world"? Or, failing that, would they find unity thrust upon them, as it were against their will, at the hands of either Persia or Macedon?

Since Persia's policy was to keep the Greek states permanently divided, on the principle of "divide and rule", and since the Greek states proved incapable of becoming reconciled

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and achieving unity without external pressure, it was left to Macedon, the one power capable of undertaking this rôle, to supply that pressure and give the necessary lead. Philip of Macedon, followed by his son Alexander (356-323 B.C.), succeeded by an able mixture of diplomacy and force in uniting most of the Greek states in a federal league. Alexander, as leader of this league, turned their forces against Persia.

Alexander conquered Persia and Egypt, founded cities as far afield as Bactria in Central Asia, and led his troops across the Himalayas to the shores of the Indian Ocean. By so doing he helped to extend the "world-market" of the Classical Age to its farthest bounds in the east.

But the new opportunities for peaceful commercial development were frustrated by the wars which broke out between the states into which Alexander's empire disintegrated after his death. The history of the Hellenistic States is one of growing prosperity during periods of peace, cut short by recurrent outbreaks of war, and by the economic burdens resulting from maintaining strong armies and pursuing defensive policies of "autarky" or self-sufficiency.

Eventually a new power, Rome, arose in the west and by force of arms united most of the former domains of Alexander, along with the Mediterranean and West European lands, into one empire. At the cost of losing much freedom and suffering the demoralising effects of a long succession of wars and crises, the Classical world enjoyed two centuries of prosperity based on freedom of trade throughout a politically unified area.

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In the world to-day we are faced with similar problems. Is there any way, other than through war, to attain

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a framework of economic and political unity which will make possible a prosperous and peaceful world?

But to-day the problem is trebly complicated.

First, the area concerned is no longer any limited part of the globe, but almost its entire surface. Formerly a civilisation, like that of Rome, could collapse without its fall making any impression on distant civilisations like that of China. But to-day distance has been annihilated, and the fall of the West would bring the rest of the world down in ruins. Conversely our task is not that of achieving unity for one civilisation, but unity for the entire world.

Second, mankind's capacities for self-destruction have been enormously increased. Formerly, drought, floods or disease were the great destroyers : now that rôle is played by man himself. The wars and class-wars of older civilizations in every case sapped their vitality and made certain their ultimate collapse. In our case war may make that collapse more rapid and more dramatic. Another major war might lead to the breakdown of civilisation through the destruction of industrial centres. Not only through heavy bombing can cities be wiped off the map, but atom bombs (so the physicists tell us) may, through radiation, render their sites uninhabitable for years after. With such weapons our civilisation has developed the power to destroy itself: we can jump (if we will) straight into a Dark Age without going through the long-drawn phases of decline, marked by the establishment of militaristic "totalitarian" empires. We may even end by annihilating the entire human race.

Third, the ideological conflicts of our age are more bitter and more profound than those of any previous era.

Alexander's world was a world of ideological conflict. The conflicts of ideas which raged among the Greeks were

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complicated by the clash between Greek ideas and those coming from Persia, Egypt and other civilisations. The old faith of the Greeks gave way to mystical or atheistic philosophies,¹ and to adaptations of oriental religions.

Each Greek state, too, developed its own particular patriotic faith, while Greeks in their relations with non-Greeks were animated by strong feelings of racial and cultural superiority. Such feelings could issue in what we might term an ideology, in the sense of a faith which sets into motion not merely individuals but entire peoples. Such elements are to be found in the faith of Alexander, who believed he had a divine vocation to spread his orientalist version of the Greek way of life throughout the world.

Later, Augustus, aided by Virgil and other writers, tried to create an ideology which would give unity and vitality to the peoples of the Roman world. But the faiths which appeared as real dynamic ideologies during the twilight of the Classical World were Christianity and Islam.

Like the ancient Greeks, we in the modern West have seen the appearance of nationalist or cultural ideologies. But the reaction against the old religion has gone further in the West than it did in the Hellenic World, and in its place atheistic philosophies, instead of being confined to a minority of educated, intellectual men, have expanded to embrace multitudes.

This peculiarly intensive character of ideological conflict, which distinguishes our era from all others, must be examined in further detail.

¹ See Ch. 2 (c).

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(b) *Disintegration and spiritual hunger.*

As in the Age of Alexander, so in our own age, the divisions within society are reaching the extreme limit. Plato's diagnosis was correct. At such a stage of society the divisions within the soul are reflected in divisions in every sphere of life. The divisions which sunder men's hearts in the West have been passed on to those peoples of Asia and Africa who have come within the orbit of Western penetration.

Again as Plato pointed out, love of money—and in general a materialist attitude towards life—has played a major part in fostering these divisions.

Love of money issued in the accumulation of capital, without which our modern type of world could scarcely have developed. But, as Marx demonstrated, capitalism bears within itself the seeds of its own decay, suffering from "inner contradictions" which cause its partial paralysis and eventual collapse.

The capitalism of the pre-industrial era had its evils, but these were immensely aggravated by the coming of the machine. This led to the breakdown of the older type of city. The class divisions within the city were exaggerated to the extreme degree: the rich became richer (for a time), the poor became poorer—and no longer did rich and poor live in the same streets, but the poor lived in the smut-laden environment of the factories, while the rich lived in fine houses in spacious "residential" areas on the opposite side of the town. The class divisions of the city were reflected in the class divisions of the nation. Disraeli could speak of the two nations, the rich and the poor, who lived differently, talked differently and thought differently.

The nations of the West became internally divided, losing

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their organic, inner coherence. To compensate for this loss of inner unity the authority of the state was increased, and with it the power to impose a semblance of unity on its citizens. Society became increasingly atomised into a collection of individuals who could only be kept together by the strong governments of the nation-states.

On the ideological level disintegration similarly proceeded apace. As in the Classical world, the West entered a phase of agnosticism and scepticism. The old religion, both in its Catholic and Protestant forms, was increasingly rejected. The same phenomenon appeared as in Ancient Greece—the division between the rationalist critics who sought to discredit religion altogether and those who tried to re-establish religion more firmly than before by probing down to its true basis.

Man cannot live by bread alone: he has to have some set of ideas, whether these be termed a religion, a faith, or an ideology. When a once accepted religion loses its hold something has to take its place. An "Age of Enlightenment" in any civilisation therefore always ushers in an age of intense ideological ferment, during which new faiths and ideas compete to fill the vacuum left by the weakening of older convictions.

For at such a stage of history men's *need* of a faith or ideology is greater than ever. The old community of the city has broken down, divided into opposing classes. But even if these divisions did not exist, people could no longer feel the same comradeship in the monstrous overgrown "conurbation" into which the city of bygone days has been transformed. In the Industrial Revolution millions, uprooted from the countryside, felt oppressed by this absence of community life, which the disintegrating influences of urban industrial life spread into the countryside. People found themselves deper-

sonalised units in an apparently inhuman system—parts of a machine to be thrown on the scrapheap when no longer wanted. They found themselves the prey of mass forces—of slump, unemployment and war, which they had no means of controlling.

(c) *Ideologies of nationalism and democracy.*

The old communities of town, village, guild and workshop had given men more than a sense of comradeship—they had been based on deep spiritual realities, part of an organic order which could not be divorced from the Christian religion. The rites and ceremonies of the Church sanctified this order at every point—but now the break-up of this order, together with the decline of the old religion, left men spiritually isolated and impoverished.

This explains the idols which modern man has set up in the place of God. Of these Mammon is the most obvious, the search for wealth and comfort, which has become the principal “ideology” for millions in the West. Other idols are the nation and the race.

Nationalism has partially usurped the place of religion. The nation-state has been a growing focus of loyalty since the Middle Ages, and has generated intense passion in its citizens. Without its fervent patriotism, the terrible wars of the modern era could never have been fought.

Every nation of the West has regarded itself as chosen by destiny to carry out some unique mission. The British have seen themselves chosen to spread throughout the world the blessings of industrialism and trade, and to bring the advantages of civilisation to peoples whom they regarded as “backward”. As Lord Cromer put it in regard to the country which he dominated for 27 years, “the special aptitude shown by

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Englishmen in the government of Oriental races pointed to England as the most effective and beneficent instrument for the gradual introduction of European civilisation into Egypt.”¹

The French have felt the same about their *mission civilisatrice*, so in their day did the Spaniards, and so—more recently—did the Italians. To-day the Americans, though bewildered by their new position as a major world power, are beginning to discover not only a responsibility towards the rest of the world, but a mission which they must accomplish in it. The sense of a national mission, focussed by an all powerful nation-state, reached its extreme development in Germany, where, under Hitler, it was propagated as a religion complete with doctrine, devotees and martyrs—and even with rites and ceremonies.

Democracy too, from time to time, has assumed the dimensions of a faith. It was such to the revolutionaries in France who destroyed the remains of feudalism and the restrictions of the monarchical state. The new Trinity was “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity”, sharing the highest throne with the goddess Reason, who was actually made the presiding deity, by Robespierre, of France’s new democratic religion. As a faith it inspired the ragged armies of the Republic which surged across the frontiers to liberate the European peoples, and looked to carrying out a similar mission in the Orient and overseas.

Mingled with a revived form of Puritanism and with ideas of an imperial mission, liberal democracy became for multitudes of the British people something in the nature of a faith. Freedom is a great ideal, particularly exalted at times when men are thrusting aside the bonds of institutions and moulds of thought which are outmoded. Those who are striving to

¹ Cromer: *Modern Egypt*, p.254.

