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THE UN-MARXIAN SOCIALIST

THE UN-MARXIAN SOCIALIST

A Study of Proudhon

By

HENRI DE LUBAC, SJ.

Translated by

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LONDON

SHEED & WARD

1948

FIRST PUBLISHED 1948
BY SHEED AND WARD, LTD.
I I O / I I I FLEET STREET
LONDON, E.C.4

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY PURNELL AND SONS, LTD.
PAULTON (SOMERSET) AND LONDON

To the Memory

of

PERE YVES DE MONTCHEUIL,

A Witness to the Charity of Christ,

Assassinated by the Gestapo

{Grenoble, August 10//i, 1944)

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE AUTHOR says that in France Proudhon is, generally, not known. The same applies to England. Proudhon has been called " the great moralist of the working-classes ". Our author would qualify him more simply as a great moralist.

One of his epigrams—familiar perhaps to examination candidates —has passed into the English language, *Propriety, c'est le vol,* " Property is theft". Since that word has apparently become naturalized. I have preferred to retain it throughout this work instead of ownership or a right to property.

A list of French titles, with English equivalents, will be found at the beginning of the book. Here again Proudhon seems to be so little known over here that I have been unable to find any English translations of his works and have had therefore to supply the English titles. *La Philosophie de la Misere,* for instance, has been rendered as '* The Philosophy of Distress " as this seems better suited to Marx's punning rejoinder, *La Miskre de la Philosophie,* "The Distress of Philosophy ". In this list of titles will be found the initial letters used to indicate the various books in the footnotes to each page.

The first chapter—Biography—has been adapted and considerably amplified in order to give a clearer historical setting to Proudhon's times for the benefit of the English reader. The historical details of the Revolution in February, 1848, are not the author's.

I am very grateful to the Rev. F. C. Copleston, S.J., who kindly read the proofs of this book for me.

R. E. S.

St. Wilfrid's,
Ventnor, L of W.
St. Wilfrid's Day,
Oct, 12th, 1947.

FOREWORD

LIKE PEGUY, with whom he has so many points of resemblance, Proudhon has suffered of late a twofold indignity. At the very moment when the world was turning its back upon him, scoffing at his predominant ideas and his most cherished sentiments, historians there were who placed this repudiation under his own patronage. Did they not go so far as to see in this theoretician of " anarchy " the champion of a " resplendent authority ", " emanating from man and spreading throughout the whole of society, to be both its mainstay and its end "? Did they not discover in the writings of this " mutualist " " the essential principles of the present-day political economy of a totalitarian State "? Did they not make this adorer of Justice hold that Justice was merely " the intelligence of the strongest man "? Others, not pushing the paradox to such extremes, had already listed him among the leaders of the " counter-revolution ". Several times over, during the last fifty years, attempts have been made to establish or to revive a Proudhon tradition which would enable French Socialism to make a stand against Marxism. The interpretation was at times tendentious. The result, it must be confessed, was very poor. " The Proudhon era ", which some had already heralded, never came. Despite a group of excellent publishers, despite a few serious researches—the most noteworthy of which is, without a doubt, M. Jean Lacroix's—despite, too, a renewal of interest shown today in many ways, Proudhon is still, generally speaking, not known. Professional philosophers despise him. With few exceptions, economists and sociologists refuse to take him seriously. Historians of letters, showing themselves herein more severe in taste than a Sainte-Beuve, neglect him; it is only with a few of them that some of his writings barely manage to find favour, writings such as his *Majorats litteraires* and *Confessions d'un rdvolutionnaire,* or even the autobiographical passages in *Justice,* though they deserve to rank with the autobiographies of a St. Augustine, a Chateaubriand or a Renan.

That he should not be known by Catholics in particular, or that they should see in him a bugaboo, is less surprising. There are great excuses for such ignorance. In the last century Proudhon was one of the strong opponents of our faith, and that in a manner most **violent and very** provoking. His work is still dangerous, its flame

flickers here and there even now. Need I say that I have no intention of rehabilitating him ? I do not think that the fight which must be undertaken against Marxist Atheism calls for a return to Proudhon. I am not enamoured, any more than he was, of " doctrinal reconciliations " and harmony at any price. My purpose then is, not to soften the impact of his most outrageous theses, but to combat them. But to combat them, we must first understand them, both in their tenor and in their origin. Hitherto nothing like a thorough investigation (from the Christian standpoint) of Proudhon's attitude with regard to Christianity has appeared. Yet such a work would seem to be desirable on several grounds. Proudhon bears witness to the awakening and the revolt of the lower classes. He also bears witness—with a dreadful bias, but frequently also with clear-seeing eyes—to the Catholicism of his day. More than anything else, the religious problem exercised him without respite, and never once did he look upon it as being plainly solved. This it is which distinguishes him from so many others. With him we do at least discover some attempt to criticize his own criticisms. His thought is caught up in a rhythm which brings him back of necessity upon his own negations, so that he himself calls to us, so to speak, to draw closer to him by taking sides against him. To respond to such a call is not " to enlist him in our ranks "; we shall still be refuting him through the alliance he offers.

In one of those dark moods to which he often gave way, he once wrote: " We must no longer be under any illusion. Europe is tired of order and thought; it is entering upon an age of brutal force, of contempt for principles and of orgy. We simple folk, gentle in manners, upright in conscience, have lived too long; it only remains for us to weep as we behold the decadence of the Christian nations." Pessimism apart, does not this despairing cry show the inclinations of his heart? Even when he is attacking us with the utmost fury, his voice still stimulates us as if urging us on to better things. Be it a question of faith, of hope or of charity, the way he has of shaking us up is good for us in that it makes us put our own house in order. We condemn his errors, we repudiate his blasphemies, we appeal to Proudhon himself, to Proudhon in his better senses, against the excesses which carried him away, but not on any single occasion is there between ourselves and him that complete and final rupture which makes all dialogue impossible.

If now, away beyond his ideas, we strive to know the man himself, sympathy can be given a freer rein. " I believe," he remarked, " that

fundamentally every man is better than his system." At all events that is true of himself. Moreover, he is not one of those authors easily understood without at least a prolonged survey of their life-story as men. " The account of his mind," said Sainte-Beuve, " can be read in his letters; that is the place to look for it." I would add, and in his Note-books also. His letters and his Note-books, however, have been scarcely utilized. Proudhon has had none to be his historian as Xavier Leon was for Fichte or Charles Andler for Nietzsche. The edition, in fourteen volumes, of his Correspondence, brought out by Langlois in 1875, was quickly returned to the pulp-merchant for want of readers, and many other letters remained unpublished. Consequently the idea of an eight-volume edition of his Note-books was abandoned. Only a few extracts have been published. I have had frequent recourse to these extracts and to the correspondence.[1] With Proudhon thus acting as his own commentator he will seem more alive. If it is true that by its best side as well as by its worst Proudhon's work is already dated, in other respects he is very much of the present day. He is not merely for us a noble adversary who deserves to survive as a splendid type of man. Proudhon is a great stimulator of thought, and the topical character of his work is not likely soon to pass away, for he is a thinker who, without turning us aside from our earthly tasks, makes us reflect with him unceasingly upon the eternal problems.

[1] Several of the texts from the Note-books, which I quote or to which I allude, have been made known to me by M. F b b e Haubtmann, who is preparing an important work on Proudhon. I should like to express my gratitude to him. I did not wish to give an historical analysis of Proudhon's thought, even confining it to the religious problem. Any reader who is disappointed will no doubt be able to find all he wants in the biography to which M. Daniel Halevy is putting the finishing touches. He will also discover a good deal of information in the big Bougle-Moysset edition (not yet completed), which I have quoted, generally, when dealing with the works which have so far appeared in it.

THE FRENCH TITLES, AND ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS, OF PROUDHON'S WORKS REFERRED TO IN THIS BOOK

(The initials are those used in the footnotes elsewhere to indicate references to the book concerned.)

TITLE	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT	REFERRED TO AS	
Essai de grammaire ginirale (published 1837)	Essay on General Grammar	*Grammaire ginirale*	E. G.
De Vutilite de la calibration du dimanche, sous les rapports de Vhygiene, de la morale, des relations de famille et de cite (published 1839; other editions 1841, 1850)	Sunday Observance and its usefulness from the points of view of hygiene, morality and family and town life	*Celebration du dimanche*	C. D.
Qu'est-ce que la propriite ? ou Recherches sur le principe du droit et du gouvernement (June, 1840)	What is Property? or a Study of the Principle of Right and Government	*Propriety*	Prop.
Lettre a M. Blanqui (April, 1841)	Letter to M. Blanqui	*Lettre a M. Blanqui*	L. B.
Lettre a M. Considerant ou Avertissement aux propriitaires (January, 1842)	Letter to M. Considerant, or A Warning to Property Owners	*Avertissement aux proprie'taires*	A. P.
De la criation de Vordre dans Vhumanitd (September 1843; second corrected edition, 1849)	On the creation of Order in Mankind	*Creation de l'ordre*	C. O. H.

TITLE	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT	REFERRED TO AS
Systime des contradictions tconomiques ou Philosophie de la Misire (two volumes, 1846) which brought forth Marx's ironic rejoinder, *Misire de la Philosophie*	The System of Economic Contradictions or the Philosophy of Distress The Distress of Philosophy	*Philosophie de la misire* M. P.
Solution de la question sociale (March, 1848)	The Solution to the Social Question	S. Q. S.
Lettre h Louis Blanc (April 8th, 1848)	Letter to Louis Blanc	L. B.
Confessions d'un re'volutionnaire (written in prison, published October, 1849)	The Confessions of A Revolutionary	*Confessions*
Lidie generate de la Revolution au XIXe stecle (July, 1851)	A General Idea of the Revolution in the nineteenth century	*Idee gdnirale de la Revolution*
La revolution sociale demontree par le coup d'Etat (July, 1851)	The Social Revolution proved by the coup d'Etat	*Revolution sociale*
Lettres sur la Philosophie du Progris (written in Brussels, end of 1853; Parisian booksellers refused to sell it)	The Philosophy of Progress	*Philosophie du Progris*
Manuel du Spe'culateur h la Bourse (first edition, 1853, in collaboration with DucbSne)	Stock Exchange Manipulator's Handbook	*Manuel du Speculateur*

P. M.
M. P.
S. Q. S.
L. B.
Con.
I. G. R.
R. S.
P.P.
M. S.

TITLE	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT	REFERRED TO AS	
Reformes a operer dans I'administra-Uons des chemins de fer (Mai-ch, I £55)	Changes to be made in the Administration of Railways	*Administration des chemins defer*	A. C. D.
Be la Justice dans ta kivolulion et dans VEgUse (three volumes, April, 1858)	Justice in the Revolution and in the Church	*Justice*	Just.
La Justice poursuivie par VEglise (Brussels, ? 1858)	Justice prosecuted by the Church	*Justice paursuivie*	J. P-
Programme (Brussels, between 1858 and 1860) *Programme* appeared as the first instalment of a new edition *of Justice.* Each instalment of this new edition contained an appendix called	The Programme or Syllabus of a Popular Philosophy (which was never published)	*Programme*	Prog*.
Nouvelles de la Revolution	News of the Revolution		N; R.
Thdorie de Vimpdt (Brussels)	Theory on Taxes		T. I.
La Guerre et la Paix (Paris, May 21st, 1861)	War and Peace		G. P.
Majorats litteraires (A work on Copyrights, April, 1862)	Literary Entailments		M. L.
Du Principe Fddiratifet de VUnitd en Italie (February, 1863)	On the Principle of Federation and Unity in Italy	*Unite* en Italie*	U. I.
Les ddmocrates assermentds et les rifractaires (April, 1863)	The Democrats who took the Oath and those who did not	*Les dimocrates assermentis*	D. A.

TITLE	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT	REFERRED TO AS	
Du principe de Vart et sa destination sociale (published, with additions, posthumously)	The Principle of Art and its Social Purpose	*Principe de Vart*	P. A.
Si les traites de 1815 *ont cesse* d'exister* (Decernber, 1863)	Have the 1815 Treaties ceased to exist?	*Traitisde \i\S*	T. 1815
La Capacity politique des classes ouvrieres (posthumous, 1864)	The Political Capabilitiesofthe Working Classes	*Capacite' politique*	C. P.

LESSER WORKS POSTHUMOUSLY PUBLISHED BY FRIENDS

Thiorie de la propriitd	Theory of Property .	Th.P.
La Pornocratie	Pornocracy	Porn.
La Fdodalite industrielle	Industrial Feudality	F. I.
Les contradictions politiques	Political contradictions	Con. P.
Cesarisme et christianisme	Imperialism and Christianity	C. C.
La Bible annotde	The Bible annotated	B. A.

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PART ONE

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY

I

1809-38.

PIERRE JOSEPH PROUDHON was a native of Besancon, as were also the other social reformers, Charles Fourier, Just Muiron and Hippolyte Reynaud. He was born in the district known as the Battant, on January 15th, 1809. His father, Claude Proudhon, was a cooper, honest and hard-working, but not very thrifty. Later he abandoned his tools and bought a public house for himself, for which he brewed his own beer. Proudhon's mother was Catherine Simonin, a cook, a good and clever woman endowed with a very delicate moral sense and a woman much wrapped up in household duties. In after years Proudhon wrote of her: " I owe to my mother everything that I am." Proudhon also inherited a good many traits from his maternal grandfather, old " Tournesi", a brave old soldier who loved to grouse but was quick in battle and impatient of all tyranny. One branch of his father's family were wealthy government supporters, " thoroughly conservative and godly ", but with these Proudhon never had any relations.

In his earliest years Pierre Joseph was his father's cellar-boy. Later, when his parents went to live in the country, he became a cowman. These open-air years left their mark on the lad for life. His recollections of them in his book, *Justice,* are redolent of the countryside. In 1820, the winning of a scholarship enabled him to go to the royal college at Besancon, after the Easter holidays. There he shone as a student, winning the class-prize every year. His leisure hours, which were few and far between, he spent in the local library reading everything he could find. This puzzled Charles Weiss, the librarian, who once asked him: " What do you intend to do with all those books, young man ? " " What has that got to do with you ? " was the somewhat savage answer he received.[1]

His studies and his reading did not prevent him from carrying on with his work in the fields, and when, later, his parents went back

[1] Charles Weiss (1799-1866), L'*Atlas cfu monde bhgraphique* (chapter v, Le Clerc), a great scholar, whom Sainte-Beuve called his " dear and learned friend ".

to live in the town again, he found work as a cooper. At this early stage the difficulty and the humiliation of his situation weighed upon him. " I constantly lacked even the most essential books and did all my Latin studies without a dictionary.'*[2] On prize-giving day, 1826, he came home loaded with honours only to find the rest of the family in tears. The last of their fields had just been lost in an unfortunate lawsuit. Pierre Joseph managed, however, to spend one more year, his last, in the college. While still in the top form he attended the Abbe Astier's classes at the Faculty of Philosophy. In the autumn Of 18-27 *he* started Work as a printer and proof-reader, in the Battant district at first as an apprentice, and afterwards in the town itself with the firm of Gauthief. In this Way he Was able to help support the family.