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replace an old order by a new always make freedom their main watchword, since freedom from the old order and its institutions has to be first achieved before the new order with its new institutions can be constructed.

This was the task of the industrial-capitalist *bourgeoisie* in the 19th century, and many venerable institutions—like the unreformed House of Commons—fell before their expanding power. At the same time these “liberal” ideas were linked with others derived from a more positive conception of freedom, which descended from the religious and political experiments of the Puritan era; they fused with a conception of progress which came originally from the Hebrew prophets, but which had been enormously influenced by Darwin’s theory of evolution. This form of democratic faith was voiced by a man who, more than any scholar since Erasmus, was a citizen of Europe—Lord Acton. “This constancy of progress, of progress in the direction of organised and assured freedom, is the characteristic fact of Modern History and its tribute to the theory of Providence . . . We can find no philosophy on the observation of four hundred years . . . but I hope that even this narrow and disedifying section of history will aid you to see that the action of Christ, who is risen on mankind whom He redeemed, fails not but increases; that the wisdom of divine rule appears not in the perfection but in the improvement of the world; and that achieved liberty is the one ethical result that rests on the converging and combined conditions of advancing civilisation. Then you will understand what a famous philosopher said, that History is the true demonstration of Religion.”¹

¹ Inaugural Lecture, “*The Study of History.*” *Lectures on Modern History* (Cambridge, 1906), pp. 11, 12. The philosopher is Leibniz.

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Since Acton electrified Cambridge with these words in 1895, democracy has lost ground as an effective ideology. It has become increasingly a system whereby divergent interests and points of view are brought to some kind of compromise: a system of finding the lowest common denominator of competing interests rather than the highest common denominator of the best plan for the community. Or—even worse—it has become a machine whereby a minority in a nation dupes a majority into accepting its will as the “general will.”

Democracy, which aroused such high hopes in the 19th century, is now becoming stultified all over the world where parliamentary institutions have taken root. Divisions, often along class-lines, have so clearly sundered nations into two that no “general will” is discernable in the legislative bodies which are elected. Governments find it increasingly difficult to command working majorities, and coalitions flounder in a morass of compromise.

The old ideologies of nationalism and liberal-democracy have been proved bankrupt. The masses, asking for the bread of life, have been given a stone. Man's hunger for great living has not been satisfied by faiths which are superficial.

Chapter Eight

The Religious Basis of Communism

(a) *Religious ideas and the demand for social change.*

TODAY THE masses, not only in the West but in Asia and Africa as well, are demanding far more than outmoded ideologies of nationalism and liberalism could give. Since the coming of the machine they have increasingly demanded nothing less than a radical revolution of the entire social order.

There has always been a revolutionary strain in Europe which has looked to a radical transformation of society. In the past it was associated with religion. Men were not satisfied that the change which Christianity preached was purely spiritual.

The peasant risings which shook Europe periodically during the Middle Ages aimed at freedom from the burdens of feudalism, but their watchwords were religious. They borrowed from Christian revelation apocalyptic ideas of change, with emphasis on change in the social order; or they harked back to an idea of primitive socialism for which they found warrant in Scripture. It was a priest who gave the revolting English peasants their slogan—

“When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman?”

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—and the demands of the German peasants, whose mass revolt in 1525 was so savagely repressed, were couched in religious phrases.

With the coming of industry the demands of the workers took a more frankly materialist turn. Prophets were not wanting who told them that the coming of the machine promised an age of abundance for all. The poor became ever less ready to accept those conditions of want and exploitation which—unless times were unusually good—they had until then accepted as their normal lot.

Similarly the optimism engendered by modern communications and the establishment of the world-market persuaded men that an era of universal peace was at hand.¹

Neither of these expectations was realised. The immediate effect of the Industrial Revolution was to make the masses even poorer and more exploited and to widen still further the gulf between them and the possessing classes; while wars, instead of ceasing, became more horrible and more destructive, and affected more people than in any period since the barbarian invasions.

Socialism and communism are the expression of this demand for a new social order, which assumed a force and a bitterness due to the deteriorating conditions in which the workers found themselves for many years. They began as theories of social change, but became imbued with religious elements—due to the hunger for religion which the Churches failed to meet.

The Churches, preaching the Christian message, have always, directly or indirectly, provided the inspiration for social progress. But in the 19th century the Churches failed to

¹ Ref. Ch. 7, p.120.

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proclaim a message of social change as the fruit of Christian living. Some Christian leaders saw the need, but—like the mid-Victorian “Christian Socialist”, F. D. Maurice—they were ineffective,¹—misunderstood and little heeded. They gained no following among the masses whose half-conscious aspirations alone could provide the dynamic for social change.

There were two main reasons for the Churches’ failure to put themselves at the head of the movement for establishing a better social order based on justice, equity and brotherhood. One was the attitude of most middle-class and wealthy citizens towards the inequalities of the social order—an attitude of accepting this order as inevitable and even as divinely ordained—

“The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high and lowly
And ordered their estate.”

With this went an outlook towards poverty, which professed it to be good for the soul and therefore desirable for Christian people. This view could well find warrant in scripture—but it was falsified by the lives of those people who professed it: for though well-intentioned and wealthy Christians often gave generously to “the poor” (or to good causes such as Foreign Missions), they rarely followed the example of St. Francis in embracing it as an ideal for themselves. Even so outstanding a Christian leader as William Wilberforce (1759–1833) shows something of this attitude when he affirms: “that the more lowly path of the poor has been allotted them

¹ “They formed altogether a remarkable group of men—leaders and officers, but without any army behind them.” M. Beer: *A History of British Socialism* (Bell, 1929), II, 184.

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by the hand of God; that it is their part faithfully to discharge its duties and contentedly to bear its inconveniences; that the present state of things is very short; that the objects about which worldly men conflict so eagerly are not worth the contest; that the peace of mind which Religion offers indiscriminately to all ranks affords more true satisfaction than all the expensive pleasures that are beyond the poor man's reach; that in this view the poor have the advantage; that if their superiors enjoy more abundant comforts, they are also exposed to many temptations from which the inferior classes are happily exempted."¹

The other reason for the Churches' failure to proclaim an ideology of social change lay in the individualism which had gained an increasing grip on Christians as well as agnostics since the Renaissance. The *personal* aspect of religion had come to predominate far over its *social* implications. As Christians men were primarily concerned with saving their own souls or with bringing personal salvation to others. They rarely thought in terms of personal change as merely the first step towards accomplishing a far-reaching *social* change.

This explains the relative failure in the social sphere of those movements of religious revival which took place in the West during the 18th and 19th centuries. Britain, as the country which first felt the shock of industrialism, was the testing ground for these movements. But though the re-born Puritanism preached by the brothers Wesley was the starting point of a religious revival which assumed national dimen-

¹ William Wilberforce: *A practical view of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians, etc.*, (London, 1797), p. 405. To Wilberforce's credit it should be added that, as the evils of the Industrial Revolution became more apparent, he increasingly supported measures of reform regarding factories, the Penal Code, etc.

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sions, it failed to provide an adequate dynamic for social change on the profounder levels. It was strong enough to give some stability, some cohesion to the nation during the crisis of industrialisation, exaggerated as this crisis was by a long-drawn war with France ; and prevented hunger, bitterness and despair from plunging Britain into a bloody revolution of the type which took place in France—because “ the *elite* of the working-class and the hard-working and capable *bourgeois* had been imbued by the evangelical movement with a spirit from which the established order had nothing to fear.”¹

Besides preventing the violent disruption of the social fabric, British evangelicalism smoothed the way for gradual progress in eradicating the worst evils of industrialism, and provided some of the drive for the reform of out-of-date institutions. It also underlay that peculiar type of socialism which came to birth in Victorian England.

Dissenting ministers took leadership in the Chartist movement, and Methodists were among the Tolpuddle “ martyrs ” who were sentenced to transportation for their pioneering trade union activity. The founder of the modern Labour Movement, Keir Hardie, was also a product of evangelicalism. The impetus which drove him first into the Labour movement, he wrote of himself, “ and the inspiration which carried him on in it, were derived more from the teachings of Jesus than from all other sources combined.”²

The Christian spirit has been the leaven and the main-spring of socialism, even when socialists have denied the tree from which they were hewn. To Christianity they owe the

¹ Élie Halévy: *History of the English People in 1815* (Penguin), III, 47.

² From a speech, May 5th, 1910, quoted by Hamilton Fyfe: *Keir Hardie*, (Duckworth, 1935), p.25.

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vision of a better social order which has gleamed before their eyes; but they have not understood how to *live* this Christianity so as to realise this social order in practice.

The same is equally true of that most powerful and most professedly atheist of modern creeds, communism.

(b) *Religious ideas and modern communism.*

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) built on the philosophers and socialist thinkers of the early 19th century. In the place of the scattered ideas of their predecessors they provided a rounded and elaborate intellectual system which could not fail to influence all men who shared the growing mass desire for social change.

Saint-Simon, the early French socialist writer, and Robert Owen, the pioneer of "model" factory communities in Britain, had both recognised the opportunity offered by the coming of the machine for organising a new and better type of society. They believed in a "managerial revolution", to be accomplished by enlightened planning on the part of the industrial chiefs, who should use their position and experience in the interest of society as a whole. Robert Owen at the New Lanark Mills demonstrated the practicability of the factory estate which ensured good wages, housing, education and social amenities to its workers and their families. But he was surprised and disappointed when his less idealist fellow-industrialists failed to follow his lead.

Marx stated that the necessary transformation of society could never take place through a revolution from above, by management, nor did he agree with those who believed in social change through establishing Utopian communities. He held that social change took place through mass-movements, notably through the conflict of classes.

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The writings of Marx and Engels purport to be a scientific presentation of this thesis. But there is a more important element in their writings than their penetrating analysis of contemporary industrial and social relations (based on much original research) and than their new approach to the interpretation of history. This is the religious element, powerful though concealed, which permeates all their thought, and has endowed it with the force to become the most potent ideology of the modern world until to-day.

This religious element in communism is the contribution of Karl Marx. Descended from a long line of Jewish rabbis, he supplied the passion for world change: that passion which the Hebrew prophets had expressed, looking to the realisation of a spiritual ideal—the New Jerusalem or the Realm of God—in the conditions of the present world.

Fully in the Jewish tradition, Marx affirmed that all thought, all aspiration, should be directed towards this objective. “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is, however, to *change* it”.¹ His philosophy claimed to be an explanation of the universe, but it was designed as a call to action.

He inherited from Judaism the conception of an unfolding plan for mankind, but he expressed it in secular terms. In his view it did not originate from God—for Marx was an atheist—nor did the plan concern the spiritual progress of mankind (except in so far as its fulfilment was concerned with a moral idea—the coming of an order based on *social justice*). God was not working through history—history was itself moving mankind towards its ultimate goal. The key to effective

¹ Thesis no. 11 of Theses on Feuerbach. Tr. from Marx and Engels; *Selected Works*, vol. 2 (Lawrence & Wishart, 1950).

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living was to recognise this inevitable historical movement, and to participate in it. "Freedom", as Engels said, quoting Hegel, "is the appreciation of necessity".¹

The Hebrew prophets had seen the world as the battleground between God and Satan. In Marxism the conflict between good and evil is replaced by the "dialectic", which (in social terms) is the clash between the dominant class of a decaying society and the oppressed class representing a society which is coming to birth. The old order is outmoded and bad, and its dominant class reactionary and wicked; the oppressed class, struggling to establish the new order, is good, because on the side of history. But good is a relative term, except when applied to the ultimate social order—the classless society—which will consummate the process of history; for any social order before that era, though good because necessary in its day, becomes bad as soon as history has moved on. Morals, in fact, exist in Marxism, but are reducible in practice to expediency—whatever helps on the movement of history is good, whatever retards it is bad.¹

The messianic element comes out in Marx's teaching on revolution. "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one",² he wrote, and a violent revolution was necessary to establish the ultimate order which was history's goal. Instead of some great apocalyptic Event which would transform the heavens and earth, Marx looked to a bloody revolution whereby the "proletariat" would come to power.

The exploited industrial workers of the 19th century represented for Marx the Chosen People, the poor—poor not

¹ Engels: *Anti-Dühring* (Marxist-Leninist Library. Eng. tr.), 128.

² Marx: *Capital*, (Everyman), vol. 2, p. 833.

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in heart, but in this world's goods. They showed forth, as it were in embryo, the type of society which should crown the future: for their relations one to another, enforced in the factory, were the relations of social production which should be normal in the classless society. Through the last violent revolution of class conflict the final, perfect society would be initiated: the proletariat would inherit the earth. History would have achieved its goal.¹

The term "historical materialism" applied to Marxist philosophy conceals its religious nature. Matter alone to the Marxist is real; he denies the existence of any spiritual principle. But he endows matter itself with a kind of spiritual quality, since the elements which compose matter are (he supposes) in a state of continual conflict and tension. From this "dialectical" conflict comes the original impulse which has motivated the process of evolution and eventually the movement of history.

This conception of a dynamic force which acts through all created things seems akin to primitive animism.² It is

¹ Marx, by a graphic phrase, expressed this conclusion in other terms: with the achievement of this revolution "prehistory ends and history begins".

² "Dialectical materialism was only a 19th century form of animism." F. J. Sheen: *Communism and the Conscience of the West*, (Browne and Nolan, 1948), 80.

See also the observations of Nicolas Berdyaev in *The End of Our Time* (section on *The 'General Line' of Soviet Philosophy*), in his critique of the Marx-Leninist theory of the "autodynamism of matter."—"We are faced with the invariable weakness of materialism; it is not able to define itself . . . Matter (in Marx-Leninist theory) is endowed with unusual properties; all the riches of being are bestowed on it, it becomes spiritualised, it takes on an interior life, it is thought, the *logos*, liberty . . . it

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conceived by the Marxist not as a blind, mechanical force, but as a *purposive* force working towards an ultimate aim, the creation of the classless society as the embodiment of social justice.

The extraordinary appeal of Marxism as an essentially *religious* faith lies therefore in this, that it restates in secular terms the most potent Jewish and Christian ideas. It “diverts to the things of time and history realities which for the Christian faith are essentially *beyond* history and time.”³

(c) *The Russian world-mission and communism.*

This explains the response which Marxism found in Russia. Russian civilisation had its roots in Greek Orthodox Christianity, which (like Catholic Christianity in the West) developed a “structure of soul” or an attitude to life which was fundamentally Christian. But, as in the West, this civilisation never reached fruition in a genuinely Christian society.

can be seen at a glance that this system is not properly speaking materialism but hylo-zoism. Matter in motion represents at the same time both the evolution of the world and the passage from a lower to a higher. The autodynamism of matter is the cause of evolution. . . . A philosophy of conflict and action has got to be created. . . .” (pp. 225, 237, 244).

At the same time communism is violently anti-Christian. “The fundamental argument is that *religion in general, and Christianity in particular, is the negation of human activity* . . . Soviet philosophy holds so tightly to materialism because it is the radical negation of all transcendence and other-worldliness, which communists hate more than anything else . . . Marx-Leninists believe that the rationalisation of political economy means the end of mysticism and religion, there will be no room left for mystery.” (pp. 251, 252).

³ J. Maritain: *True Humanism* (English trans., Bles, 1938), 50.

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As much as in the West, the Christian consciousness of Russia has expressed itself in a desire to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. But the divorce between this ideal and the harsh reality of 19th century Russian society was in many ways more striking than in the West. Class-divisions, exploitation, ignorance and misery were as evident in Russia as in the West; and more than in the West the forces of growth were hampered by an autocratic regime, and by a Church whose privileged higher clergy were allied with the regime on a policy of maintaining the existing order.

The frustration caused by this state of affairs underlay the revolutionary ferment which grew in Russia from the mid-19th century onwards. The demands for a new order were powerfully expressed in Christian terms by Dostoevsky, Tolstoi and others. But the penetration of atheistic and rationalist ideas from the West swung a majority of the intelligentsia towards social change viewed in materialist terms, as a change in the political and social system to be accomplished by more or less revolutionary means.

It was to this *secularised* Christian consciousness of many thinking Russians that Marxism made such a powerful appeal, when it was imported in the latter part of the 19th century. This inverted Christian ideology was exactly what was wanted by those of the Russian intelligentsia who had already translated their originally Christian aspirations into secular, materialist terms.

Orthodox Christendom is the twin civilisation of the Latin West. Russia, as its principal heir, has inherited its messianic vision. But it is a vision of *Russia* as God's chosen instrument to realise on earth a new order: Moscow, as the monk Philoteus of Pskov pointed out to the Prince of Moscow (writing soon after the fall of Constantinople in 1453), is the

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heir of Christian Rome¹. Russia's sense of a historic world-mission has therefore been as strong as that which the various Western nations have appropriated to themselves, and, like the national ideologies of the West, that of Russia has been equally impregnated with religious elements. But, as a world-mission for *Russia*, it has been in a sense exclusive. It has fostered that sense of difference, of separateness, which—long before the Communist Revolution—has helped to divide Russia from the West.

The civilisation which Russia represents has tended always to conflict with the West. The Russians have felt the need of affirming the distinctiveness of their civilisation in the face of the penetration of Western influences—and the need has been the greater since the similarities between the two civilisations are in many ways greater than their differences.

The sense of rivalry has been acute, the more so as Russia has been conscious of the superior material power of the West. In spite of the handicap of poorer resources Russia still aspires to carry out her world-mission, and this can only be viewed in terms of thwarting the parallel efforts of the West, and in bending the West to her will.

Marxism in Russia has fused with this particular national, or rather supranational ideology, which is her secularised inheritance from her Christian past. It is this which makes Russian communism such a dynamic—and demonic—force in the modern world.

¹ "The Church of ancient Rome fell because of Apollinarian heresy. As to the second Rome (Constantinople), it has been hewn down by the axes of the Ishmaelites. But this third Rome, the Holy Apostolic Church, under thy mighty rule shines throughout the entire world more brightly than the sun . . . Two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and no fourth can ever be." Quoted in H. Iswolsky: *Soul of Russia* (Sheed & Ward, 1944) p.25.

Chapter Nine

Retrogression in the Modern World

(a) *The demonic element in the West.*

MARXISM HAS a powerful appeal because of the Christian ideas which it has appropriated. But since these ideas have been turned upside down, it is bound to fail in practice. Not only so, but any attempt to apply it leads inevitably to retrogression and disaster.

Marx built on the facile rationalism of the "enlightenment", the era of Voltaire and Rousseau, when men were assumed to be good, and only committed to evil ways through the bad and obsolete institutions such as feudalism and the Church, with which society was encumbered; with a change in the system of society, men's natural goodness would express itself freely, and an era of happiness and harmony would ensue.