Some time later he found himself out of work, and after spending a few weeks supervising studies at Gray the young man left his native place to look for work, towards the end of 1830. He worked as a printer at Neuchatel in Switzerland, at Marseilles and at Draguinan. Once more he was unemployed and this time, in his search for work, he went as far afield as Paris (March, 1832), but with no success. Here his friend Gustave Fallot put him up for a few months. Then he came south again and called upon the Mayor of Toulon, in the name of the law, to find work for him. Afterwards he wrote, with a little exaggeration perhaps: " In this manner I traversed a part of France, sometimes lacking work, at others lacking bread, and all because I had told an employer the truth to his face. His answer had been brutally to pitch me out."[8] Finally, in 1833, after a short stay at Arbois, he returned to his native town and settled down as a foreman with the firm of Gauthier, " happy years, thanks to my work ".

He had already taught himself Hebrew, back in 1829. During the years of his peregrinations he continued his own education and studied the Bible and read the theologians. He formed certain intellectual plans. He had struck up a friendship with the Orientalist, Pauthier. He once said to the young scholar, Fallot, who had, so to speak, opened Proudhon's eyes and made him see himself as he really was: "Let me be Plato and you shall be Socrates."[4] Proudhon had never been a very religious-minded man, but from now on his break with the Church was complete. It was in 1832 that he resolved to write

*** Letter applying for the Suard Award *(Correspondence,* vol. i, pp. 24-5).**

*** Letter applying for the Suard Award *(Correspondance,* vol. 1, p. 28).**

*** Letter to Weiss, 1838 (vol. i, p. 23). Fallot wrote to him on December 5th, 1831: " My dear Proudhon, how I miss that black and dark room filled with smoke in which I lived in Besancon, where we spent such pleasant hours philosophizing ! " (vol. i, p. xvi).**

against religion, " religion ", that is, as he specified, " such as the theologians had made it ".

It was unfortunate for him that, at the beginning of 1836, when he was twenty-seven, he purchased a printing-house, together with Lambert and Maurice. The latter remained faithful to him until the end, but, with the business soon in a bad way and bankruptcy before him, Lambert committed suicide in 1838. It was not until 1843 that Proudhon was able finally to get rid of this printing business. During the winter of 1836-7 a serious illness drove him to the country to rest. He settled in the suburbs, at Montrapon, where he produced his first work, an *Essai de grammaire ge'ne'rale,* which was published in 1837. He was not long, however, in disclaiming it. In the following year he matriculated, at the age of twenty-nine, so as to be able to compete for the Suard Award, which was held by the Besancon Academy. This was an annual grant left by a former member of the Academy, Jean Baptiste Suard,[5] to pay for the upkeep of a young man of the city, while carrying on his studies. If Proudhon won it, it would enable him to continue his studies and at the same time support the family. It was granted to him on August 23rd. At that time he gave up all idea of a marriage on which he had set his heart. Later he wrote: " To hanker after justice and to love a woman are too much both together."[6]

II

1838-48.

In November, 1838, he arrived in Paris. At first he saw scarcely anybody, except an old member of the Academy, Droz, who, so to speak, was charged with his supervision. Even he, kind-hearted though he was, was not a little startled by some of the independent ideas put forward by his young pupil. The 1,500 francs Proudhon received from his annual Award enabled him to support the family. To increase the sum he took on several other jobs. He corrected proofs for a " Carlist" paper called *VEurope* and wrote a series of articles for a *Catholic Encyclopedia,* which failed; furthermore, he was defrauded by the editor.[7] He continued his reading and thinking and

[5] Jean Baptiste Suard (1733-1817), man of letters, critic and French journalist, born at Besancon. Besangon Academy is one of seventeen in France (including Algeria), each governed by a rector assisted by as many inspectors as there are *departements* in its area.—*Translator.*

• Foreword to *P. M.* (vol. i, p. 63). A splendid page in C. *D.* is quite possibly a recollection of this first love, pp. 70-72.

[7] To Huguenet, February 23rd, 1839 (vol. i, p. 90) ; March 11th and April 11th (pp.94, 116), etc.

attended courses of lectures,[8] Burnoufs in particular. He studied languages and political economy. In fine, he was moulding himself by his own efforts. On February 12th, 1840, he informed his friend Ackermann: "I have nobody with whom I can discuss my studies, nobody at all"[9]

In 1839, Proudhon wrote an essay on a subject set by the Besancon Academy, *De Vutilitd de la calibration du dimanche sous les rapports de rhygiine, de la morale, des relations de famille et de cite*[10] Despite the academic character of the subject, his essay was vivid and arresting. He did not, however, win the prize, receiving only a mention and a bronze medal. Of this early essay it has been said that " in it the whole work of Proudhon is outlined ".[11] He himself felt that it marked his entry into the real battle of life. " I can say that I have just crossed the Rubicon."[12]

It was this first competitive effort which decided him to give up languages[13] for social criticism. An idea he had of publishing a *Revue de Franche-Comte'* was abortive. In June, 1840, however, he brought out a book with the long-drawn-out title, *Qu'est-ce que la Propriety? ou Recherches sur le principe du droit et du gouvernement.* As a matter of fact, that was to be his lifetime's study. He dedicated the book to the Academy which was maintaining him—" to be either a sop or a goad ".[14] " This Essay is the child of your thoughts ! "[15] Two others followed very shortly. In April, 1841, he wrote his *Lettre a M. Blanqui* (an economist who had warded off proceedings against the first book by his kind intervention), and in January, 1842, his *Lettre a M. Conside'rant, ou Avertissement aux propriitaires* (this was an answer to a *Defense du fouriirisme* published a few months previously). Alarmed at the audacity of this young man whom it had adopted, the learned Academy withdrew the Suard Award. Simultaneously the *Avertissement aux proprie'taires* was seized in Paris on January 18th, and action taken

• He was merciless in his views on the courses of lectures then in vogue. "I have decided to give up public lectures, which I consider a thoroughly useless national luxury. Some day I will tell you some of the nonsense the lectureres talk. I have made a few notes. " To Perennes, December 9th, 1838 (vol. i, p. 73) ; to the same, March 13th, 1839 (pp. 97-103).

• Cf. November 15th : " There are moments when I sink into an abandonment beyond words " (vol. i, p. 256).

[10] Sunday observance and its usefulness, from the points of view of hygiene, morality and family and town life.

[11] Auge-Laribe, p. 24. This Essay was republished in 1841, and again in 1850.

[12] To Huguenet, June 1st, 1839 (vol. i, p. 129).

[13] But not altogether. On May 9th, 1842, he wrote to Bergmann: " As the study of languages will have a place in my work as well as throughout my life... " (vol. ii, p. 38)

[14] Auge-Larite, p. 102.

[15] *Propriete* , p. 120.

against its author. He was indicted " on four charges, attacking property, inciting contempt for the government, and offending against religion and morals ",[16] Proudhon went to Besancon to conduct his own case before the jury. Caution and malice were mingled in his pleadings. Afterwards, giving Tissot a vivid account of the whole case, he said: " Far from being an apology (my speech) was one long defence."[17] He was acquitted.

The sale of his printing business at this period left him with a deficit of 7,000 francs. So once again he was compelled to look for work. In April, 1843, he took a post at Lyons as clerk to a firm engaged in carrying coal to the Rhine via the Rhone canal.[18] One of his employers was his old college friend, Antoine Gauthier, with whom he was on very intimate terms. Proudhon was entrusted with the administrative side of this sound and honest firm and proved to be a model clerk, intelligent and alert, with a good understanding of the business and thoroughly loyal. In his leisure hours, whenever he could get away from his desk in the quai Sainte-Marie-des-ChSnes, in the old St. Paul's district, he used to frequent the small revolutionary circles in Lyons. In these he found men who harboured memories of the struggles during the revolutionary insurrections of the reign of Louis-Philippe, under the Premier Casimir Perier in 1831 and under Guizot in 1834. In particular he used to visit the working-class group of *Mutuellistes*, whose well-informed and resolute fanaticism astonished him.[19] All this did not prevent him, however, from taking an interest in the theatre, nor even from dreaming for a few months of a career as a dramatic author.[20]

In September, 1843, his first big work appeared, *De la creation de Vordre dans Vhumanite,* which was republished, in an amended edition, in 1849. It was meant to be primarily a simple pamphlet, a counter to a book by Lamennais.[21] It was a confused book, clearly showing the youth of its author, and it seemed to have been prompted by " a pressing need to take stock of himself". It dealt with religion, metaphysics, history and economics. Though overweighted with a display

[16] *Con.,* p. 176. Proudhon admitted that this third work was written " not without heat. The dialectic overpowered me, and a fanaticism, peculiar to logicians, went to my brain and turned my Essay into a pamphlet" *(ibid.,* pp. 175-6).

[17] February 28th, 1842 (vol. ii, p. 17).

" To Maurice, August 13th, 1844 (vol. ii, p. 136).

[19] His stay in Lyons was irksome to him. Letter to Maurice, August 4th, 1843; " I am in Lyons ... like a man who has been buried ... I am immersed in all that is disgusting and vile in the business world of Lyons. . . . You can imagine that it scarcely suits me to wallow all my life in this mud of Lyons. Oh ! the dirty city I .... Lyons is a mixture of dissolute and sanctimonious people " (vol. ii, pp. 90-1).

[20] His rough drafts of two dramas, *Judith* and *Galitee,* date from the end of 1843. " To Micaud, July 18th, 1841 (vol. vi, p. 311).

of logic, it was in itself proof of the new intellectual influences which Proudhon had come under for a few years past.[22]

As a matter of fact, during his first stay in Paris he had encountered the German philosophy and had mixed its findings with the reflections suggested to him by the system of his fellow-citizen, Fourier. In 1844, the Germans Karl Marx and Karl Grun, and later the Russian Bakunin and a few other political refugees, completed his initiation. His firm's business often took him to Paris from Lyons. On these visits he kept in touch with the revolutionaries but took no part in their political campaigns and held himself aloof from all the " Utopists ". He poked fun at the social gospels according to Buchez, Lamennais, Considerant, Flora Tristant, Pecqueur and Pierre Leroux. He was full of irony, now piercing, now savage, against Fourier who had recently died (1837). When introduced into the " Society of Economists ", then the favourite seat of Liberal orthodoxy, he got to know the publisher Guillaumin. Where Marx was concerned he jealously guarded his independence, and in 1846 received coldly a request to collaborate which Marx sent to him from Brussels.

Although as a business man his life was fully occupied, to say nothing of the demands his many connexions made upon him, he yet found time to go on elaborating his thought. Very soon the latest fruit of that thought was given to the public in two volumes, *Systeme des contradictions dconomiques ou Philosophic de la misire* (1846). Marx, thenceforward at loggerheads with him, immediately produced a spiteful criticism of it, which appeared in 1847 under the ironical title, *La Misire de la Philosophic* In the months before Proudhon's work was published Marx had been writing extravagant eulogies of Proudhon's book on Property, but from 1846 onwards he had nothing but sarcasm and contempt for him. Even if the cross-currents of life had not caused misunderstandings and personal quarrels to arise between them, these two men were certainly not designed by nature to sympathize or agree with each other.[23]

Towards the end of that same year, 1846, Proudhon settled in the capital as Gauthier's Paris representative. In 1847 he again left Paris to take up journalism. He was to be the leading writer of *Le Peuple,*

[M] Cf. letter to Ackermann, September 20th, 1843 (vol. ii, p. 103), and *Con.,* pp. 177-8. *' Good judges saw in it only an ill-arranged controversial pamphlet made up of all kinds of subjects badly prepared," says F, Pillon, who himself confirms this judgement, *{La Critique philosophise,* 1872-3, vol. ii, p. 376). Proudhon himself passed a severe judgement upon his own work, in his Note-book for 1848: '' The summary of a student's studies or of those of an ignoramus. The author thought he was inventing things that were known before his time."

" See *infra,* part three.

but, for want of authorization, the paper was unable to appear. On January 8th, 1847, he joined the Masonic Lodge at Besancon. His father had died a few months previously and he lost his beloved mother[24] at the end of 1847.

III

1848-56.

February, 1848, was the date of the Revolution against Louis-Philippe and his minister Guizot, who wanted to maintain a property qualification for the suffrage. This was the Revolution which led to the setting-up of the Second Republic and also to universal suffrage.[26] Proudhon showed no enthusiasm for it. " They have carried out a Revolution without any ideas."[26] In the preceding months banquets had been organized in some of the large cities and towns, Colmar, Strasburg, Soissons, St. Quentin and Macon (where Lamartine made a striking speech), in order to urge some measure of electional reform. It was the government's refusal to allow one of these banquets in Paris, organized on a vast scale, which precipitated the insurrection of February 24th. Louis-Philippe abdicated in favour of his grandson, the Count of Paris, but the latter was not accepted.