This thinking was based on an entirely false psychology. The Church was more realistic when it taught that human nature was prone to sin, and that a change in human nature was necessary if society was to progress—progress being conceived in spiritual terms towards the Kingdom of God on earth. This denial of man's fallen nature, and of his need of grace and redemption to achieve a higher state, puts the whole of Marxist thinking on a false and dangerous basis. It is the logical conclusion of that Renaissance philosophy which made man the

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centre of the universe, viewing him as possessing all the virtues. The Middle Ages had regarded these virtues as the gifts of God, conditional on man's repentance for his sin. The Renaissance had taught that man could raise himself to the highest level through his own powers; the Church had taught that only through turning to God could man and society be raised to a higher plane.

Marxism is the culmination of that view which regarded man as capable, through his own unaided powers, of constructing the perfect society. But history supports the view of theology, that man is a weak and fallible creature, and that whatever the institutions he lives under, and however good the material conditions he enjoys, he is just as prone to evil as to good. The tendency to goodness and the desire for perfection in man can only be fostered so long as his spiritual roots are intact—roots which draw sustenance from the source of all goodness in God.

In Renaissance man these spiritual roots had not yet decayed, but by the 19th century the attacks of rationalism and atheism had done their work. In Marxism these roots are entirely denied, so that the fruits in great living and a better society are unattainable.

It is a law of man's being that he must strive to create a better order. But to do this he needs strength greater than his own. If he turns away from the strength which comes from God, he must needs turn to that demonic strength which comes from evil.

Man's attempt to construct a better order in his own strength means in reality that he relies on the powers of evil; the evil forces, given free reign, lead to tyranny, destruction and chaos on a scale which overwhelms the imagination.

With profound flashes of insight, Goethe illustrated this truth in *Faust*. Faust, the personification of Western man, sets

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himself to probe the secrets of life; he strives to satisfy his endless greed for knowledge, for all to which the intellect can attain: science, astrology, occultism, all these manifestations of the "earth spirit", are means to feed his insatiable love of power. But, bitterly disappointed, he finds their aid still leaves him far from the goal; he comes near to suicide and is only saved by his childhood memories of religion, with the ringing of the Easter bells and the angels' song, "*Christ ist erstanden*", "Christ is risen".

Faust is saved from self-destruction at this point, only to fall into the clutches of Mephistopheles, the power of evil, from whom at last he feels he can draw strength to attain his desires. The first desire he wishes to satisfy is that of sex, the desire that lies so close to ambition that it can be almost inter-changeable with it—if he cannot have the highest, he will have the lowest—

"Too high have I aspired, self-pleasing, fond,
When truthfully my rank's no more than yours.
The mighty Spirit spurned my weak despair,
And Nature closed to me her sacred doors.
My thread of thought is severed in despite,
I sicken, long revolted at all learning;
Then let us quench the pain of passion's burning
In the soft depth of sensual delight."¹

¹ *Faust*, Part I, Scene 4. (Trans. P. Wayne, Penguin, 1949, p.89).

"Ich habe mich zu hoch gebläht,
In deinen Rang gehör' ich nur:
Der grosse Geist hat mich verschmäht,
Vor mir verschliesst sich die Natur.
Des Denkens Faden ist zerrissen,
Mir ekelt lange vor allem Wissen.
Lass in den Tiefen der Sinnlichkeit
Uns glühende Leidenschaften stillen."

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So with the aid of Mephistopheles, he seduces Gretchen.

“ Unless her sweet young loveliness has lain

Within my arms’ embrace this very night,

The stroke of twelve shall end our pact outright.”¹

The picture is prophetic of the Western world, preoccupied since the Renaissance with the search for knowledge and for the powers which intellectual and scientific discovery can bring; coming more firmly into the grip of those natural forces (the “ earth spirit ”), from which spiritual power alone can bring freedom; and ending by coming under the power of evil itself, when ambition gives way to lust, leading to the lowest point of degradation. The Christian convictions which remain to Faust, and the still living Christian faith of Gretchen, alone provide hope of redemption.

Our power-mad, sex-mad civilisation seems hurtling to destruction. But Goethe had a deep hope for humanity. In the “ prologue in Heaven ”, God allows Mephistopheles to try his will on Faust—but simply to prevent Faust from “ sinking below his proper level ” in “ seeking for unconditioned ease.” The purpose of the ordeal with Mephistopheles is to set Faust once again on the true path of spiritual growth, creative progress.

“ Man’s efforts sink below his proper level,
And since he seeks for unconditioned ease,
I send this fellow who must goad and tease
And toil to serve creation, though a devil ”.

The destiny of Faust is not perdition—

“ A good man in his dark, bewildered course
Will not forget the way of righteousness ”²

¹ I, Sc. 7. (tr. p.122).

² Pt. I., Prologue in Heaven (tr. 41,42). See Professor Toynebee’s treatment of this theme, *A Study of History*, I, 279. seq.

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The devil's aim is "to annihilate God's creation"¹—"everything that exists merits destruction"², Mephistopholes says to Faust—and the threat of annihilation hangs over us. But God's purposes are not stultified. Although our path to salvation may be inadequately suggested in Part II of Faust, nihilism, materialism and totalitarianism will not be history's final word for the West.³

(b) *The practical failure of communism.*

Marxism proclaims itself to be the most creative and progressive force in the world; but it has taken and inverted

¹ The German Quarterly (Appleton, Wis. U.S.A.) p.13: *Goethe's Faust—Man or Superman?*—G. F. Merkel.

² "Alles, was entsteht ist werth, dass es zu Grunde geht." (*Faust*, Part I, Scene 3).

³ Faust, every bit as much as Plato's *bourgeois*, is a divided man, but he is divided in the way expressed by St. Paul: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom. 7, 22, 23).

"Two souls, alas, are housed within my breast,
And each will wrestle for the mastery there.
The one has passion's craving crude for love,
And hugs a world where sweet the senses rage;
The other longs for pastures fair above,
Leaving the murk for lofty heritage.
O spirits, if there be, that range the air,
Swaying in potency 'twixt heaven and earth,
Come down, from out your golden skyey lair
Bear me to beauteous life, another birth."
(Und führt mich weg, zu neuem, buntem Leben).

—*Faust*, I, Sc. 2. Tr. p.67.

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the deepest convictions of the Church. This demonic element in Marxism condemns it to be, in practice, not merely a force of extremest reaction, but a force making for nihilism, decadence and collapse. Satan promised Christ the Kingdoms of the world if He worshipped him; he suggested that He should win the masses by bread¹, by the use of material lures; and turned Him towards self-destruction as a test of God's power to protect Him.

This explains the vagueness and apparent *naïveté* in the pictures drawn by Marx, Engels and Lenin, of the eventual communist society. The first period after the revolution is that of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" (in practice, dictatorship by the Communist Party, ostensibly on behalf of the proletariat), during which the *bourgeoisie* and "class-enemies" in general would be liquidated. At the end of this phase, communist society would be established. In this society, a new principle of harmonious social co-operation would be spontaneously applied by the citizens. Government, in the form of coercive oppression by a dominant class against the rest, would no longer be necessary: the classless society would be ushered in where each produced according to his ability and each received according to his need.

Two points of weakness are here revealed. Marx assumed the abolition of the existing form of the state, while admitting the continued need of management and administration. The state, according to his and Engels' thinking, is a "special repressive force" organised by the dominant class in the community to keep the rest of society in subjection; to hold the community together in spite of its "internal contradictions" which result from an outmoded productive system, and

¹ "Bread is a political weapon"—Molotov (quoted in Sheen, *op. cit.*, 99).

which continually threaten to destroy it. But while the abolition of these "internal contradictions" would make the "special repressive force" of the state unnecessary, the need for management and administration would still remain. "The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the process of production. The state is not 'abolished', it *withers away*."¹ The suggestion is that the element which is concerned with "the administration of things and the direction of the process of production" would not appear as a governing class in relation to the rest of society.²

Secondly they fall into the same error in assuming that some inherently positive quality of the proletariat will enable it to create the new classless society whose establishment will bring with it such a change in human nature that the new society can be carried on without any need for "the coercive apparatus" of the state. People will acquire the habit of working "according to their ability" without coercion, and of taking from society (its shops, warehouses, etc.) what they *need* and no more than they need. New habits will ensure that they give in other ways what is necessary towards society and

¹ Engels: *Anti-Dühring*, 308.

² Compare Lenin's somewhat naïve view of the position of technicians in communist society—"The question of control and accounting must not be confused with the question of the scientifically educated staff of engineers, agronomists and so on. These gentlemen are working today and obey the capitalists; they will work even better tomorrow and obey the armed workers." Lenin: *State and Revolution*, ch. 5 (4). Eng. tr. *Selected Works* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1947), Vol. 2, p. 210.

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observe the rules of civilised behaviour. "People will gradually *become accustomed* to observing the elementary rules of social life that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims; they will become accustomed to observing them without force, without compulsion, without subordination, without the *special apparatus* for compulsion which is called the state."¹

Lenin expands this thought further: "We are not Utopians, and we do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of *individual persons* or the need to suppress *such* excesses. But, in the first place, no special machine, no special apparatus of repression is needed for this: this will be done by the armed people itself, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilised people, even in modern society, parts two people who are fighting, or interferes to prevent a woman from being assaulted. And, secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses, which consist of violating the rules of social life, is the exploitation of the masses, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to '*wither away*', We do not know how quickly, and in what order, but we know that they will wither away".²

Lenin in fact believed that the new order would function spontaneously through newly acquired habits—the product of "social drill" or "mimesis", aided by that natural goodness in man which all rationalists so loudly proclaim.

(c) *The retrogression to barbarism and collapse.*

The practical outcome of the revolution in Russia has

¹ Ibid. ch. 5 (2), tr. p. 202.

² Ibid. Tr. Vol. 2. p. 203.

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been far from the establishment of a new and progressive type of society. Communists indeed admit that communist society has not yet been achieved: they have only reached in Russia the stage of "socialism", a transitional stage in which the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is still operative. But they look to "the mass awakening of communist consciousness . . . a mass change of human nature"¹, through the continuance of revolutionary activity, which will finally establish the communist classless society in all its fulness.

But the more ruthlessly the communists strive to push their society forwards, the more persistently it retrogresses. Every new regulation and control strengthens the "law" at the expense of the "spirit". Every new purge, every new plan—uprooting more people and depersonalising more relationships—only serves to strengthen an increasingly demonic and inhuman form of tyranny. Under this tyranny millions are being thrust into misery, despair and nihilism. Man, mistaking himself for God, allows the Devil to take control. Fear, hate and greed, all the lower forces of man's nature, are mobilised in the effort of a determined few to hold millions under their will.

These forces are negative, destructive. Demonic forces of materialism are abroad in the world to-day, and the world is threatened with destruction. But destruction is most to be feared among the peoples where these forces have their strongest grip, for it is the destruction of oneself, at one's own or another's hands, to which satanic possession must lead. Such physical destruction is but the outward and visible sign of inner and spiritual destruction—the death of the soul

¹ *Programme of the Communist International*, as published by Workers Library Publishers, Inc., 3rd edition, 1936; quoted in Sheen, *op. cit.* 134.

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through spiritual starvation, through cutting itself off from its sources of nourishment in God.

There is spiritual hunger in the West, but there is a far worse spiritual famine in Russia: Marxism has come to Russia as a religion,¹ which has created the outward semblance of an integrated society—but integrated on too low a level, and in reality deeply divided. As a religion it does not satisfy, however much the Soviet rulers may try to use it as opium for their people. They have failed to secure unity and loyalty through the passion which communism should arouse, and their bankruptcy is shown by their attempts to suppress all free ideas, and to dope or psychologically coerce their most difficult opponents. Mass psychological methods are used to dope whole populations into becoming the robot-like instruments of the governing group's will.

This spiritual bankruptcy of a regime which is forced to ever greater intolerance and ruthlessness, to an increasing reliance on bureaucratic and dehumanised methods of government, points to the same fate befalling the Soviet empire as has befallen all such empires in history—and which will befall the empires and nations of the West if they too continue to travel the same historic road.

Such empires rise to dominate civilisations whose spiritual resources have been dissipated. Disunity and division of all kinds, wars and class-struggles, exhaust their moral capital and leave them the prey of some ravenous "universal state".¹ Such an empire may appear as a saviour to people wearied by years of strife, destruction and poverty. Today the masses turn

¹ "For the first time in the world's history an atheist sect has obtained power." N. Berdyaev: *The End of Our Time* (Sheed and Ward, 1933), p.219.

¹ Professor Toynbee's phrase.

to the Welfare State for the abundance and equitable treatment which those responsible were too selfish to give them freely; tomorrow they may turn to a totalitarian creed and empire to save them from evils which the Welfare State has only served to aggravate.

For if men do not care for each other through love, they cannot be forced to care for each other through hate. Democracy is a fine ideal, but freedom and equality can only exist together if they are completed by fraternity or brotherly love.² Take away love, and freedom (as in 19th century Europe) leads to inequality and exploitation; whereas equality without love can only be imposed by force, and this is the negation of freedom.

The dictator state sets up Mammon as its God, claiming to solve the economic and political problem and to give man material well-being. But it makes man an economic unit, viewed primarily as "producer" or "consumer". In its effort to achieve this end, it binds burdens on men's backs too grievous to be borne. The burdens of an enormous bureaucracy and army, the crushing weight of taxation, the inhumanity and crudity of the regime—all these engender a situation where instability is chronic, and where the empire continues to exist only because the people's vitality has been so far sapped that they cannot create anything better.

² "Of all the political systems, democracy is indeed the furthest removed from nature, the only one to transcend, at least in intention, the conditions of the 'closed society'. It proclaims liberty, demands equality, and reconciles these two hostile sisters, by reminding them that they are sisters, by exalting above everything fraternity. Looked at from this angle, the republican motto shows that the third term dispels the oft-noted contradictions between the two others, and that the essential thing is fraternity." (Bergson, *op. cit.*, 243.)

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So the Roman empire declined to its fall. The end was hastened by the revolt of the uprooted peasantry against the towns which had exploited them, and by the moral abandonment of the regime on the part of the tax-paying *bourgeoisie*. Its collapse from within was but a question of time when the western Empire was dealt its death blow by the invading barbarians from without.

History can hold out no better hope for a totalitarian empire to-day—even if, as is the aim of Soviet Russia—it might succeed in embracing the globe.

Decadence has already arrived in the West, just as it has long since arrived in Russia. The forces of barbarisation go on apace. The vitality of our civilisation has been drained by wars more destructive and more “total” than any which history has seen—wars which are becoming not only more horrible but more frequent. Moral standards have been rapidly falling. Increasingly homes break up and crime flourishes. Mass production of contraceptives promotes sexual laxity. This and other easy indulgences—drink, tobacco, gambling and cheap amusements—dissipate human energy on an increasingly colossal scale. Periodic slumps and mass unemployment underline the failure of capitalist industrialism, whether controlled by private individuals or by the state.

We delude ourselves into thinking there is progress, because technical inventions are still made and new gadgets and machines become available. More hospitals are built, more schools are opened. But real disunity within society increases proportionately as the external power of the State becomes stronger.

The weakening of spiritual vitality is also shown in a resurgence of irrational forces—the growing popularity of spiritualism and astrology, and of Freudian views that men are

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the playthings of their "libido" and their subconscious. All this masks a return to a more primitive attitude to life, which—if not reversed—will lead back to a more primitive type of society.

Another disquietening sign is the existence of what Professor Toynbee calls an "internal proletariat"—the deculturated and dispossessed masses, who no longer feel they have any stake in a decaying civilisation.

The barbarians envied the greatness and splendour of Rome, and when it declined they stepped in to despoil it and take over its power. The West is no Roman Empire with well-defined frontiers, but besides its dissatisfied "internal proletariat", there are two external groups who watch it with covetous eyes. One is composed of the peoples of its twin-civilisation, descended from Orthodox Christendom, of which Russia is the main representative; the other is formed by the peoples of Asia and Africa. These divisions in our modern world are not unlike those in Classical times between the Roman West, the Greek East, and the "barbarians".

If both descendants of the original Christian civilisations of East and West tear each other to pieces, the peoples external to them will probably step in and take over—but here speculation loses touch with reality. In the days of Rome's decline, the danger from war-bands of Goth and Hun was clear for all to see, but none could forecast the rise of Islam on its frontiers—a new civilisation with a new faith, carried from East to West by armies which were all but invincible.

It is useless to prophesy about the character of a Dark Age which is by no means our inevitable fate. The choice is still open before us—either to be the last survivors of a declining age, or the pioneers of a new and better order such as the world has never seen.

Chapter Ten

Towards the Next Stage Beyond Civilisation

(a) *The crisis and opportunity of the present.*

TODAY THREE alternatives confront us.

We may be overwhelmed by another World War, which would knock out our civilisation by destroying the industrial centres, making them uninhabitable for many years after. Such a war might lead to the annihilation of whole peoples, or even of the human race itself.

Or we may be taken over by a world totalitarian dictatorship, which by loosing demonic and irrational forces and by crushing the creative spirit in man, would make certain the ultimate collapse. A period of barbarism and destruction would usher in another Dark Age.

Or, thirdly, we may help to build an entirely new order of society, a type of society as far beyond civilisation, as civilisation is beyond primitive tribalism.

The third way is the way of change and hope. What does it involve?

Today history is moving at tremendous speed, towards a high point of colossal catastrophe or a high point of colossal change. This current of history cannot be stayed, nor can it be turned back. Those who hanker for a return to the days before 1914, or even those before 1939, are looking for Never-Never Land.

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History will bear us on, but to what goal is a matter for our choice. The point is, that the choice must be made *today*.

The coming of catastrophe and another Dark Age would postpone the next stage in humanity's upward climb, perhaps for a thousand years. Or perhaps man would cease for ever to be, under God, the means for raising the entire creation to a higher order of being.

Evolution once took place on this planet through inanimate matter, and then through all forms of life, from the protoplasm with single cell to the mammals and eventually man. The appearance of life and of each new species presupposes fresh acts of creation; with each such act of creation life moved on to a higher plane. Since the coming of man, the development of other forms of life has virtually ceased. Man has become the centre of the drama which life has played on this planet.

The development of higher forms of society, of culture or of religion, has not been the whole of the story. Even if man annihilates himself God's purposes will not be falsified. Discords sound, there is a change to the minor key—but we do not know the whole of the symphony to which we contribute our passing notes.¹

We can only with certainty say that today we are called

¹ "Why rushed the discords in but that harmony might be prized? God is the unchangeable Governor as He is the unchangeable Creator of mutable things, ordering all events in His providence until the beauty of the completed course of time (the component parts of which are the dispensations adapted to each successive age) shall be finished, like the grand melody of some ineffably rare master of song." St. Augustine's

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to a higher stage of living, based on a higher consciousness for mankind. This call we can accept or refuse.