Proudhon had disapproved of this campaign of the banquets and also of the agitation set up by the students. For all that, after having proposed to the new Assembly his own plan for remedying the social question[27] and having striven in all sincerity to bring about agreement, he took up an attitude of violent opposition. At that time his platform was *Le Repre'sentant du Peuple,* a paper which he had launched

•• If ever I marry, I should like to love my wife as much as I have loved my mother.'' Proudhon tells of his father*s death in *Just.,* vol. ii, pp. 439-40. Cf. his letter to Beslay, in which he speaks of his mother, July 23rd, 1860 : •'' If mine had lived, I never would have had a family ... I know by experience how much love for one*s old parents grows as one sees them growing older '' (vol. x, p. 106) ; to Edmond, May 11th, 1851 : " My mother, to whom I owe everything** (vol. iv, p. 60) ; *Just.,* vol. iv, p. 294 : " I was fortunate enough to have a mother who outshone others in chastity, and, despite the poorness of her peasant's education, a woman of sense out of the ordinary. When she saw me growing up and already worried by a young man*s dreams, she said to me, * *Never mention love to a girl, even if you propose to marry her* V*

" Historical details from *The Historians* History of the World,* fifth edition, 1926, vols, xiii-xiv, pp. 85 *seq.—Translator.*

*• To Canut, February 24th. Cf. *Le Peuple,* February 19th, 1849 (the article is quoted at length by Pillon, *loc. cit.,* pp. 350-1). Cf. Weill, *Histoire du parti rdpublicain en France,* p. 210, note : " The majority of the republicans were astonished and embarrassed, worried by the success of this revolution.**

[87] Cf. Daniel Halevy : " He disapproved of the political adventure into which his country was plunging, but he had the soul of an inventor. And did ever inventor decline to give an opinion ? " *(Con.,* p. 20).

in October, 1847, though declining the editorship of it. At the end of March, 1848, he published two small books which he called *Solution de la question sociale,* and on April 8th, his *Lettre a Louis Blanc.*[28]

After the February Revolution the provisional government, to avoid the distress and distrust which followed in the wake of the Revolution, had guaranteed employment and full wages to every citizen. Multitudes were thrust upon them every day. Workshops and manufactories closed down, no credit was available and thousands were destitute in the streets. As an expedient the provisional government opened National Workshops in which all the unemployed might work. The wages paid were higher even than in the days of prosperity, two francs a day, with the result that thousands flocked to Paris from the neighbouring towns. Men of all trades were put to tasks of public utility. These finished, there was nothing for them to do and so thousands were paid for being idle. Another consequence was that the working-classes united in demanding higher wages and less working hours. The government fixed these last at ten a day for Paris and twelve for the provinces. Master-manufacturers had to close down their workshops and thousands were thus thrown out of work. All this produced a commercial and monetary crisis and specie disappeared from circulation.

The elections for the new Assembly were held in April, by universal suffrage for the first time, and the Assembly met on May 4th. On May 15th occurred the attack on the National Assembly when the Chamber was invaded by the demonstrating crowds. After this attack it was decided to dissolve the National Workshops.

On June 4th several new elections were held and Proudhon, with several other Socialist leaders, was returned for Paris with 77,000 votes and appointed to the Finance Committee. In these same elections Thiers (and several other statesmen of the monarchy) regained a seat, and Prince Louis Napoleon was also elected.

Many parties confronted one another in the Assembly, but the ultra-democrats were in an insignificant minority. Political power was eluding their grasp. They grew desperate and began to plot another insurrection. The Assembly decided to disperse the idle and dangerous workmen, now numbering 120,000, in the National Workshops. This was the democrats' opportunity. They called upon the working-classes, the revolutionaries, the red republicans and their associates, and once again Paris was in arms. The insurrection began

••Louis Blanc (1811-82), historian and politician, born in Madrid, one of the Socialist leaders* demanded as Minister of Labour by the insurgent crowds in the February Revolution and acclaimed by the mob which invaded the National Assembly on May 15th.—*Translator.*

at ten o'clock on the night of June 22nd. The bloody days of June followed. Nearly 4,000 barricades were erected in the streets of Paris. General Cavaignac was declared dictator and the executive of five civilians thus superseded. For four days the civil strife continued. Merciless repression of the insurgents was the order of the day. This insurrection cost France more lives than any of the battles of the empire and more generals perished than at Waterloo, while thousands of the insurgents were imprisoned.

Though he was dead against all disorder and rioting, Proudhon nevertheless intervened on behalf of the insurgents. But all in vain. Cavaignac's answer was the suspension of *Le Reprtsentant du Peuple.*[29] On July 31st, Proudhon read a long speech in the National Assembly. In the course of it he introduced a fierce digression, contrasting, with a cold frenzy, the people with the bourgeoisie or middle classes. He was no orator.[30] The only effect his indictment had was to create a big stir and to make people condemn as a dangerous enemy to society the man who had already caused so much alarm by his paradoxes on property. An article in the *Illustration* of August 5th said: " Never before was the cynicism of anti-social Utopias pushed so far. ... A more disgusting appeal to the brutal instincts has never been made." Writing to Bergmann on March 5th, 1854, Proudhon recalled those tempestuous days and said: " I am sorry that in 1848 I was not at least five or six years a father."

Le Reprdsentant du Peuple, which was suppressed shortly afterwards, was followed by *Le Peuple,* appearing weekly at first and then daily from November 7th. In its pages Proudhon continued to publish articles and manifestos. The famous *Toast a la Revolution,* which he gave at the Poissoniere banquet presided over by Lamennais, appeared in it on October 15th.

At the beginning of June the framing of a new constitution had been entrusted to a committee. Discussion began on July 2nd. It was finally adopted on November 4th by 737 votes to 30. Proudhon was one of the thirty who voted against the constitution.

On January 31st, 1849, he founded a " People's Bank ", which was to make use of the gratuitous nature of credit as its principle. He

*• On June 25th all papers of a violent character on either side were suspended.—*Translator.*

*°*Con.*, p. 200: "Nature has denied me the gift of speaking well, but what need had I of that? The speech I hammered out only produced a greater effect. The laughter did not last long. They vied with one another in seeing who would be loudest in his indignation." Victor Hugo, listening to him, wrote at his desk: " He writes well but he speaks badly." Cf. also *Choses vues* (quoted by Auge-Laribe, p. 341).

wanted it to be a centre for all the various working-men's associations which had greatly increased in numbers in the previous year. (Intellectual though he was, Proudhon was fond of planning and carrying out practical schemes and thought himself well able to manage important business concerns.) This idea of a Bank was criticized by Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux.[31] At the very least it seems to have been a risky venture,[32] but we cannot judge whether it would have worked because within two months Proudhon had been condemned to pay a fine of 3,000 francs and to three years' imprisonment for two articles he had written against the Prince President, whose election had " pierced his heart ".[33]

As soon as he heard of the sentence Proudhon fled to Belgium. Shortly afterwards he rather imprudently returned to Paris—his real reason for coming back was a marriage he had in mind. He was arrested on June 10th and put in the Sainte-Pelagie prison.[34] In his prison cell he launched yet another paper, *La Voix du Peuple.* Herzen collaborated[35] with him in producing it and it lasted from September, 1849, to May, 1850, but had nothing like the great success of his previous papers.[36] " I have had four papers killed under me,"[37] he

[81] *Con.*, p. 266, note.

[11] Dolleans and Duveau: " The Bank was heading for insolvency when Proudhon was arrested " *(R.S.*, p. 31). Cf. Georges Sorel, for a similar experiment: In his proposed Bill to reform the Bank of France *(La Voix du Peuple,* January 9th, 1850) Proudhon " was seriously mistaken ", etc. *Introduction aViconomie moderne,* p. 370, note 1.

" To Louis Bonaparte, July 29th, 1852 (vol. iv, p. 301).

[84] A famous prison in Paris, in the rue Puits-de-1'Ermite. Founded in 1792, it was demolished in 1899. Chiefly used for political prisoners, especially writers sentenced for offences in the *press.—Translator.* To Maguet, October 11th, 1849: '' I am living in what is called the Princes' Pavilion, in a drawing-room on the first floor, with two large windows looking out upon the *Pltli* Hospital and the Botanical Gardens " (vol. iii, p. 34). To Maurice, October 29th: " I was not as comfortably installed in the *rue Mazarine,* even when I was a member of parliament" (p. 39).

•[5] *Le Peuple* had been suspended after the events of June 13th, when the National Guard sacked the offices of the paper.—As this question of Proudhon's newspapers is somewhat complicated, it may be well to give the dates here for reference.

1846, *Le Peuple* planned, but unable to appear.
1847, end of October. *Reprisentant du Peuple* founded.
1848, June. *Reprisentant du Peuple* suspended, and later suppressed; *Le Peuple* founded to take its place.
1849, June. *Le Peuple* suspended. September, *La Voix du Peuple* founded.
1850, May 14th. *La Voix du Peuple* suppressed; replaced by another issue of *Le Peuple.* October 15th, *Le Peuple* suppressed.
1851, An idea of restarting *Le Peuple* was abortive.—*Translator,*

•• On February 21st, 1850, writing to the Prefect of the Police, Carlier, he admitted that he had founded a paper after June 13th, " the success of which had gone on increasing among the middle classes, whereas on account of unjust suspicions it seemed at first to have divided the ordinary people " (vol. iii, p. 123). He was then accused of "entering the reactionary path", to M.V., March 7th, 1851 (vol. iv., P. 34).

*[T] To Bergmann, March 5th, 1854 (vol. vi, p. 7). For Proudhon's newspapers, see J. Weill, *Histolre du parti ripublicain en France,* pp, 245-6.

wrote. During those few months he found time to carry on a series of controversies with Fr6de>ic Bastiat, Pierre Leroux and once again with Louis Blanc. The letters he wrote while a prisoner are extraordinarily lively. We find him stimulating his collaborators from day to day, offering the Minister suggestions for the improvement of prison life, complaining of the " idle democrats " and to all alike advocating a revolutionary fervour. He spent his first months in prison writing his *Confessions (Vun re'volutionnaire,* in Sainte-Beuve's opinion the finest of all his writings from a literary point of view.

Imprisonment did not slacken the tempo of his private life nor yet put the brake upon his political activity or upon his work as a writer. In December, 1849, he married Euphrasie Ptegard, a Parisian working girl, who earned her living making dress-trimmings. She was a woman of no education but with a strict moral sense, who gave him four daughters and until the end remained his faithful, loving and courageous helpmate. She was twenty-seven, he was then forty-one. Though she was a convinced Catholic (she always kept a crucifix in her room)[38], she consented to a civil marriage. Two years later Proudhon gave Tissot these details about the marriage: " I contracted the marriage with premeditation but without passion. I, too, wanted to be a father of a family, to live my life in all its fulness and to have by my side, in the midst of the whirlpool into which I have been thrown, a picture of maternal simplicity and modesty."[39] The day after the marriage the wife went to live opposite the Sainte-Pelagie prison, where she used regularly to visit him. He, on the other hand, was released for a few days every month. The authoritarian rule of those days was sufficiently broad-minded.

Once more, however, Proudhon's pen ran away with him and his fresh outbursts caused him to be moved to the Conciergerie,[40] then to the fortress at Doullens, whence he was brought back again to the Conciergerie. *La Voix du Peuple,* suppressed on May 14th, 1850, was immediately succeeded by another issue of *Le Peuple,* which was in turn suppressed on October 15th. Amid all these struggles the prisoner's head was seething with schemes. With Herzen and a few others, he wanted to write an *Histoire de la democratic moderne,* " the great features " of which were to be " philosophy, profound truth and even the manner in which it was written ".[41] He also had in mind a big

Just, vol. iv, pp. 441-2.

October 28th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 123). To Bergmann, March 5th, 1854 (vol. vi, P. 8).

[40] Prison near the Palais de Justice in Paris, in which those condemned to death were detained during the Terror.—*Translator.*

[41] To Boutteville, August 29th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 338).

work which was to be called *La pratique rivolutionnaire*** but it never saw the light of day. He also dreamt of a *Philosophie de Vhistoire,* pending the appearance of a *Philosophie ginirale.* He even began the draft of a universal history to be called *Chronos*™ and continued to work at it in the following years. He also wanted to undertake, with a score of his friends, a *Biographie universelle,* which would be " one of the Revolution's glories " and would become " a more lasting monument than Diderot's Encyclopedia ".[44] All schemes with no actual outcome, as was also that of a *Revue hebdomadairef** or the republication of *Le Peuple.* On the other hand, he did publish L'*ldie ge'ne'rale de la Revolution au XIX* siicle* in July, 1851.

He was released on June 4th, 1852. In the following month a new work appeared which he had almost completed in prison, In this book he invited the Prince President to place himself at the head of the revolutionary movement. It was called *La Revolution dimontrie par le coup d'Etat.* Then Proudhon began to feel disgusted with it all and sought to escape from the exacting demands his life as a writer and controversialist made upon him. Thrown into the political arena, so to speak, in spite of himself, he was anxious to withdraw from it. " Writing, always writing! Who will deliver me from this hell ? " He went back to Besangon to look for an industrial or business position, but was unsuccessful in his search. A few months later, in March, 1853, he only just missed an opportunity to have a share in the new railway from Besangon to Mulhouse. The men who supplanted him offered him 20,000 francs by way of compensation, but he refused the offer.[47]

While he was in his native town he lost a case in the Court of Appeal against a dishonest publisher,[48] which he really should have won. Back in Paris again, on two occasions he tried without success to publish a *Revue du Peuple,* which he intended to be " a revolutionary platform for the whole of Europe ".[49] He was equally unsuccessful with another plan, seemingly less dangerous than the previous one, for a *Revue industrielle.*[50] At about this period he was in touch with Prince Napoleon.

" To Micaud, March 19th, 1851 (vol. vi, p. 391).
" Vol. iv, pp. 100 and 185 ; vol. v, p. 257 ; vol. vi, pp. 9 and 17.
[44] He had visions of fifty volumes, with double columns on each page ; to Edmond, January 10th, 1851 (vol. iv, pp. 185-6). To Michelet, February 19th (vol. xiv, p. 175).
[46] To Dufraisse, February 28th, 1852 (vol. iv, p. 226).
[46] To Langlois, August 14th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 87).
[47] Vol. v, pp. 150-1, 222-3, 240-2, 251-2.
" Vol. v, pp. 131, 135-6.
° To Danmon, September 13th, 1852 (vol. v, p. 18). Cf. vol. v, pp. 124, 129, 282, 285, 310, 353, etc.
" Vol. vi, p. 127.

There was another small book, also written in prison, which he had printed in Belgium, the *Philosophic du Progress.* It was published towards the end of 1853, but no bookseller in Paris would sell it.[61] In the same year, while he had " five or six different works in hand at once",[62] the first edition of the *Manuel du spdculateur a la Bourse* appeared. This had been commissioned by the publisher Garnier and was written in collaboration with Duchene, who alone had his name printed on the title-page.[63] It was only in the third, rearranged, edition that the principal author's name was given.

In the last days of August, 1854, Proudhon had an attack of cholera. One of his daughters died from the same disease. March, 1855, saw his *Riformes a opirer dans Vadministration des chemins defer.* In April, 1856, he had his first serious attack of cerebral anaemia. It weakened him considerably and reduced him to " compulsory inertia " so that he was obliged to spend several weeks convalescing in Besancon.