We stand at a focal point in history, where the currents from all epochs and all peoples converge. The saints and prophets of all ages, the spiritual pioneers of all lands, contribute to make possible this higher consciousness for mankind. That is the significance for our age of the material uniting of the world: today all the streams of history are flowing together. Confucius, Lao-Tse, the Buddha, Zoroaster, Socrates, Akbar and Mohammed, all play their part along with the Hebrew prophets and the Christian teachers and saints in preparing us for our task.

The catastrophes and crises of prehistory, the ages of ice and rain, the ages of drought and famine, prepared man for the coming of civilisation. With civilisation the saint and prophet were able to emerge—figures far greater in stature than the medicine-man or *shaman* of the primitive tribe. The coming of poetry and the arts, of greater leisure and a relative freedom from the necessities dictated by nature—these gave men scope to contemplate, to see visions, to adventure in spirit.

But man, earthbound, could not rise beyond a certain point. It needed the intervention of God in a special way as a Person, Who lived the life of an ordinary man and suffered as

Epistle to Marcellinus (Epist. 138), quoted by J. N. Figgis: *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's 'City of God'* (Longmans, 1921), p.40.

See also Browning's poem, *Abt Vogler*, which reproduces some of the phrases of this passage. Professor Butterfield's thought on the same subject is interesting (see *Christianity and History*, 66).

if He were an ordinary criminal. This is the central mystery of time, an Event which cannot be explained. It showed man how he could free himself from his earthbound ways, how to live on a higher plane, and it liberated spiritual power to enable him to attain this end.

Since then man has been coming nearer to finding this power and the higher consciousness which goes with it. A pioneer—a St. Paul or St. Francis—clears the way: men struggle forward, only to fall back. But the forward movement gradually proceeds: a St. Francis would not have been possible in any epoch before the coming of Christ.

Each such saint or spiritual pioneer “is like the creation of a new species, composed of one single individual”.¹ But around him grow other members of this “new species” who catch from him the fire. These groups, the nuclei of “inspired democracy”, live out in advance of the rest of mankind that way of life which must become the normal living of mankind in the future.

Individuals inspired by God show forth a pattern of life *individually*. A group inspired by God shows forth the pattern of life *socially*. The next stage for humanity is this Spirit incarnate in *society*: the realisation on a universal scale of what St. Paul called “the Body of Christ”.

We are now at the point in history where we must either go forward towards the achievement of this stupendous aim—or abandon it and therewith sink to a more primitive plane of living. The alternatives are clear before us:—the collapse of civilisation or the coming of the God-inspired society.

¹ Bergson, *op. cit.*, Eng. tr. 77.

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(b) *The need for a superior ideology and for a spiritual creative minority.*

The coming of this new type of society needs the fulfilment of two conditions: first, the proclamation of a compelling ideology of world change, and second, the emergence of a "spiritual creative minority" which would bring this change about.

But since the world, and not merely the West, is its field of operation, this ideology must be expressed in terms which are acceptable by every man and race. It must be based on the spiritual heritage revealed down the ages to all mankind. At a time when in Asia and Africa nationalism has suddenly sprung to life, anything less than this would be foredoomed to failure.

A restatement for our times of those potent ideas which Marxism has appropriated and inverted, would be the ideology which the world is waiting for—far more compelling when presented right side up, because far truer than in the inverted form they receive in Marxism.

Such an ideology must above all stress the truth which Marxism denies—that no change in the social system can have effect without a change in human nature, and that this change in human nature can only come about through the miracle-working grace of God. It must stress that this change is basically *personal*, and that the person to begin with is *oneself*; that pointing one's finger at another person or against "the system" in general leads to intolerance, hatred, fear, and the unloosing of evil forces. It must stress that the miracle of personal change is a necessary step towards the miracle of world-change, that great event towards which creation moves; and that, though the spiritual revolution of personal change

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introduces us to a new dimension—an event in eternity as much as in time—it is part of the greater revolution which remakes the world in time, and prepares it for its fruition in eternity. It will stress the relation between these events and those others where “time makes intersection with eternity”¹—events which are in time and history, but are rooted in eternity: events such as the creation of the world, the creation of man, and the Incarnation. It will stress the relation between the whole of human history and that other dimension—the full dimension of being—which is beyond history, but which we enter through history in the here-and-now, by accepting the full dimension of change. It will relate personal moral and spiritual change to world change, as being part of that “greatest revolution of all time whereby the Cross of Christ shall transform the world.”²

The perspective of eternity alone evokes the fullest creativeness in man. But the work of creation proceeds through the efforts of devoted minorities who have sought the secret of change in themselves.

This truth has also been appropriated by Marxism. It possesses in the Communist Party a dedicated order which

¹ “Men’s curiosity searches past and future
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint—
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a life-time’s death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.”

T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (Faber), 32.

² F. N. D. Buchman: *Remaking the World* (Blandford Press, 1947), p.46.

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recalls the Guardians of Plato: an order whose task is the creation and maintaining of communist society.

Western civilisation, as a society with a distinctive spiritual basis, was created by the dedicated servants of the Church, the saintly missionaries and monks.

A new type of society on a true spiritual basis can only be created by a similar dedicated order, a *spiritual creative minority*. The world is awaiting "the emergence in every country of firm and resolute God-guided men, with all the conviction, fire and fervour of early Christians. Their ever-widening influence would be invincible."¹

Such a group would need to live in advance the life of "inspired democracy", which history suggests is the next stage for mankind as a whole, the type of society which will complete and succeed civilisation.

There are signs that civilisation has now reached its ultimate stage of development. From it can grow a new order of living, as superior to civilisation as civilisation is to primitive tribalism.

Inspired democracy will build on the best that civilisation has to offer—it will take over and develop all that is best in the heritage of civilisation, the fruits of six thousand years. It will take over that supreme gain of the human spirit, freedom to attain his highest being, which civilisation has opened to man. It will build on those systems of government and society which have cherished and developed this freedom, and have given men and women equal scope as fellow workers and creators in society. It will build on the positive gains of liberalism and

¹ Buchman, *op. cit.* 122.

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democracy—"the one ethical result that rests on the converging and combined conditions of advancing civilisation".²

It will build too on the best that is offered by nationalism, its sense of community and its sense of mission. It will build on the distinctive contribution which every nation has to make in constructing a new society for mankind.

At the same time it will be *supranational*. It will answer the need for a united world. As the creative minority for this world, it will include members of all races and all nations, of East as well as West, black as well as white.

Besides having the "fire and fervour" of Early Christians, it will demonstrate the same type of society which the Early Christians first gave to the world. It will demonstrate, in a form which the world will understand, the way of life of inspired democracy.

It will stand in the line of succession to all those communities which, throughout history, have demonstrated this way of life. It will play that part in our epoch which was played by the Early Church in the Roman world, by the monastic movement in the Dark Ages, and by the Franciscans and other preaching orders at the dawn of the Renaissance.

Like these historic communities it will set a new pattern of living which will affect all peoples within its orbit—the orbit of the entire world. It will foster a new level of morals, new institutions, new laws, a new culture. It will lead to a flowering of the human spirit, reminiscent of that of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but a flowering of the spirit in which the whole of humanity will share.

Each of these historic communities oriented the society of

² Lord Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, p.12 (quoted above, Chap. 7 (c) p.130.

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its day in a more spiritual direction. This would similarly be the effect of the spiritual creative minority of our era.

It would not deny the material advances which our civilisation has made, nor would it challenge the large-scale organisations, industrial, economic and political, which modern man has created to satisfy the needs of unity and efficiency—organisations which represent a high achievement of administrative skill. It would build on all the technique and organisation which today's world has to offer, for these represent the *material* basis of the world which is to be. All these and the culture of our day it would orient in a spiritual direction, by endowing the inventors, the administrators and the statesmen, the artists and writers, teachers and thinkers, the workers and the housewives, the old and the young, with its dynamic ideology or faith.

It would provide the leaven to change the nature of the world to-day, just as the faith of the pioneers of civilisation changed mankind's entire outlook and mode of life.

(c) *The coming of a new world order.*

As we go forward to building that new society—call it “super-civilisation” or what we will—which is to succeed civilisation itself, we may find significant analogies in the events which led to the birth of civilisation out of tribalism.

The first builders of civilisation, in the Nile Valley, were faced, as we are, with a threat to their entire existence—not indeed a threat of their own making, but due to the drying up of the North African prairies. Civilisation was their “response” to this “challenge”¹ just as “super-civilisation” should be our response to the threat of self-destruction.

¹ See A. J. Toynbee (ref. above, Chap. 1).

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In the case of the dwellers by the Nile, the threat to their existence was balanced by the discovery of a new technique for securing the means of life—agriculture, which was able not merely to ensure their survival, but promised the raising of culture and the art of living to levels hitherto unimagined.

The transition to civilisation was not accomplished without further fundamental changes, which were as much inner, affecting the psychology of the people concerned, as external, affecting their outward habits of life. Settlement in villages was a mode of living utterly different from the wandering life of small groups as hunters or “food-gatherers”. Further, the Nile Valley, bounded by deserts, presented a small region by comparison with the wide spaces over which men had freely been able to roam. Now, brought together in a small restricted area, they were obliged to discover a new way of living to suit their changing circumstances.

Their world, like ours, had shrunk: their living-space was cramped. In solving the problems connected with living closely together in village settlements, the earliest farmers in the Nile Valley laid the basis of the future world order of civilisation.