IV

1856-64

In August, 1854, a friend of Proudhon, Villiaume, arranged a meeting between Proudhon and a Catholic publicist who called himself M. de Mirecourt. The latter was publishing a series of short biographies of " contemporary celebrities ",[54] Mirecourt's biography of Proudhon appeared in May, 1855. It was an insulting lampoon. What aggravated the offence in Proudhon's eyes was the fact that the book contained a letter written by Cardinal Mathieu, the Archbishop of Besancon, who seemed thus to guarantee it. Proudhon hesitated for a time and then made up his mind to answer it. He disregarded Mirecourt and set himself to attack the Archbishop, and through the Archbishop the Church herself. His reply grew bigger and bigger and finally became the bulkiest and the most important of all his works. The three volumes of *De la Justice dans la Revolution et dans l'Eglise* came out in April, 1858. On the 21st of the month Proudhon wrote to Prince Napoleon: " It will be an honour for the reign of Napoleon I I I that such a work was able to appear under so severe a rule and with men's consciences in such a piteous state, or rather that such a tremendous question was able to be raised."[65] On the 28th the book was seized. On June 2nd,

"Vol. v, p. 271.
To Suchet, May 2nd, 1853 (vol. v, p. 204).
Vol. v, pp. 296, 303.
"To Villiaum*, August 10th, 1854 (vol. vi, p. 61), etc.
"Vol. vii, p. 339.

in spite of a petition to the Senate[56]—which was looked upon as an aggravation of the offence and in turn seized—the author was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and ordered to pay a fine of 4,000 francs for offences against religion and morals. He drafted a written defence, but all the publishers fought shy of it. Experience had made him wise and so to avoid a second term of imprisonment he crossed the frontier. On July 17th he settled down in Brussels as a professor of mathematics under the name of Durfort. His wife and family joined him there on December 1st and together they spent several years of exile in a small dwelling-house in the suburb of Ixelles. His first thought on arriving in Brussels had been the publication of the written defence which the judges had spurned. It was addressed to " all the legal experts *(juris-consultes)* in Europe ",[67] and was called *La Justice poursuivie par rEglise.*[69]

Thenceforward Proudhon discarded all longings to be " a champion of popular rights " and wished to be merely a " professor of applied philosophy ".*• The years between 1858 and 1860 were " disastrous " ones for him, nothing but lawsuits, exile, illnesses and distress,[80] yet they were filled with a series of works overlapping one another, most of which remained unfinished. " So many gigantic schemes are going round and round in my brain."[61] A title for one of these schemes was suggested to him by a course of popular literature attempted by Lamartine.[6]* It was to be a *Philosophie populaire* in an indefinite number of parts. The syllabus or *Programme* of it appeared shortly afterwards as the first instalment of a new and completely rearranged edition *of Justice.* Each instalment of this new edition contained an appendix called *Nouvelles de la Revolution,* giving a survey of events. He also thought of writing a book on Voltaire.[63] A competition was organized by the Canton of Vaud in Switzerland, for which he wrote his *Thiorie de l'impot* and won the prize. But his chief work during these years was a study on the problem of war. He made several attempts to write it and, after dealing for months with various publishers and overcoming difficulties with the printers, the book was finally published by Dentu in Paris, on May 21st, 1861, under the title *La*

•« May 11th, 1858 (vol. viii, pp. 22-7).
" To Beslay, July 30th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 123).
••" This can rank with Beaumarchais' best." Langlois writes (vol. i, p. xl).
•• To Cretin, December 5th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 314).
•• To Beslay, July 23rd, 1860 (vol. x, p. 104). To Gouvemet, March 22nd, 1859: ** Since I came to Belgium I have not stopped sinking " (vol. ix, p. 42). To Boneron January 22nd, 1860: " The year 1859 has been a black-letter one for me " (vol. ix, p. 320).
" To Nicolle, October 27th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 249).
• To Chaudey, June 18th, 1859 (vol. ix, pp. 100-1).
•• Vol. ix, pp. 36, 101.

Guerre et la Paix. With the majority of the French political refugees exiled like himself he had little to do since he could agree neither with their doctrine nor with their attitude.[64]

On August 16th, 1859, an Act was passed granting an amnesty to prisoners and Proudhon therefore had hopes of returning soon to France. Then he discovered that it concerned only political offenders whereas he was officially guilty of " offences against morals ". Some of his friends interceded for him (without, incidentally, obtaining his consent), but all to no purpose.[65] On December 12th, 1861, a decree of the Emperor cancelled the outlaw's sentence. Several times, however, he postponed his return. " The goat must graze where it is tied."[66] For close upon another two years he carefully followed all the European questions -from his room in the suburb of Ixelles. He was a strong opponent of Italian unity and of the rising in Poland, much to the indignation of many democrats who were already beginning to lose their bearings after reading his *La Guerre et la Paix.* More than ever he was accused of coming to terms with the " reaction " and a rift occurred between himself and some of his old friends or comrades in arms, such as Charles Edmond and Alfred Darimon. In April, 1862, he published a protest against a Bill dealing with copyrights, which a number of men of letters supported. This was his *Majorats litte'raires,* one of the most successful of his works. There was growing misunderstanding, however, of his political opinions. At that time he was writing articles for the Belgian paper *LOffice de la publicity* and a few expressions in these articles had led people to believe, quite wrongly, that he advocated the annexation of Belgium by France. The Belgian press protested, and crowds of people demonstrated beneath his window on September 16th and 17th,[67] crying " Long live Belgium ! " and " Down with the annexationists ! " This made him decide to .go back to France without delay.

Settling in Passy, he began to work feverishly. Once again he was refused permission to publish some newspapers he had in mind, *La Fiddration* and then *Le Suffrage universel.*[*8] He was asked to write for the *Nain jaune,* but he refused the offer although it would have placed him in easy circumstances. In 1863, in close succession he

" Vol. viii, p. 129 ; vol. ix, pp. 145-6, 153.

" Vol. ix, pp. 117 *seq.,* 130-40, 158-64, 217, 258.

•• A French proverb meaning •' One must make the best of things "—*Translator.* To Neveu, January 6th, 1862 (vol. xi, p. 323).

•' For these incidents, see *Federation et uniti,* pp. 63-5, 121, 125-32. '* Strange hallucination, ** said Proudhon, *ibid.* p. 65. Cf, *Correspondance,* vol. xii, pp. 177, 179, 182-201.

•[8] To the Minister of the Interior, i.e. the French Home Secretary, February 5th and April 10th, 1863 (vol. xii, pp. 275-7, 375-6).

published four books: *Du principe fidiratif et de Vunite' en Italie* in February; *Les democrates assermentes et les rifractaires*(The Democrats who took the oath and those who did not) in April; the third was a small book about one of his fellow-citizens, the artist Courbet, who had just had a picture rejected by the *Salon* (The French Academy) on the ground that it was subversive;[69] and finally, in December, Si *les twite's de* 1815 *ont cessd d'exister.* This last scored a great success.[70]

For a long while now Proudhon's health had been far from good. On several occasions in Brussels he had suffered from heavy colds in the head and from increasing brain-fag, of which he was often complaining in his letters. In September, 1863, he was ill again until the following January, and also had several relapses in subsequent months. On March 8th he wrote a long letter to the working-men of Rouen. It showed what things were uppermost in his mind that year. In the months of August and September he went to Besancon for a while to convalesce—it was to be his last visit—and while there saw once again the hamlet of Burgille, a reminder to him of the happiest days of his childhood. It was during this visit that he called upon the aged Weiss, his acquaintance of the old days in the library. Weiss was then in his eighty-fifth year. " I went and threw myself into the arms of old Weiss, who received me with fatherly tears."[71] Back in Paris again, he got down to work once more. Two months later he was dead, on December 19th, 1864. He was not yet fifty-six.

In his last days Proudhon had almost finished writing *La capacity politique des classes ouvrieres.* It forms a commentary on the famous *Manifeste des Soixante* (Manifesto of the Sixty), drawn up by the working-man Tolain and by Henri Lefort. Its publication was made possible in the very year of Proudhon's death through the good offices of Gustave Chaudey.[72] In the following years some of his friends published a series of posthumous works, but they are all less important or not as well written as his other works.[73]

[69] With additions, this became the posthumous work, *Du principe de Vart et de sa destination sociale.*

[70] It was immediately translated into German and Russian. "The controversialist has surpassed himself," wrote Desjardins (vol. ii, p. 53). " Some of his propositions may be debatable, but the form in which he has dressed them up is marvellous."

" To Chaudey, September 16th, 1863 (vol. xiv, p. 52). To Pauthier, November 3rd (p. 92). Cf. to Maurice, March 12th, 1860, eulogy of Weiss (vol. ix, pp. 343-4).

[72] Chaudey wrote the last chapter from particulars given to him by Proudhon on the latter*s death-bed. " Like Saint-Simon, Proudhon died thinking only of his work ; and, loyal to the oath taken in his young days, his last thoughts were for his ' brothers in misery' " (Maxime Leroy, *Capacity politique•*, pp. 21-2).

[79] *Thdorie de la propriiti; La Pornocratie> la Fiodaliti industrielle, les Contradictions politiques, Ce'sarisme et christianisme, Id Bible annote'e,* etc.

CHAPTER II

THE FIGHTER AND THE WRITER

FROM THE beginning to the end of his career Proudhon complained of being misunderstood and unjustly treated. The general public certainly did not look kindly upon this eruptive man of the people who nonplussed, when he did not scare, them. Many took him for a Communist or for a low anarchist. After the stir caused by the controversies of 1848 he became for a while a " bogey-man "; they saw in him, to use his own expression, " an ogre ". Those who thought they had a better understanding of things accused him of manipulating paradoxes out of sheer vanity as an author in order to attract the attention of the public. They laughed at his " transcendent fancies " * and called him a humbug or a hoaxer. All this hurt him. As the years went by his complaints, at times bitter, grew more and more frequent and melancholic. Like all who have something new to offer, lack of understanding was the first obstacle he met with and he found that he shocked people. Then he perceived that everybody was borrowing from him without dreaming of giving him the credit. Like all independents, he ended by feeling that he was just as isolated in his own party as he was rejected by those outside. And the best of his thought did him as much harm as, and even more than, his most mistaken ideas or the least justifiable of his outbursts.

In 1858 he wrote: " The world, the official world of course, the world which enjoys possession, gives orders, judges and has a good time, that world thrusts me aside, that world hates me. . . . Have I not been, from my birth, out of favour with Nature and mankind ? "[2] Two years later comes a despondent complaint: " I have not reaped even the beginnings of my deserts. I can quite believe that I have attempted things which were beyond my power; even so there is something at the bottom of it all, and yet who is grateful to me ? . . . Formerly I was

[1] **E. Caro, *Etudes morales sur le temps present* (1855), p. xvi. By the same, *Nouvelles Etudes* . . . (1869), p. 308; " I can picture to myself the secret joy of this great scoffer as he witnesses the terror he has caused. He must have laughed wholeheartedly at the middle classes who fancied they saw in him Antichrist disguised as a Socialist, and I have good reasons for assuming that this sinister rdle was not unduly displeasing to his vanity, eager as he was to attract attention to his singular ways."**

• To Edmond, September 13th, 1858 (vol. viii, pp. 191-2).

a monster, now I am an old fogey."[3] And again a year later: " I am always looked upon as an eccentric, clumsy, troublesome and unpleasing writer; they lash out at me, I suffer from their pin-pricks, then the women take a hand in it and there is no more to be said. . . . More than ever I wonder whether I belong to this world, whether I stand for anything in it or whether I ought to consider myself as a lost soul coming back to scare the living and to whom the living refuse their prayers."[4]

Some days the wound smarts so much that he cannot refrain from exhibiting it in public. In *Les Confessions d'un Rdvolutionnaire,* after recounting his speech to the Assembly on July 71st, 1848, and the violent outbursts which followed it, he concludes with these words:

When God allowed Satan to torment the holy man Job, he said to him, " I give him up to you, body and soul, but I forbid you to meddle with his life." Thought is our life. I have been treated worse than Job; my thought has been unceasingly travestied in a shameful manner. For a while I was the theoretician of robbery, the panegyrist of prostitution, the personal enemy of God, Antichrist, a nameless creature.[6]

If in such remarks there is indeed a certain bluster, a " Gallic love of affectation ", the complaint is none the less sincere, and no doubt it needed the habitual spite of a Pillon to see in it nothing but " simulated emotion " and " arrogant delight ".[6] He may, however, have been more humiliated and more annoyed by those who feigned to defend him while they refused to take him seriously. " For the greater glory of philosophy alone" he had fought principles which others, before him, had denied " striving after originality or out of capriciousness or in quest of paradoxes ", and now they coupled him with those mountebanks ! Now they pretended to see in what they called " those savage airs, those big fangs, that loud voice ", so many " ingenious means used by him to work up a connexion for his shop and to sell out his

[3] **To Gouvernet, November 27th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 214).**
[4] **To the same, December 19th, 1861 (vol. xi, pp. 296-7).**
[5] ***Con.*, pp. 202-3: " I do not believe that there was ever an instance of a similar outburst. I have figured in sermons, plays, songs, satires, biographies, caricatures; I have been blamed, insulted, cursed; I have been held up to contempt and hatred, handed over to justice by my colleagues, etc., the religious-minded, in anonymous letters, have threatened me with the wrath of God; pious women have sent me blessed medals; prostitutes and convicts have offered me congratulations, the obscene irony of which showed the aberrations of public opinion."**
[6] ***La Critique philosophique,* 1874-5 (vol. ii, p. 296). Cf. Letter to Tilloy, September 22nd, 1856: * * I know how much hatred I have enkindled in a certain circle; at times also it grieves me; but I make the best of it and retain my equanimity, reflecting that the majority of men are only big children, and that children hate the doctor who doses, cauterizes and vaccinates them " (vol. vii, p. 134).**

stock of paper"![7] His " buffooneries " are mentioned, and styled the " dodges of a charlatan ".[8]

In an article in *La Presse,* Eugene Pelletan once gave a light description of him. It was intended to be sympathetic, but the tone was still ironical. "The Bacchantes picked him up at the foot of one of the Jura peaks. They crushed on his lips all the grapes of the world; they intoxicated him with all the ecstasies of reason. . . ."[9] Proudhon soon paid him back in his own coin:

One of our kindest serial-writers, M. Pelletan, taking it upon himself on one occasion to defend me, *motu proprio,* told his readers none the less this curious secret, that in attacking now property, now the powers that be, and now something else, I was firing shots into the air to draw the attention of simpletons to myself. M. Pelletan has been kind indeed, but I cannot be grateful to him for his kindness: he mistakes me for a gentleman of the pen.[10]

There are excuses for these misapprehensions, which went on for a long time,[11] and we have to agree with M. Auge-Laribe that in this or that biting expression we can " obviously detect the desire to shock and dismay the middle classes ".[12] Moreover Proudhon himself

[7] **Louis Veuillot, *Du nouveau livre de M. Proudhon {La Revolution sociale),* in *VUnivers,* August 29th, 1852. Louis Blanc's invectives are what are to be expected from a mediocre and chagrined opponent: " Among the low-class revilers I am obliged to include M. Proudhon, a worthless Zoilus, a writer without any ideas, an economist without principles, who uses trifling and insulting language, a great juggler of words who has exhausted all the contradictions and who, violently in love with himself, and admiring the noise he makes to gather the passers-by round him, thinks he is raising questions when he is merely muddling them, mistakes fuss for fame, coarseness for energy, and has written books which would be sheer nothingness were they not chaos." *[Organisation du travail,* ninth edition (1850), Foreword).**

[8] **Edmond Scherer, *M. Proudhon ou la banqueroute du socialisme* (speaking of *Justice,* 1858), in *Melanges de critique religieuse* (1860), p. 492: '* In front of his door he has placed a funny fellow commissioned to draw the crowd. . . . You go inside and you are surprised to find, behind the curtain, a man busy solving questions of the highest nature." It was this same Scherer who once apologized for devoting a whole article to the nonentity named Baudelaire, a man who was neither artist nor poet. . . . See also *Revue des Deux Mondes,* September 15th, 1875, pp. 472-4, *Le dernier livre de Proudhon.***

[9] ***La Presse,* November 18th, 1849.**

[10] ***Idie gtntrale de la Revolution* (1851), pp. 109-10, Proudhon again criticized M. Pelletan in *Capacity politique,* p. 54: " M. Pelletan, with his hierophantic style, is today the most irritating speaker in Parliament." M. Pelletan had his revenge in a nasty and unintelligent article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* January 15th, 1866, *Proudhon et ses ceuvres completes.* To be fair, we must add that he had been shocked by the way Proudhon had poked fun at certain ".virtuous democrats" defeated on December 2nd. Cf. Dolteans and Duveau, *Revolution sociale,* pp. 9-10.**

[11] **Cf. Paul Thureau-Dangin, *Histoire de la monarchic de Juillet,* vol. vi, p. 131: " All his life through, like another cynic, he delighted in dumbfounding, nay more, in terrifying, the gaping crowds." Emile Faguet, *Politiques et moralistes du XIX^e siecle,* p. 164.**

***12Prop.,* p. 104.**

admitted that he was partly responsible for them. A year before he died, Proudhon confessed to Gustave Chaudey that his " sorry lot" was due in some measure to himself, that he had " wasted a tidy capital of work and intelligence ", and that he had " laboured hot-headedly and with haste ",[13] He frequently blamed his temperament and his style and also his method, for in every problem he first of all demolished in order to reconstruct. Of the programme, *Destruam et aedificabo* (I will demolish and I will build), with which he headed his book *Contradictions fronomiques,* for a long time he scarcely carried out more than the first part. Though often announced, the second part never really took shape. " I have denied a lot," he told Villiaume in 1856. " I have begun all over again another work, a general survey of facts, ideas and institutions. . . . This work has not always been understood, and for this I am certainly partly to blame. . . . Accordingly I have been taken for a pamphleteer though I wished to be nothing more than a critic."[14] The greater part of his activity " was spent in criticisms and controversies ". Is it necessary to add, what he himself admitted, that it was impossible for him to do anything else, and that in no other way would he ever have come to know himself?[15] His principles, he said, " could not have emerged save through a lengthy and hazardous controversy ",[16] At all events it was not until quite late in life that he thought " he held at last the key to his labyrinth " and saw shining before his eyes " a great idea " which in future he would only have to set out for what it was.[17] His dialectic, too, continually ranging from one contrary idea to another, was bound to upset the majority of his readers and make them see in him an upholder of contradictions. No one understood anything in this " work of dissecting and airing ideas,[18] if I may thus

" To Chaudey, September 11th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 147), and March 7th, 1862, for his ** fiery temperament" (vol. xii, p. 10).

[14] To Villiaum6, January 24th, 1856 (vol. vii, pp. 8-10); to Micaud, December 25th, 1855 (vol. vi, pp. 282-6); to Charpentier, August 24th, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 117). Proudhon protested against this reputation as a demolisher : *Th.P.*, pp. 215-17.

[15] To Bergmann, April 9th, 1860, and November 15th, 1861 (vol. x, p. 14 and vol. xi, p. 287).

" To Maurice, December 15th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 332).

[17] To Bergmann, November 15th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 287). Cf. what Nietzsche wrote in March, 1874, after the second *Intempestive*: " For me it is important to bring to light everything that has a controversial or negative character. I will begin by running through the whole scale of my enmities, from top to bottom, and in a manner immoderate enough to make the rafters ring. In five years' time I will cast all controversy far from me and will think about a * good work'. At present repugnance and sorrow lie too heavy upon my chest, and it has got to come out, willy-nilly " (in Albert's translation of *Considerations inactuelles,* vol. i, pp. 257-8).

" Cf. *Majorats iittiraires* (vol. xvi, p. 45), "analysing and airing all the theories ... *'; p. 124, " criticism demands neither privilege nor endowment for the ideas it airs before casting them upon the world." *Just.* vol. iii, p. 262.

put it, by means of which I am gradually making my way to a higher conception of political and economic laws ". The most extravagant opinions were therefore in turn attributed to him, and people continued to " slate " him, he said, without noticing the development of his thought.[19]

Whether real or assumed, the requirements of the *pars destruens* (the destructive part), which, as Proudhon admitted, played such a considerable role in his work and which his dialectic rendered more ruthless, are nevertheless not an explanation for everything. There was a strain of violence, of immoderation, of hot-headedness in this man, an element of passion over which he had no control. Pelletan said of him fairly accurately, though with a spice of caricature: " When a thought goes to his head, he has an apoplectic fit of eloquence."[20] He himself mentions his " ironical and bad-tempered verve ", and his " passionate analysis ".[21] On May 3rd, 1840, when he was preparing his first book on Property, he wrote: " I cannot think of it without shuddering. . . . My heart throbs as Fieschi's[22] did when about to set his infernal machine going."[23] On September 20th, 1855, he wrote to Charles Edmond, who was worried after reading one of his manuscripts: " My wretched style always has that result. Without my wishing it, things become magnified, more marked and pronounced when I write them, so that timid minds are led astray."[24] In another letter, to Madier-Montjau, he blamed his " awful style " of which he was " not aware, but which, one has to believe, produces a terrible effect, if it be but slightly distorted".[25] He gave a more lengthy explanation, with almost a surgeon's precision, in the quasi-confession which he sent to Larramat on June 25th, 1856:

You are right: I have spent my life in useless outbursts. An incomplete education, long years frittered away in the printer's craft and

[19] To Gros, February 6th, 1863: " Already some of the ideas I have been seeking are beginning to dawn in my mind with such fulness and clearness that all the accepted theories are blotted out; all the same, they put down to contradiction what is the fruit of dialectic, and, for the honour of the holy doctrines, they persist in making of me a Communist, *ergo* an enemy of the family and of morals, an advocate of disorder, spoliation and materialism. What is still more funny, they have made of me, in the last resort, a Legitimist, an Orleanist, a papist and even a partisan of the Praetorian regime'' (vol. xii, pp. 280-1).

[20] In article already quoted, p. 347. " Mental convulsions," said Jacques Valdour, *Liberaux, socialistes, catholiques sociaux,* p. 201.

[21] To Maurice, March 21st, 1848 (vol. ii, p. 296). In his controversies, once he thinks that he has reason on his side he strikes as though he were " the exterminating angel"; to Maurice, March 5th, 1863 (vol xii, p. 347). He also said: ** Dialectics go to my brain."

[22] A Corsican conspirator who made an attempt on the life of Louis-Philippe by means of an infernal machine.—*Translator.*

[23] To Bergmann (vol. i, p. 212).

[24] Vol. vi, p. 256.

"September 15th, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 189).

habits much too primitive and even savage, which delayed the development of my intelligence and excited my passions accordingly, have worn me out. The harm is done. Unfortunately, Nature endowed me with the rare and fatal privilege of combining the heat of passion and the subtlety of logic in an equal, and higher, degree. These two powers continually inflame, instead of moderating, each other, so that in whatever I do, whatever I say or whatever I feel I am carried away by a *crescendo* which always ends in a kind of spasmodic swooning, which at first lasted only as long as a flash of lightning but which has finally taken on an alarming seriousness. . . .[26]

We find the same admission in a letter " to the citizen Louis Blanc, secretary of the provisional government", in which he begins by apologizing for the petulance of some of his criticisms. " It is my misfortune," he tells him, " that my passions and my ideas coincide; the light which enlightens other men burns me." And he continues despondently: " Whatever I do, it is impossible for me to alter this unhappy trend of mind."[27] " It is impossible for me," he admitted later to another correspondent, " not to shout, not to pour forth curses and threats, not to wear myself out inwardly; then, to relieve my feelings a little, I have to ease my mind by taking up tasks beyond my means and my strength ,"[28] So he resigned himself to suffer the consequences unwillingly caused by himself. " You cannot with impunity cast upon the world a flood of ideas in a style as fiery as mine. What has happened was inevitable, and I count myself lucky not to have met with something worse."[29]

In this respect the story of his three books on Property is instructive. We have already seen how he was on tenterhooks when about to publish the first of them. He readily admitted their " biting and domineering tone ".[30] But he promised his beloved Bergmann that he would restrain himself better in future. " I want to give to my second book as many winning ways and as much charm and urbanity as there are anger and uncouthness in my first. I now feel that I have done myself harm by

" Vol. vii, pp. 86-7. And in the same letter he again gives a favourite explanation of his work, an explanation without which he cannot be properly understood: ** I do not know whether there is a cure for this nervous state and this brain-fag which are the result of it; all I ask is that I may be able to complete my work by crowning the *critical* period of my career with some *positive* data on economic and social science." *Cf.* letter to Ackermann, May. 23rd, 1842: "The effort I made for two days to produce my speech for the defence gave me neuralgia and brain trouble for a week " (vol. ii, p. 45). To Rolland, February 20th, 1860, from time to time he has " to let his chest burst".

" April 8th, 1848 (vol. ii, pp. 305-6).

" To Holland, May 24th, 1860.

" To Maurice. July 24th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 116).

[80] To Micaud, April 6th, 1841.

my violence, and I want to try to undo it."[31] Both the experience and the resolution were fruitless. He had a presentiment that it would be so, and we find him, in the midst of his writing, already pleading guilty: "Your path is a teaching one [Bergmann was a Professor at Strasburg University], mine that of a scout and adventurer."[32] Some months later, in the letter covering the book, he wrote:

> You may possibly find the style of this book still too stilted, and the tone to which I am partial too boastful and " cocky ": it is a trick of originality after which I do not strive, but of which I should find it very difficult to divest myself entirely.[33]

The second book was in fact scarcely milder than the first, merely a trifle heavier. Moreover, shortly afterwards came the outburst of the third book *{Avertissement aux propridtaires).* This was, properly speaking, a pamphlet and drew legal proceedings down upon its author. Having learnt of its seizure by the police, Proudhon nevertheless wrote to Bergmann: " Save for a few hasty utterances . . . the remainder is. still more moderate than my first books ! "[34] With illusions such as these it was not likely that he would soon turn over a new leaf.[36]

Later, recounting to the same friend the disappointments which characterized for him the period of the February revolution, these were his explanations: " In 1848-9 I sowed my thoughts which were not ripe nor sufficiently prepared; the rude germs were neither understood nor known; falling upon stony ground and among thorns, they could not fail to wither away and be choked."[36] That is also to some extent the story of his life and of all his works.

If a thorough explanation is sought for some of his violences, or for the scathing tone of satire which he adopted, or even for the excesses in some of his soundest ideas, the wretched circumstances of his personal life must also be remembered as well as the humiliations of his childhood and his youth[37] and the hard struggle he was continually

[31] November 10th, 1840 (vol. i, p. 247).
[32] January 1st, 1841 (vol. i, p. 264).
[33] April 24th, 1841 (vol. i, p. 308).
[34] January 23rd, 1842 (vol. ii, p. 9).
[35] To Javel, February 8th, 1842: " I have just learnt to my cost that until further orders I have to put aside my lion's skin and wear a fox's. Formerly I was vehement, and deafening, like a Demosthenes; now I am forced to stick to pure reason and to keep my wits about me " (vol. xi, p. 372). Was his resolution really serious ? At all events it suffered the usual fate. On August 30th, 1858, he was again promising, also in vain, to start another war in which there would be " no more abuse, no more insults"; to Gouvernet (vol. viii, p. 159).
[38] April 9th, 1854 (vol. vi, p. 18).
[37] Cf. *Suard Award :* ** I was punished a hundred times for having forgotten my books. The truth was that I had none." " One day I sold my college prizes, the only library that I ever possessed," etc. (p. 10). To Rolland, December 5th, 1860: " I have imbibed absinth since I was a child at the breast."

making for his own existence and that of his family.[38] When he had asked the Academicians of his native town for a modest allowance, he had told them frankly that he desired to work with all his energy for the deliverance of the working class in which he had been born and to which he belonged for ever. He was made to modify this alarming expression.[89] Thanks to a slight alteration, says Arthur Desjardins, " everybody was satisfied ".[40] Everybody except the one chiefly concerned! That was neither the first nor the last time that he had to submit *to* the law for the poor. Feelings of " secret resentment" seethed in his savage breast. He was not ashamed of them, for they were not base desires,[41] neither did he trouble to hide them. " I understand better than anybody," he said in his *Lettre a M. Blanqui,* " how irritation caused by injustice can make an author scathing and fierce in his criticisms ,"[42] A letter written to Herzen on the same subject makes pathetic reading. In 1849-50, during his imprisonment in Sainte-PSlagie, he had worked in close collaboration with the Russian in editing *La Voix du Peuple.* An intimate friendship had sprung up between them. Shortly afterwards, Herzen lost both his mother and his son at the same time in an accident. In the letter of sympathy which Proudhon sent, he opened his heart to his friend:

. . . Born of a family of workers, I can count both on my father's and on my mother's side, in the last century, I don't know how many members of my family who have been ruined, persecuted, killed, afflicted by all these slaveries, old and new. Do you think these secret feelings of resentment have no part in the fight I am waging ? Ah ! the misfortune which has just befallen you brings them to life again at this moment and makes them smart more than ever. . . .[43]

[88] To Maurice, February 15th, 1849: " My life is a struggle, a dreadful struggle " (vol. ii, p. 362).