Aided by the coming of a new type of religion, they were able to change their entire outlook and so build a new way of life—civilisation—on the basis which the new food-producing technique made possible.

In our case we too have the *technical* basis, through modern industry and inventions, for establishing a new way of life. The coming of a faith or ideology is still, however, our urgent need—an ideology which will re-express, in terms compelling for our age, mankind’s highest moral and spiritual discoveries. Such an ideology would make fruitful as the basis of a new way of life all those astonishing technical discoveries which man has made in the last two hundred years.

Towards the Next Stage Beyond Civilisation

A *spiritual revolution* is needed to complement and render fruitful the industrial revolution. How to bring about this spiritual revolution is the task facing mankind to-day.

One thing is clear: it will not happen accidentally. Some "creative minority" must pioneer it, just as a group of men in the Nile Valley faced the need of a radical change of attitude, in pioneering the earliest civilised society in the world. That community, though small in numbers and rudimentary by our modern standards, was the growing-point whence civilisation spread throughout Asia and the Mediterranean area. It was the prototype of all subsequent civilisation, which now has become world-wide—so that there are few places in the world where the original primitive mode of life survives.

On this analogy some group of men today must establish, as it were in embryo, the world-society of the future. They must form a community living the new way of life, as the growing-point from which the new type of society can expand.

This is in line with the normal process of growth in human society. Civilisation spread throughout the world as the result of a multiplication of the centres or growing-points of civilised life, the Nile Valley, Mesopotamia, Crete, China and elsewhere.

In this way too have the changes taken place from one *phase* of civilisation to another. When the agricultural phase of a civilisation has given place to the urban and commercial phase it has been through the development of towns as the centres of a new *bourgeois* way of life, with a different outlook from that of the agricultural countryside.

In our Western civilisation there has been another well-marked transition from the earlier *bourgeois* phase to industrial society with the mammoth city or "conurbation" as its typical unit. In this case the factory was the growing-

point of a new way of life, involving new social relations between employers and employed; it was around the factories that the industrial towns grew up in which the same relations—and divisions—were reflected on a wider scale.

Our hope—and expectation—must therefore be that a further stage of society, beyond that of our existing civilisation, should grow up in the midst of the old order, and that this new society should transform and knit together a world to which the old order brings nothing but division. Further, this new society should be established first on a small scale, in embryo, and should then spread from its local growing-points throughout the entire world. The birth or rebirth of society is needed; and if the clues which history affords are correct, it will be through a nucleus of people who have accepted a revolutionary idea and the change which this idea involves.

Such a nucleus would be a tiny minority of mankind, as tiny perhaps as that represented by those early pioneers in the Nile Valley and in the other settlements which were the growing-points of civilisation. But they would be the “creative minority” destined to remake the world.

Where is the “creative minority” of our era to be found? Marx thought that he had found it in the industrial workers, “the proletariat”. The believers in 19th century liberal democracy thought the Western *bourgeoisie* to be in the van of progress. The merchants and industrialists liked to think that their efforts were throwing wider the circle of civilisation.

On a certain level, the level of material progress, the 19th century industrialists came nearest to forming a creative minority for their age. Later, international labour developed a sense of mission, and played a part in creating the framework of the Welfare State which is now being erected in various Western lands.

Towards the Next Stage Beyond Civilisation

But in the conditions of the present, neither world-capitalism nor world-labour are effectively creating the new type of society which can save the world from disaster. We must look elsewhere to find the embryo of the new society of the future, the creative minority which will remake the world.

In this creative minority labour will have an important part, for on labour rest the technical foundations of the social organisation of our modern world. The industrialists too, and the managerial element in all walks of life, will find their true place as members of a creative minority which will bring their triumphs of enterprise and administrative skill to fruition. And Communists, changing from an outmoded and barren faith to the true faith, will bring their dynamism and fighting qualities without which the new world cannot be built.

History is moving so fast that we must expect astonishing changes within our own life-time. It is not too much to expect that there will be a mass change towards the way of life of inspired democracy. To-day people are spiritually famished. They are ready to turn in their millions towards a compelling ideology which leads to a life firmly based on spiritual values.

We should not be deluded by the apparent materialism which exists everywhere. This is just the compensation for the hunger which people feel in their hearts. If that hunger is satisfied, they will respond as the masses in a materialistic age responded to Christianity centuries ago. Our minds have been prepared down the ages for the coming of inspired democracy, and—rightly presented by the creative minority which lives it out—it will be accepted on a mass scale.

History shows the advances towards inspired democracy which have been pioneered from time to time. It also shows these advances arrested at a certain point by the strait-jacket of organisation, the coming of institutionalism. Can a creative

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minority of inspired democracy today succeed in moving beyond this point, allowing the dynamic of the spirit to overcome the hardening up of the "law"—and so continue to grow until it ceases to be a minority but embraces the whole of mankind?

The answer depends on whether we can learn history's lessons, and so avoid those errors which led to the hardening up of former pioneering groups.

The leaven will continue to transform humanity, and the seed will continue to grow into the mightiest of all trees, as long as inspiration is allowed to flow freely, and as long as every member of the new society attains the fullest life in seeking and expressing this inspiration. It demands the continual incentive of absolute moral standards, as a dynamic towards attaining the fullest life for individuals as for nations. Continuous growth demands continuous change, and the members of the creative minority must continue to change each other as well as to change the world. In this way the "gravitational pull"¹ away from the life of spiritual freedom to the inertia of the earthy, can be overcome. Life need never become static at the dead-point, the point of arrested development, where habit, custom—all that makes up "law"—become too heavy, and where growth is stifled under a nerveless hand.

This continuing miracle of change is the essence of the creative process. It is God's eternal answer to the eternal threat of catastrophe.

¹ Professor Herbert Butterfield: *Christianity and History* (Bell, 1949), p.38.

Epilogue

It was as an undergraduate at Oxford that I encountered in the early thirties what was then known as the Oxford Group, and recognised in it a force which was destined, as I believed, to the remaking of the world. There were already enough signs that the world in its present form was moving to catastrophe, and that as a single individual I could make no impact on events. I recognised, although dimly at first, that the future lay with organised movements which stood for an ideology of social change. In those days communism and fascism seemed the main examples of such movements. Neither appealed to me, since both did violence to those Christian values which (however imperfectly I applied them) were for me the highest in life. But in the Oxford Group I saw the nucleus of a world force with a Christian ideology which bid fair to outrival the others. I was gripped by the simple philosophy of world change in which Frank Buchman expressed his message—"New men, new nations, a new world."

Enthusiasm and idealism, I soon found, were insufficient if I was to be a member of this world force. I too had to face the cost of change in my own life. It began with the application of the Socratic principle of "Know thyself", a process which sometimes was painful. Honest recognition of the kind of person one is can easily come as a shock to people who have had many illusions about themselves. But the shock of self-recognition was salutary. Through it I began to find a surer purpose and sense of direction. I began to find, among other

things, a new creativeness which went far beyond my former outmoded ideals of humanism and individualism. I even began to find something of the power to pass on my new experience to others.

The war sent me overseas with the army, but almost wherever I went I found Moral Re-Armament groups, nuclei of a new society which seemed like the embryo of a new world—groups in which even those of differing creeds and background, Christians, Jews and Moslems, could find unity.

The ending of the war has marked the eclipse of one of the main ideologies of our age, fascism. For a time, communism has been in the ascendant, but now people everywhere are looking for an ideology which expresses our inherited moral and spiritual values. As people are coming to recognise what Moral Re-Armament stands for, they are increasingly turning towards it as the ideology of the coming age.

Victory in the war of arms opened the way for the spread of Moral Re-Armament on the European continent. In Germany where the defeat of Nazism left an ideological vacuum, and where Communists have been disillusioned by the programme and methods of Moscow, the response has been particularly striking. But also in France, Italy, Holland and elsewhere, there has been a growing interest in Moral Re-Armament, whose forces have been strengthened by many veterans of the war and of the resistance movements.

So also in the Far East. How great is the need and interest there, was shown by the visit of 78 leading Japanese to Europe in 1950, in order to learn at first hand about Moral Re-Armament with a view to bringing it to their own nation.

Epilogue

The first place in Europe to be visited by these Japanese was the World Assembly of Moral Re-Armament at Caux, Switzerland. This has become a unique meeting-ground for the leadership of all nations and all classes, as well as a remarkable demonstration of inspired democracy in action. Its secret lies in the core of men and women who form the nucleus of each "team" which takes responsibility for the day-to-day tasks of such a community, as well as for the special purposes for which the Assembly exists. Each such team is a "cell" in a social organism which lives and grows; its vitality and direction are drawn from the quality of living of the people who compose it—who set absolute moral standards for their lives, and who daily seek the guidance of God. Caux is an experiment in teamwork based on inspired living. On this basis, economic, administrative, social and international problems, such as those with which statesmen are only too familiar, are daily solved.