•• He had written," born and brought up in the working class, and still belonging to it, *to-day and for ever* ". These last words had to be struck out. He declared that he wished to work " for the complete emancipation of my brothers and companions ". He had to correct it to " for the moral and intellectual betterment of those whom I am pleased to call my brothers and companions ". Cf. letter to Ackermann, June 13th, 1838 (vol. i, p. 52). To know how serious was the '* oath " he had wanted to take in his letter of application, his letter addressed to Ackermann of September 16th must be read (vol. i, pp. 59-61).

[40] P. /. *Proudhon, sa vie, ses auvres, sa doctrine* (1896), vol. i, p. 27.

[41] See his protestation, in *Just.,* against Mirecourt's remark: " Proudhon lived on envy.*'

[48] P. 127. He added : " When, after working hard for twenty years, a man finds himself on the point of wanting for bread again and then suddenly discovers, in a misunderstanding or in a faulty reckoning, the cause of the evil he and so many millions like him have been suffering, it is very difficult for him not to cry out in pain, and in fear." Cf. letter to Bergmann, August 19th, 1840 (vol. i, p. 238).

[48] November 27th, 1851 (Labry, *Herzen et Proudhon,* pp. 122-3).

He had at the same time, nevertheless, a strong strain of realism and a depth of wisdom and moderation, of which he was equally aware and which can be seen running throughout the whole of his work despite the excesses of his speech or of his thought. Certainly it could be only by an enormous misconception—unless it was by cunning that has more to do with political action than with doctrinal analysis—that he was classed among the " leaders of the counter-revolution ",[44] Proudhon, it is true, was hard upon the " poor political stuff", which he considered the principle of nationalities, the parliamentary regime and universal suffrage to be.[45] He treats them as " comedy ", " humbug ", " a lottery ", " mystification ", etc.[46] According to him, the first of the three was merely " a false principle, a false fact, an anachronism " ;[47] it was just " revolutionary bunkumology ",[48] He was glad to be able to convince a friend that" the dogma of the people's sovereignty" was "perfect nonsense".[49] Already in the *Calibration du dimanche* he was ridiculing " the wonder of modern times, giving one's vote by rising or remaining seated, upon questions which science and study alone can solve ".[5 °] Later on, looking back on his political r61e in 1848, he blamed the " parliamentary stupefaction" which seized him " in that insulated spot known as a National Assembly ".[51] When he republished *Justice* he inserted a " small political catechism," containing the following question and answer in its " fifth instruction ":

Q. What is your opinion of universal suffrage ?
A. Universal suffrage, such as all our constitutions have made it since '89, is strangulation of the public conscience, suicide of the people's sovereignty, and apostasy from the Revolution.[52]

[44] **Cf. Louis Dimier, *Les maitres de la contre-rtvolution au XIX[e] siecle* (Lectures given in the Institut d'Action Franchise in 1906), pp. 279-303. The article devoted to Proudhon, it must be added, is more objective than the title of the book would lead one to believe.**

[45] **To Maurice, February 25th, 1848 (vol. ii, p. 280). Note-books, December 5th, 1851, and to Mathey, December 9th, *(R. s.*, p. 57), etc.**

[49] **An article of April 29th, 1848, reproduced in *Idies rivolutionnalres* (1849). *I.G.R.*, p. 158. Letter to Gouvernet, May 3rd, 1860 (vol. x, p. 46). To Beslay, April 15th, 1861, and to Herzen, April 21st (vol. xi, pp. 7-8, 22).**

[47] **To Beslay, February 6th, 1859 (vol. ix, p. 12).**

[48] **To Edmond, July 9th, 1854 (vol. ix, p. 364).**

[49] **To Micaud, April 6th, 1841 (vol. vi, p. 300).**

[50] **C. *D.*, p. 40. *A.* P., p. 208: " What! votes where it is a question of calculations . . ." *Just.*, vol. ii, p. 164: " In substituting the investiture by the people for that of the Church, they fell into a worse superstition;... Religion for religion, the people's ballot-box is still below the Holy Merovingian Ampulla." *S. Q. S.[f]* p. 62: " The surest means of making the people tell lies is to establish universal suffrage "; cf. pp. 86-7.**

[81] ***Con.*, p. 169.**

Just.*, vol. ii, pp. 286-7: " In order to make universal suffrage intelligent, moral and democratic, you must, after assessing the value of the various services rendered, and assuring, by free discussion, that the votes are free, make the citizens vote by categories according to their services, in accordance with the principle of collective force which is the basis of society and of the State.'

" The ceremony of the *scrutin* " (i.e. a parliamentary division), he also said, is "a thousand times more idiotic than that of the Holy Ampulla ".[63]

It is equally true that for him every constitution was " either a pack-saddle or a pack-horse ",[54] and that the question of regime left him generally indifferent.[66] It may be guessed that he too readily put up with all forms of politics and at times held " formal" liberties too cheaply. Writing to Bergmann in 1854, he said that he was " much more anxious about the work done by the trustees of power than about their title ". It is known that he had hopes of making the Prince-President, and then the Emperor, " the Saint John the Baptist of a new Messiahship ",[56] And how many times did he not say that, if the Empire made up its mind to put into force the programme of the social revolution, he would throw in his lot with the Empire !

But we must not allow all this to hoodwink us. His invectives against democracy were not those of a counter-revolutionary. They were aimed at what he himself called " the false democracy ",[57] or again, " a decadent democracy '\[58] They attacked an apparently liberal" pseudo-democracy " which " was not economic and social", and which ensured " liberty and equality only in a barbarous manner ", in other words, in a thoroughly negative way;[59] or else " a Jacobinical democracy ", a " Jacobinic and jingo democracy ", in which he^denounced " the last fortress of despotism ".[60] For he detested " *la Montague* and the

[M] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 469. It should be noted that Proudhon's very severe judgement upon the people's suffrage was influenced by the history of the Coup d'Etat so readily ratified by the nation: to Mathey, December 9th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 132).

[54] To Girardin, November 10th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 125); i.e. a nuisance or a convenience.

"*Explications sur le droit de propria* (1842): " Instead of foolishly listening, as we do, to these strolling dabblers in politics who shout * Democracy ! democracy !' to us, we should do better to ask the subordinates of those in power, men who, unseen and without encouragement, strive to force the true principles of order and liberty into the higher social realms " (pp. 274-5, note). His remark to Dufraisse, March 19th, 1852, is well known : " To go in for politics is to wash one's hands in dung " (vol. iv, p. 255).

" To Dufraisse, March 19th, 1852 (vol. iv, p. 255). To the same, May 30th (p. 281). To the President of the Republic, July 29th (pp. 301-5). On January 23rd, 1842, to Bergmann, on the Minister of the Interior DuchStel: ** I show him . . . how one could turn the most radical theories to the government's advantage " (vol. ii, p. 10).

" To Chaudey, February 15th, 1862 (vol. xi, p. 360).

[48] To Chaudey, April 7th, 1861: "the pseudo-democratic clique of Paris" (vol. x, p. 337); to Demoulin, September 17th, 1861 (vol. xi, pp. 193-4); to Chaudey, February 15th, 1862 (vol. xi, p. 360), etc.

" Cf. *S. Q. S,* pp. 68, 70.

• [a] To Pilhes, April 26th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 43). To Gouvernet, December 19th, 1861 (p. 206). To Delhasse, August 6th, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 161). *Commentaires sur les mimoires de Fouchi* (1900), p. 5: " FouchS is the prototype of our modern Jacobins, self-styled democrats . . ." To Boutteville, January 6th, 1862 (vol. xi, p. 332). *Just.*% notes and explanations (vol. ii, p. 303): " What does the Jacobinical democracy want to be today ? A theocracy with the suffrage as its sacrament."

State-worshippers ",[61] and all the devotees of that " statute-book of capitalist and commercial tyranny ", which Rousseau's *Social Contract* actually was.[62] Again he willingly denounced the " Machiavellism " of the " official democracy "[63] and he reproached the majority of the democrats with being content with " empty formulas ",[64] Nevertheless he did not want to destroy, but to complete, the work of 1789. " Liberty, that is the whole of my system ! " he informed his electors in 1848.[86] Until the very end he placed himself on the side of " the true friends of democracy ",[66] and in the letter which he sent, on the point of death, in December, 1864, to the workmen of Paris and Rouen to announce to them his work on the *Capacite politique des classes ouvrieres*, he forewarned them that they would find in it only one idea, " The Idea of the new Democracy ".[67] If then he had a grudge against the " old democracy ", the democracy of Robespierre and Marat, the democracy which drew its inspiration from the *Social Contract* and which, it seemed to him, Louis Blanc was trying to revive, it was in order to contrast it with a " young democracy ", which was a " social democracy ",[68] In the same condemnation he included " the reactionary Conservative ".[69] He complained that " everywhere comprehension of the Revolution had been extinguished by the very ones who were supposed to represent the Revolution ".[70] " We are the Revolution," he said with a view to dispelling certain misapprehensions. ** It is annoying that this sacramental word should be misused, but it is for us to give it its true meaning. We are also democracy and socialism; we may at times laugh at both the names and the personnel, but what

[61] **To the editors of *La Voix du Peuple* April 15th, 1850 (vol. iii, p. 203).—" The Mountain'*, name given to a group of members who occupied the highest seats in the National Convention and who voted for the most violent measures.—*Translator*.**

[62] **/. *G. R.* (1851), p. 133.**

[63] **To Beslay, April 15th, 1861; to Delarageaz, April 16th (vol. xi, pp. 8, 9).**

[64] **To Beslay, August 22nd, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 186); to Gouvernet, February 15th, 1862 (p. 364).**

[65] **Manifesto to the electors of the Seine. Cf. Jean Lacroix, *La souverainett du droit et la dimocratie*, in *Esprit*, March, 1935, p, 882:" With Proudhon anti-democrat means merely an opponent of superiority in numbers. ... It was in the name of the genuine democratic principle that he attacked an insufficient or rather a warped realization of it. . . (for him) the democratic principle was identical with that of personal dignity."**

[66] **To Delarageaz, August 17th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 133). *Just.*, preliminary treatise (vol. i, pp. 255-6): " Despite my disdain of the ballot-boxes, I belong to the democracy; I do not detach myself from it, and no one has the right to exclude me."**

[67] ***C. P.*, p. 50.**

[68] **To Darimon, November 1st, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 268). To Theodore de Fircks, November 9th (p, 273). To Darimon, March 5th, 1843 (vol. xii, pp. 350-1). *Just.*, vo!. iv, pp. 325, 336 *(Nouvetles de la Revolution)*.**

[69] **To Bourges, April 15th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 12).**

[70] **To Delarageaz, August 7th, 1852 (vol. v, p. 376).**

those words cover and what those people stand for belong to us also; we must be careful of them ! "[71] Between his former works and those of the days of his exile, though there may be a few changes in tone or in emphasis, we do not find the profound differences which some have thought they could see.[72] He republished that long hymn to the Republic, for that is what *Justice* is, at the very time he was writing *La Guerre et la Paix;* and, as he then said to Chaudey, the latter was " a development", though unexpected in some ways, " of the fundamental principles " of the former.[73] Proudhon never ceased to feel " all the violent passions of democracy seething "[74] within him, or lost his hope for " a regeneration of democratic reason and conscience ",[75] He always held the belief " that everything is false in politics save what is in conformity with reaspn and justice ",[76] and rejected Machiavelli as symbolical of the doctrine which horrified him.[77] He always wanted "to save the Revolution".[78] "Revolution" and "Justice" always remained two sacred words for him.

These precise details were necessary to focus him properly and to correct the distortion caused at times by judgements too superficial or too interested. For all that, Proudhon was much more than a revolutionary in the usual sense of the word, he was a reformer. That was how he defined himself in a letter to his fellow-citizen, Micaud, on February 26th, 1844.[79] He may well have exclaimed on one occasion in a moment of enthusiasm: " We must make revolution, damn it ! It is the only good thing, the only reality in this life ! "[80] That did not prevent him, however, from having an equal loathing for fanatics and people with subversive ideas. At the beginning of his first book on

[71] **To Gouvernet, December 19th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 209).**

[72] **What is true is that Proudhon's " conservative " spirit manifested itself more in his last years. Moreover, in the days of *La Voix du Peuple* he had been accused of betraying the revolutionary cause, and in 1852 had astonished his republican friends with the *Revolution Sociale,* which the *Gazette de France* gladly welcomed.**

[73] **To Chaudey, October 27th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 182).**

[74] **To Bourges, November 27th, 1857 (vol. x, p. 361), etc.**

[75] **To Buzon, November 19th, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 233).**

[76] **To Delarageaz, August 17th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 134).**

[77] **To Clerc, January 2nd, 1857 (vol. vii, p. 185). For him " Machiavellism " was synonymous with " villainy ": *Commentaires sur les mtmoires de Fouche"* p. 24. M. Renaudet, *Machiavel,* p. 294, has described his hero as " the genuine forerunner of our Jacobins ".**

[78] **To Noel, April 10th, 1863 ; *ibid.*: " I am your very sincere and faithful cousin *in revolutione* " (vol. xii, pp. 378-9). To Buzon, September 18th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 197) and January 31st, 1863 (vol. xii, p. 269). Cf. the rest of the title of £/./., viz., *and the need for reconstituting the Revolution party.* Cf. the last sentence in the second edition of *Just.* (vol. iv, p. 499).**

[7]» **Vol. vi, p. 329. And *P.* A/., vol. ii, p. 345 : " sincere reformer ".**

[80] **To Antoine Gauthier, December 18th, 1848 (vol. ii, p. 351). It must be remembered that this exclamation, partly encouraging and partly ironical, was addressed to a timorous friend, timorous because he was an employer. M. L. (vol. xvi), p. 75.**

Property he warned his readers: "I am by no means an agent of dissension, a fire-brand of sedition ";[81] elsewhere he said, and it comes to the same thing: " I am a revolutionary, but not one who barges into everything."[82] Veuillot evidently realized this, though his interpretation was too spiteful to be accurate, when he wrote: " There is an indescribable something about him, something which the middle classes have scented out and which reassures them; the ogre is a business man."[83] If not to explain what he was, at least to understand what he wanted to be, we must also bear in mind what he himself once wrote from Brussels to Milliet who had formerly been his work-mate in the printing-house at Besancon: " You will be very much astonished some day to learn, after what you have heard people say and have yourself imagined about my opinions, that I am one of the greatest artificers of order, one of the most moderate progressionists, one of the least Utopian and one of the most practical reformers that exist."[84] The fact is that his *Theorie de Vimpot* for instance, in which he made at the very most a few concessions in his wording and the manner of presenting it, won the prize for him in the competition organized by the sage representatives of the Canton of Vaud. For him this was a delicious revenge on " the economists' party " and against that of the middle-class politicians who had formerly so ill-treated him for his ideas on the subject.[85] He mistrusted the new formulas whose inventors saw primarily only their handsome exterior; and he once declared that " a political constitution should as far as possible be something given by Nature, spontaneously created, a living thing of itself and consequently harmonizing all things ".[86] In the same way, one of the essential points separating him from Marx was that he refused " to lay down revolutionary action as a means of social reform "; he was seeking an " economic combination" without any " violence" and wanted nothing like " a St. Bartholomew's Day ",[87]

[81] *QWest-ce que la propriite ?,* p. 132. The massacres in June, 1848, made him still more an enemy of all violence; he had wept during those terrible days (Droz, p. 75).

[82] *Cf.* to Dr. Cretin, March 4th, 1842 (vol. xii, p. 7).

"UUnivers, August 29th, 1852, article already quoted. Cf. F. Pillon, refusing " to take seriously the outbursts of a writer who, as the controversial mood takes him, is continually going from the boldest paradox to the most sententious commonplace ". *Un mot malheureux de M. Gambetta,* in *La Critique philosophique,* 1876-7, vol. ii, p. 243.

[84] November 2nd, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 220).

* [85] To Bergmann, May 30th, 1861: to Beslay,-June 17th (vol. xi, pp. 106, 119). To Bergmann, November 30th : this work " quite peculiar in the dress I have given it nevertheless contains the hinge upon which turns everything I have thought and wanted as long as I have known you " ; all the same, he admits that it had not become apparent to him " with such clearness until these last years " (p. 287).

[86] To Delarageaz, November 15th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 283).

[87] To Karl Marx, May 17th, 1846 (vol. *ii,* pp. 199-200).

The ideologists and Utopians did not find greater favour with him. From the beginning he summed them up and held himself aloof from them. Returning from a stay in Paris he wrote from Lyons to his friend Maurice, on July 27th, 1844:

I know not how many new gospels are being preached at present. I have no desire to increase the number of these fools. . . . I produce a prodigious effect upon those who see me for the first time, when they come to realize that I possess common sense.[88]

In the *Confessions cTun revolutionnaire* he makes lively fun of "mystical, theological and transcendental Socialism*'.[89] In *Justice,* talking about Jean Reynaud, he wrote: " No, no, I am not going to let myself in for vagaries such as those."[90] Reflections of this nature from his pen are numerous. Some of them were addressed to the first Marxists, as, for instance, when he dealt severely with those who "served their ideology rather than ideas. . . ."

George Sand was not wrong after all when, writing from her abode at Nohant, she took Mazzini to task for allowing himself to be frightened by Proudhon. " Why then," she wrote on May 23rd, 1852, " have you included Proudhon in your anathemas ? I don't understand it at all." This man, she added, has rendered great services to the people's cause, for "he is very militant, very passionate, very incisive "; but " apart from that, he is a learned and clever economist", he is not a Socialist; Proudhon "is Socialism's greatest enemy".[91] In this she judged him as he loved to judge himself: " You know that I am profoundly Conservative," he wrote to Emile de Girardin,[92] not without a certain irony, and again: " It is I who am the true Conservative."[93]

" Vol. ii, p. 131.

•• *Con.,* p. 333. In *Majorats Uttiraires* he defined his own doctrine as "critical socialism " (vol. xvi, p. 124).

[99] *Just.,* vol. i, p. 275.

[M] Letter to Joseph Mazzini, May 23rd, 1852 *{Correspondance,* vol. iii, 1882, pp. 340-1). George Sand is, however, mistaken in thinking that " Proudhon's doctrine does not exist "; that it is a tissue of*' dazzling contradictions and brilliant paradoxes which will never gain adherents ". Nevertheless, writing to Edmond Planchut, on February 13th, 1849, she showed that she had some hopes for the proposed People's Bank: " Don't you think that as far as means are concerned, Proudhon has, in his Bank, the wherewithal to restore material life to this exhausted body ? " She also had an inkling that he was not the unilateral denier that he appeared to be: [44] There is more than one way of defining individual property and common property; Proudhon will tell you everything is put right by his system " *{Ibid.,* pp. 113-15). Upbraiding ThSophile Thor6, on May 26th, 1849, for his disagreement with Proudhon, she exclaimed: " What a useful and vigorous champion of democracy ! What immense services has he not rendered in the past year ! " (p. 142).

" In *La Presse,* in 1849.

•»To Mathey, April 21st, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 85). To Cretin, March 4th, 1862: [44] He who says revolution . . . speaks of conservation as much as elimination" (vol. xii, p. 8). Speaking of his speech of 1848 (not given) on the right to work and

He is somewhat like France herself as he described her in the *Post-scriptum* to his *Confessions:* " a nation conservative by temperament and taste, revolutionary only by necessity and by exception." During his exile in Belgium one of his friends once told him of certain fears which his outbursts had roused. His answer was: " Tell them all that I am neither stupid, nor ungrateful, nor absurd, that I know very well what I am doing, and that in my greatest outbursts there is always a Minerva behind me who controls me."[94] Almost at the outset of his career he had written: " Every moment I discover how difficult it is to keep one's equilibrium",[95] but almost at the last he could give this fairly accurate definition of himself: " The nature of my mind could be .characterized in one phrase: mobility itself, but brought back always to equilibrium."[96]

Equilibrium: in the next chapter we shall see the place held by this word in his method and his doctrine. Just as by this word he defined his nature, so by it he described the practical ideal to which he wanted to lead the people. Moderation and equilibrium, this was in fact the programme which, in *Justice,* he offered to preach to the people, if Cardinal Mathieu, on his side, would undertake to recall the rich to their duties.[97]

More than once Proudhon complained of his occupation as a writer, " this frightful business of being a writer ".[98] In a way he lived a life divided between intellectual research and immediate action. It was not that he was gifted for politics, properly so-called. His experience in 1848 was disastrous, and after the coup d'etat in December, engaging in a battle of wits with those in office, this " candid revolutionary " allowed himself " to be out-manoeuvred by Morny and by the Emperor himself".[99] Striving to make himself the counsellor of the Elysee[100] (official residence of the President of the French Republic), he succeeded only in being accepted as the Emperor's " stool-pigeon ", and when

the right to property, he said: " this speech so pacifically revolutionary and so eminently conservative " (*Con.*, epilogue, p. 458). Cf. Eugene Pelletan, in *La Presse,* November 18th, 1849: " Go on, M. Proudhon. . . . In thirty years' time, I hope it will be later, Conservatives* daughters will plant rose-trees on your tomb."

•* To Delhasse, September 12th, 1862 (vol. xii. pp. 184-5).

[95] To Micaud, October 16th, 1844 (vol. vi, p. 344).

•• To Chaudey, May 6th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 38).

***Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 394-5.**

•• To Rolland, December 5th, 1860.

•• G. Guy-Grand, *Justice,* p. 130. The details of the relations between Proudhon and Louis Bonaparte, and afterwards Carlier and Morny, can be read in the Introduction to the *Revolution Sociale* by Dollens and Duveau, pp. 12—103. Cf. *Conespondance,* vol. iii, pp. 15-19 and 21-6; vol. v, pp. 153-65, etc. For the relations with the Prince Napoleon, see the letter of explanations to Madier-Montjau, vol. vii, pp. 30-41.

[100] Cf. Letter to Guillemin, December 24th, 1852: "I already see the Empire . . . being compelled to strike its colours " (vol. v, p. 125).

he was not being accused as a " traitor" he was at least suspected of being " very accommodating ".[101] Moreover, he never had any ambition to become the leader of a party,[102] like Mazzini or Garibaldi or Marx. Too independent to allow himself to be regimented, it would have been equally repugnant to him to regiment others.[103] " The idea that some people have about the influence of certain individuals," he wrote,[104] " is laughable. . . . It is even noticeable, on the contrary, that the more a man gives evidence of judgement, perspicacity, a sense of sequence and comprehensive powers, the more he loses his ascendancy over the masses, to whom reflection is repugnant and who go only by instinct." The hope which he had long cherished was simply " to gain a little esteem in the world of philosophy ",[105] What he was after, much more than any party or the forming of any bands of followers, was a public of his own, first of all in order to live (that was his constant worry), to find " a little rest and a little comfort ",[108] and then to provide a stimulus. He was pleased when he obtained a few tokensof sympathy, especially from young people.[107] On January 6th, 1862, he wrote to Boutteville: "I have won a small public, whose approbation satisfies my pride and my pocket; I want to complete a few works I have undertaken and to start thinking again: after that I shall only have to wait quietly for death."[108] Every one has a choice, either to sneer at this lower middle-class ideal or to admire this moderation of the ancients. " It is more middle-class than stoical," he himself added. At all events that was how he was made. He rejected even " the title of leader of a school ", though he had a strongly developed sense of the team spirit,[109] and above all he did not wish *' to be taken for the pope of a small church ".[110]

[101] To Madier-Montjau, November 10th, 1852 (vol. v, p. 83). To Maurice, January 1st, 1853: " The democratic and social riff-raff . . . accuses me of having sold myself to Bonaparte'* (p. 132). To Madier-Montjau, same date (p. 144).

[102] To Darimon, October 14th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 177).

loa cf. Peguy, *De la situation faite au parti intellectuel:* " A man who has a little decency has perhaps an even more instinctive dread of exercising anything at all like temporal intellectual domination than he has of submitting to it" *((Euvres,* vol, iii, p. 180).

[104] To Darimon, February 15th, 1850 (vol. iii, p. 103).

[105] To Maurice, March 29th, 1844 (vol. ii, p. 124).

[106] To Maurice, September 3rd, 1844 (vol. ii, p. 148). To the same, April 28th, 1857: " If I can see myself, at the age of fifty, free from debts for six months or a year ahead and the strength to work, that is all I desire " (vol. vii, p. 239); and December 15th, 1858: " Now that the French *market* is practically closed to me, I am going to set to work to gain credit in the foreign market..." (vol. viii, p. 331).

[107] To Larramat, June 25th, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 86).

[108] Vol. xi, p. 320. To Bergmann, April 9th, 1860: " I do not wish for adventures; my age does not permit them . . . " (vol. x, p. 14).

[109] To Edmond, November 13th, 1853 (vol. v, pp. 286-7).

[110] To M. X., August 10th, 1850 (vol. iii, p. 318). To Langlois, January 7th, 1862: " Let us avoid setting ourselves up as a sect" (vol. xi, p. 345).

It was in a different way that action tempted him. He had a liking for well-managed affairs, and his reputation as a man who could carry out a plan or as a technician was as dear to him, or even more so, than that of a thinker and a social philosopher.[111] In 1851, from his prison he wrote: *' Not alone by bunkum issuing from the lungs of mystagogues does man live, but by bread and meat. . . . For a long while now we have been stringing out phrases: we must learn to mould them."[112] His People's Bank and his Scheme for a permanent exhibition[11S] captured his imagination. When his friend Penet sought to form a company for the leasing of the canals in which he wanted him to join, Proudhon was full of enthusiasm for this " great plan " and was burning " to prove once for all to the upper rabble and the lower rabble " that he was " capable of something else besides running a newspaper, and that a man of character who is willing to take the trouble to work can do fifty times more than a hireling who depends only on his hands ".[114] When, ill and outlawed, he had to resign himself to being more or less slighted as " a man of theory ", he recalled the ideas which he had set afloat on railways, river navigation, the Stock Exchange, credit and taxes, and demanded that at least he should be given credit as a " practical man ".[115] The old longing, too, for a settled and peaceful life by means of some profitable occupation was constantly recurring. Thus, in 1846, he was already looking upon his " period of pure investigation " as finished and was thinking of creating " a comfortable existence ".[116] In 1852 he was hoping for " a small directorship in canals or railways '\[117] Again at the end of 1860 he wrote: " I am tired and disgusted and I am thinking of definitely giving up my career as a writer."[118]

[111] **Cf. the letter to Ackermann, September 20th, 1843: " I am counting upon being in Paris this winter. . . . While they think me buried in metaphysics, I will suddenly reveal to them my knowledge of practical matters, gained on a mass of subjects, with which I hope to make a lot of people wild " (vol. ii, p. 100).**

[111] **To Edmond, January 22nd, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 24). And to Cretin, September 21st, 1852: " I cannot always carry on the war with my pen. . . . You would like me to be a writer, remaining in the sanctuary of my study and never dirtying my boots in the mud of politics. It is certainly something to be a plaster saint; as for me, I reckon that the smallest poodle, biting the heels of the passers-by, is still a better guardian of his master's house " (vol. v, p. 39).**

[118] **For the People's Bank, *Just.*, vol. ii, pp. 81-7. As for the permanent Exhibition, in 1852, he saw in it, and thought everybody else did," the greatest and most decisive foundation of the period "; to Edmond, July 1st, 1855 (vol. vi, p. 192).**

[114] **To Guillemin, April 26th, 1852 (vol, iv, pp. 267-8).**

[115] **To Chaudey, December28th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 303). To Pilhes, April 26th (p. 42).**

"• To Bergmann, October 22nd, 1846 (vol. ii, p. 222). It is true that he did not give way to the temptation: " I aspire to something better. . . . It seems to me that I have a right to claim a more noble rdle." More than once he at least dreamt of a quiet literary career. See, besides the texts quoted, letter to Maurice, May 1st, 1859 (vol. ix, p. 59).

[117] **To Maguet, July 30th, 1852 (vol. iv, p. 307).**

"• To Gouvernet, November 27th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 213).