When I first came to Caux I was struck, like so many others, by this demonstration of a new world. Communists from the Ruhr, or Lombardy, or the Red Belt of Paris or from the docks of London and Glasgow, have been able to grasp the reality of this truly classless society. After overcoming the dazed sense which can be the result of contact with this new dimension of living, they have in many cases abandoned Marxism for what they recognise to be a superior ideology. A leading communist from the Ruhr, Herr Willi Benedens, of the Rheinpreussen Coalmining Company, was sent by his party to bring back from Caux other Communists who had transferred their allegiance to MRA—only to be

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won over himself.¹ As he said, "I found here at Caux what I had for years been fighting for. I saw proof of a classless society. I was a convinced and fanatical fighter for the ideology of the Communist Party. . . . But I realised here that the final result of class war would be the destruction of humanity through the conflict between East and West. On what basis can we build socialism? I have seen something here in Caux which not only provides the way in which we can arrive at social justice, but something which also satisfies the great needs in the heart of man."²

This change of attitude on the part of workers has often brought about a similar change of heart on the part of management and *vice versa*. In this way the wrongs perpetrated by the leaders of capitalism on our civilisation are being tardily atoned, and a unity, which far transcends the factories, mines and docks where it is built, begins to integrate the shattered fabric of our world.

* * * * *

Moral Re-Armament began with an experience in the life of Frank Buchman in 1908. It was an experience similar to that which marked a turning-point in the lives of St. Augustine, St. Francis, and of many another spiritual pioneer.

¹ Such losses of personnel made necessary the entire reconstitution of the Communist Party Executive for the Ruhr in 1949, and resulted in an edict that Communists were henceforth to abandon the usual tactics of infiltration in regard to MRA. For this and other facts of the recent world-wide progress of Moral Re-Armament, see *The World Rebuilt* by Peter Howard (Blandford Press, 1951).

² Caux Information Service No. 4, 1950.

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Like other such pioneers he passed in earlier years through a phase of frustration and unhappiness. Accused of ambition by a fellow-student, he took up work as Warden of a boys' hostel in the poorest quarter of Philadelphia, to prove to the accuser (and to himself) that this was not true—but found it was. He had quarrels with the managing committee of the hostel, who, he felt, were more concerned to balance the accounts than to see that his young folk were adequately fed. "Right in my conviction, I was wrong in harbouring ill-will . . .¹ I was divided, just as nations too are divided . . . I went to Europe to try to escape. But my battle came with me."²

In England, in a lakeland church, he had a vision like that of St. Francis in the ruined church of St. Damian. As a result he was moved to write letters of apology to the managers against whom he had cherished resentment. The same evening he found he was able to bring a similar experience to someone with whom he was staying.

Through this power of communicating his experience to others Buchman has become the initiator of a growing force of people who have caught the same fire.

During the last forty years, Moral Re-Armament has been growing like a healthy organism, throwing off new cells in every city and every country where it has penetrated. Its aim is to be the initiating and unifying factor in the process, operating like the leaven in the parable, whereby the nature of the world is changed.

This aim is frankly revolutionary—a "revolution which

¹ Quoted by A. J. Russell: *For Sinners Only* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1942), p.57.

² F. N. D. Buchman: *The Answer to any 'Ism—even Materialism.*

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will end revolution by changing human nature and remaking men and nations.”¹ It is a “spiritual revolution” which begins with personal change in the individual, and moves on to “social, economic, national and international change—all based on personal change.”² It is a revolution which takes place here and now, introducing people to a timeless dimension of living; equally it prepares for the further revolution in time, whereby the world will be remade.

But the times are urgent and much depends on the response of the millions everywhere. The challenge is to all of us, for the choice is in our hands: either to await enslavement and catastrophe, or to go forward to the building of a world society such as mankind has never seen. The decision of any one of us may be decisive, either in bringing on catastrophe or in ushering in a new world.

Movements of inspired democracy in the past have brought new elements to civilisation, besides producing a fine flowering of the human spirit in the cultural realm. So it was with the Early Church, and so with the Franciscan Brotherhood. Moral Re-Armament, as the creative force for inspired democracy, promises to outmode civilisation as we know it by bringing nearer the next stage of society which will make civilisation appear as antiquated as tribalism appears to us to-day. This should lead to a flowering of the human spirit, of an order that may surpass that of Ancient Greece or Renaissance Europe.

“Is it to be God’s light of a new day for Europe and the world; or is to be the fading light of a doomed civilisation?”

¹ *Remaking the World*, p.49.

² Buchman: *Is There an Answer? There Is* (1949) p. 3. For a study of Dr. Buchman’s thought, see R. C. Mowat: *The Message of Frank Buchman* (Blandford Press, 1951).

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The world faces this historic choice.”¹ For the world to choose aright the decision rests on each one of us.

I have made my decision and I hope this book will encourage others to make theirs.

¹ *Remaking the World*, p.75.

Appendix A

(see page 9)

The influence of climatic changes on human habits and enterprise have been worked out in great detail by Ellsworth Huntington and others. I am assuming the correctness of the theory of the origin of civilisation as related to these changes which is based on these findings—the theory adopted by Professor Toynbee, with which readers of *A Study of History* are familiar.

Grahame Clark states the case in summary form in *From Savagery to Civilisation*, p. 75: “The earliest centres of the new economy are all found in the zone stretching from North Africa to Syria, Iran and Turkestan, today among the driest in the world, but which in Pleistocene times enjoyed a rainfall similar to that now prevailing in the lands bordering the northern shores of the Mediterranean. That this should be so is no accident, since it was precisely the shifting of climatic zones that gave the impetus for domestication: growing scarcity of wild foods and the enforced association of man and beast in the dwindling oases sharpened necessity and at the same time increased opportunity. Moreover, it was precisely in this area that the progenitors of the cereal grains and the domesticated animals, on which the earliest farming economy was based, flourished in the wild state.”

Appendix B

(see page 10)

The word "ideology" has come to be used with several different meanings. Notably it has taken the place of "religion", a word which has become debased by its application to forms of belief or observances which may be unrelated to practical life. A genuine religion provides the dynamic and discipline for the whole of life, endowing it with "passion, philosophy and plan". In this sense "ideology" is used to cover not only religions based on faith in God (or in gods or some kind of spiritual essences), but creeds like communism and fascism based on a materialist outlook. The "ideology" of any person is taken to mean those ideas or principles which are expressed in his actual life: the ideas which are genuinely the motivating ideas in his life, as distinct from those which may be professed as the guiding ideas but in fact are not. So with the ideology of a group of persons (a nation, a class). In this sense a distinction could be drawn between the "*religion*" of the prosperous classes in 19th century Britain (which was a version of Christianity) and the *ideology* which actually motivated them in their economic affairs (which was basically unchristian and materialist).

Compare this definition of the word with Professor Gordon Childe's:

"In society men make names for and talk about ideas which cannot in fact be seen, smelt, handled or tasted like bananas—ideas such as two-headed eagle, mana, electricity,

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cause . . . Societies behave as if they are real things. In fact men seem to be impelled to far more strenuous and sustained action by the idea of two-headed eagle, immortality or freedom than by the most succulent bananas!

“ . . . Ideas that inspire such action must be treated by history as just as real as those which stand for the more substantial objects of archaeological study. In practice ideas form as effective an element in the environment of any human society as do mountains, trees, animals, the weather and the rest of external nature. Societies, that is, behave as if they were reacting to a spiritual environment as well as to a material environment. To deal with this environment they behave as if they needed a spiritual equipment just as much as they need a material equipment of tools.

“ This spiritual equipment is not confined to ideas which can be—and are—translated into tools and weapons that work successfully in controlling and transforming external nature, nor yet to the language which is the vehicle for ideas. It includes also what is termed society's ideology—its superstitions, religious beliefs, loyalties and artistic ideals. Apparently in pursuit of ideologies and inspired by ideas, men perform actions of a kind never observed among other animals.”

Appendix C

“History is the result of a deep interaction between eternity and time; it is the incessant irruption of eternity into time”.¹ The great events of the past have a significance beyond their era, they belong to the present. So with great works of art: they “live”, transcending the passing forms of the age wherein they were created. The great men, too, of the past, the saints and heroes, live on as our contemporaries. And we, when we seek it, can also find that quality of great living which belongs to eternity as well as to the world of time.

When our living so transcends the boundaries of this spatio-temporal realm, we are in immediate contact with the significant, “contemporary” past; we “live in the company of heroes and saints”.² Their lives and their writings, like the creations of the inspired artist and poet, are charged with meaning for us.

The utterances of the prophets were written for the people of their day, but to us they speak with equal force. The catastrophes and judgments spoken of by Isaiah or Jeremiah are for us not those executed by Babylon or Egypt; the alliances we seek are no longer with Pharoah, trusting in his chariots and horsemen; the material security in which we put our trust is no longer that promised by Baalim and false gods. But they are catastrophes and judgments executed by Germany and

¹ Berdyaev: *The Meaning of History* (Bles, 1936), p.67.

² Acton: *Lectures on Modern History*, p.5.

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Russia—who nonetheless are God's instruments inevitably coming under judgment through the catastrophes which in due time overwhelm them. We still look for security anywhere but with God; and materialism has become our idol though we do not worship it as Baal or Astarte.

Amos, flaying with biting words the exploiters of the poor, is attacking our hard-heartedness to-day, which builds up, as then, into social evil and injustice. We, like the other nations, are chosen, each one called of God to follow a road which He has prepared for us. We too depart from this road; we are in danger of failing our mission each in our way to bring the rest of the world to the knowledge of His love and His plan.

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Anyone who is familiar with the writings of Professor A. J. Toynbee will realise how much I owe to his *Study of History*, and especially to certain key ideas there which have provided me with the clues for my own thinking. Mr. Christopher Dawson's books have also been of exceptional help to me, both for their interpretation of various periods of history, and for their references to passages from early authorities, such as Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa, which I have followed up. A similar debt is owed to the late Canon B. H. Streeter in respect of his book *The Primitive Church* (Macmillan, 1929), and his references to the writings of St. Clement and others.

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