Several times, driven by the distress which threatened him,[119] he had actually tried to find some such employment.[120]

Despite all that may have been said, he was not at all "a man of letters ".[121] On this point the article which he published in *Le Representant du Peuple*, in 1848, may be read: " What the Revolution owes to literature." It is a satire on " the calling of the literary tribe " in which "intellectual development is in inverse ratio to phrase-mongering cleverness '\[122] Two years previously he had written to Karl Marx: " I look upon literature as a little girl's plaything."[123] " Chatterboxes, stringers of phrases and good for nothing when there is something to be done ": such was his description of " the literary men ".[124] '• Abuse of 'the art of phrase-making ' has made them lose the sharpness and integrity of their reason," their production " is nothing but a piece of Parisian confectionery ".[125] " Show me anywhere consciences more venal, minds more indifferent and souls more rotten than those of the literary class." " I feel uncomfortable in this Bohemia."[126] These satiric, scornful words are partly explained by the literary customs of

[M,] **To X., January 6th, 1853 (vol. v, p. 150). To Mathey, January 1st, 1854 (p. 305).**

[180] **But always in vain. To Maurice, November 28th, 1852, and February 23rd, 1854 (vol. v, pp. 97-8 and 352), etc.**

[181] **F. Pillon's judgement appears to me to be inaccurate, though there is some truth in his grounds for it: " Man of letters ! Such a designation'would have made him jump, and yet he had quite the temperament for it, the humorous or violent sally . . . irritability, moods, and in case of need the arranging of a patronage . . . and refinements of form and the calculated effects, much more than his constantly sustained role of a Danube peasant would lead us to believe " *(La critique philosophique*, 1872-3, p. 382). The absurdity of this remark by Desjardins will be noted (vol. i, p. 30): " He is indignant, perhaps like the fox in the fable, at the very thought of being taken for a man of letters."**

[122] **May 28th, 1848 *(Con.*, appendix, p. 378). Cf. the letter to Tilloy, September 22nd, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 135). On February 22nd, 1840, he wrote to Bergmann: " In the ordeal by fire my soul is being purified, and I turn my back on all thought of scientific and literary, as well as industrial, rights; to know with certitude, to say it with force, clearness and precision, that is the only thing I long for, the final favour I ask of God since he refuses me all the other advantages " (vol. i, p. 190).**

»» **To Karl Marx, May 17th, 1846 (vol. ii, p. 201).**

[184] **Apropos of Eugene Sue, to Darimon, April 16th, 1850 (vol. iii, p. 211). On April 6th, 1841, he had told Micaud of his " antipathy for the humbugs of modern literature " (vol. vi, p. 298). In 1859 he again told Chaudey of his disgust for '* the descriptive, emphatic, mawkish, declamatory school" which " led to the *Mystires de Paris*, to George Sand's novels and to journalistic chit-chat"; he prayed for "a restoration of good literature ", for the return of a school which would " better represent French genius, serious, rising above love, idealism and enthusiasm, sober, with a love for justice, which would permit only poetry and eloquence imbued with a large amount of common sense, malice, sangfroid and wit" (March 14th, vol. ix, p. 33).**

[125] ***M. L.* (vol. xvi, p. 108).**

"• To Darimon, May 18th, 1854 (vol. vii, p. 64). And to Besiay, November 18th, 1858, apropos of Victor Hugo: " I am so furious with the corruption in contemporary literature, with the Bohemian morals of all that world . . . " (vol. viii, p. 293). Cf. to Rolland, August 26th, 1860: "When I see certain horrid things in the literary and scientific world . . . I am tempted to regard the *mongrels* of politics as little *saints"*

the period which were particularly detestable,[127] but the faults and the absurdities were not the only things they attacked. You may, if you like, consider his attacks excessive. M. Andre Rousseaux sees in them signs of that " rigorous rationalism " in the name of which Proudhon broke away from the religion of love: " In all inspired literature poetry makes its power felt. A good rationalist takes it badly. . . . In this spiteful and unjust rage against literature we can see the inevitable trend of strictly rational knowledge pitting itself against the powers in man which have to do with the mysterious realm of poetry."[128]

Yet it is quite clear that Proudhon was by vocation a writer and a philosopher. Friendship did not deceive Fallot when, on December 5th, 1831, he told him: "This is my prediction. Despite yourself, inevitably, by your very destiny, Proudhon, you will be a writer, an author; you will be a philosopher."[129] He adored the sacred Ideas. He goes out to find them. He is an " adventurer of thought ".[130] All hfs life through he could say what he wrote in February, 1842: " I am busy with a new science, much more than with revolution,"[131] and: " I am a man of musings, not a man of revolution."[132] His numerous sallies, the thousand and one " excesses of speech ", for which Bergmann took him to task,[133] and the long developments which, in his letters, he devoted to politics from day to day, must not lead us astray. When he entered the arena in February, 1848, he looked upon himself as " a thinker drawn into his nation's somnambulism in spite of himself ",[134] He considered that " the man who would deserve most of the Revolution would be the one with the most ideas ",[135] and he knew that that was precisely the part he had to play. He would not allow " revolutionary agitation " to be mistaken for " action ",[136] Though he did much in the way of journalism, though he always remained at heart a journalist

[127] **Cf. the picture drawn by Paul Thureau-Dangin for the last years of the July Monarchy: *Histoire de la monarchic dc Juillct,* vol. vi.**

[128] **Andr6 Rousseaux, *Proudhon et nous,* in *Le Figaro litte'raire,* for August 22nd, 1942.**

[129] ***Correspondance,* vol. i, p. xv.**

[130] **To Cournot, August 31st, 1853 (vol. vii, p. 368).**

[131] **To Javel, February 8th, 1842 (vol. xi, p. 373). To Tissot, April 25th, 1841: " When I am dead I ask my friends to put over my grave: *Studcbat philosophic*^ " (vol. i, p. 316).**

[132] **To Bergmann, February 8th, 1842 (vol. ii, p. 13). This life of intellectual work was for him " the sweetest, the happiest, albeijt the least lucrative ": to Beslay, February 23rd, 1853 (vol. v, p. 185).**

[133] **To Bergmann, June 9th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 78).**

[134] ***Can.*, pp. 192-3.**

[135] **To Michelet, July 19th, 1851 (vol. xiv, p. 171).**

[136] **To Edmond, January 24th, 1852: " *Ideas,* be well assured of it, are action, and one acts sufficiently when one scatters into the intellectual atmosphere the germs of future society " (vol. iv, p. 197).**

and though a fair number of his works—all of them, to be truthful —were occasional writings, he could not tie himself down to work with a precise and immediate end in view. He followed every trail that opened up before his ardent curiosity, slowly bringing to maturity a many-sided work which would never be written.

Moreover, he did not direct his thought as would a cold and detached intellectual. " Despite my approaching forty-fifth year," he said in 1853, " I am always so dominated, so carried away by my heart and my inspiration that often I encounter truth itself only as a fancy, the most beautiful of all."[137] He might have added that, for that very reason, " fancy " itself could become in his eyes coloured with truth. His books, for what is at once best and most debatable in them, are indeed the fruit of a sort of " inspiration ". He analysed himself very well, and the secrets which he shared with his friends about the gestation of his various works are in the highest degree interesting. They form a first-rate document for the study of the writer's psychology. There is a mixture, or rather a sequence of naive pride and of severe self-criticism.[138] Enthusiasm and disgust alternate. Frequently, too, we are given a clear insight into the demands which the composition as well as the writing of them made upon him.

" If my first attempt is a success, nothing less than a grammatical revelation must follow ": that was the way, young as he was, he encouraged himself in his linguistic studies.[139] Shortly afterwards, too, when he was writing his first book on Property: " Either I am blinding myself," he said, " or else it (Property) will never rise again from the blow it will shortly receive."[140] Again he wrote to Bergmann: " You must laugh to see in me this extraordinary confidence. It is because, my dear fellow, I know nothing in the sciences of which the discovery has ever produced an effect similar to that which the reading of my book is capable of producing. I do not ask that it be understood; all I ask is *that it be read,* and then the fate of the old society will be sealed."[141] From one chapter alone of his *Creation de VOrdre* he

is? To Trouessart, November 4th, 1853 (vol. v, p. 282).

i*« When *La Guerre et la Paix* was being published: " Now that I have read the last page I can see that the whole thing is flat and bad "; to Defontaine, April 11th, 1861 (vol. x, p. 352). Even in the hours of his greatest pride we find him judging himself in almost too modest a manner. To Maurice, apropos of *Just.*, on May 8th, 1858: " In a word, the success of the book surpasses both our hopes and the public's expectation. . . . I am definitely one of those writers whose words compel attention, and if I am not equal in talent—far from it—to a Lamartine, a Thiers or others, I am their equal in standing " (vol. viii, p. 21).

[18]»To Muiron (vol. ii-, p. 9).

" • To Ackermann, February 12th, 1840 (vol. i, p. 183).

[l]" May 3rd, 1840 (vol. i, p. 213).

expected " a revolution in philosophic studies greater than the revolution wrought by Kant". The reader would find in it, he thought, " things unheard of until now in the realm of thinkers, things which taken together and in detail unfold quite a new plan of the creation, the effect of which (if I am not mistaken) is comparable only to that produced by Newton's system when it first appeared ".[142]

More curious even than these passing exaggerations—to which he was subject until the end of his life[143]—are some of his remarks on the conditions of his work. His *Confessions d'un Re'volutionnaire* were conceived and written in two months! When they were about to appear he wrote to Dr. Maguet: " My Confessions are printed. . . . It is a book. I did it as a kind of surprise for my mind."[144] Later, looking back on this same work, he said: " I was under the influence of one of those intuitions which come upon me at times and which make me speak with the vehemence of an oracle."[145]

On the other hand, we can follow step by step in his correspondence his long labour in begetting *Justice,* from the first idea of a quick answer to Mirecourt, at the end of May, 1855, to the completion of the three big volumes in March, 1858. When he was nearing the end, his " philosophic epic " seemed to him to be something " formidable ", which would at last give to the new world " its theology, its philosophy, its poetic art, its aestheticism, its economics, its politics and its morals ", just as the old world, which the Church had fashioned, had possessed all the old counterparts of them.[146] At first, however, for long months he had groped his way, then he had gone forward in the night, writing without relish, not knowing what shape this child of his mind would take. He wrote again to Dr. Maguet, on February 19th, 1856:

I am not yet in the press. It grows long, annoying and[1] insipid, but it is necessary, and whatever talents I may have, I could not leave things out and make it shorter. A book—you don't know that, you who bring only children into the world—a book is a whole which

[142] **To Ackermann, November 25th, 1843 (vol. ii, pp. 112-13).**

[148] **To Chaudey again, December 28th, 1861: " I have reached the goal. It is done, it is discovered, it is won. The *Theorie de Vlmpdt* is but a spark compared to the *Th&orie de la Proprie'te'*; you will see what new light is thrown on the constitution of mankind ! " (vol. xi, p. 304).**

[144] **October 30th, 1849 (vol. iii, p. 42). Cf. Nietzsche, to Peter Gast, December 20th, 1877: *' The passion running through this last piece of writing *(The Genealogy of Morals)* has something terrifying about it; I read it the day before yesterday with profound stupefaction as though it were something new to me."**

[145] **To Edmond, July 9th, 1854 (vol. vi, p. 39).**

[148] **To Dufraisse, October 28th, 1857 (vol. vii, pp. 291-4): "I venture to think that for the first time the profound and synthetic thought of the Revolution has been sifted out, shown comprehensively and placed before that old world which rules and possesses us, *intus et in cute.* . . . So the world will know itself and will be able to choose with full knowledge."**

presents itself all in a lump, which must be accepted with all its drawn-out passages, its commonplaces, its difficulties, its form, its qualities and its defects. A writer who is thought to be a *master of his subject* is really only a recorder.[147]

It was thus that the most notable of Proudhon's works, and one of the most important of the century, saw the light. A book bursting with passion, but also filled with thought—a passion often, alas, ill-informed and a thought frequently badly directed; a book with its defects all too visible, but with beauties equally outstanding.[148] M. Georges Guy-Grand has compared it to a Purana, more deservedly than P6guy did the *Avenir de la Science.* M. Georges Duveau has rightly pointed out its somewhat journalistic character. It is, he says, " written in zigzag fashion, full of nooks and corners; allusions to the chronicle of the second Empire are abundant ".[149] Perhaps, however, no one has spoken about it better than Edouard Droz:

An extraordinary book, in which Proudhon's qualities and defects are given a free rein, composed by a man who firmly held the thread of his thought, as the reading of the summaries drawn up by the author himself will show, but a man whose copious, subtle and curious thoughts, carried away by the imagination, often link certain facts or notions with the dominating idea, though the connexion is not readily perceived by anybody else. It covers an enormous field since it includes the whole of economics and the whole of philosophy, in the widest sense of that word, not to mention history and literature, of which he gives numerous outlines, even adding some critical monographs to them. It is written by a man who is able to analyse, by an artist moulded in the school of life and inspired only by a moral sense, by a plebeian who is pleased to speak of himself and his family, who shows his fist, uses abusive language and is threatening, by a lover of justice who recreates the accents and the maledictions of the Jewish prophets but who also dons the august and simple majesty of the first legislators. Altogether it is a singular and formidable mixture,

[1] " Vol. vii, pp. 27-8.

[148] Only controversial blindness could have made Charles de Mouy write, with reference to Proudhon, in the *Correspondent* of April, 1859 (vol. xlvi, p. 778), that "if-ever M. Proudhon has shown any cleverness, his last work no longer shows the least trace of it '\ Edmond Scherer also wrote in 1859, apropos of *Just.*: " A reputation as a writer has been given to M. Proudhon. I do not know on what it is based/" *M. Proudhon ou la banqueroute du socialisme* (M. Proudhon or the bankruptcy of socialism), in *Melanges de critique religieuse* (1860), p. 491.

[149] *Proudhon, Bakounine et les reactions ouvrieres des annies* 60 (Proudhon, Bakunin and the working-class reactions in the sixties), in *Esprit,* April, 1937, p. 10: " Proudhon at that time no longer had a newspaper at his service; he put into *Justice* all the zest of an unemployed journalist."

like a chaos in which a shape takes form, or the soul of a new world begins to breathe. It is classical in the way the style is exactly adapted to the thought, romantic in that the words are derived from all sources as well as by its passionate outbursts and flights of fancy; a grotesque and sublime monster in whose voice can be heard in turn laughter, roaring and sobbing, in whose gait and movements there is no congruity, yet the monster is possessed of a terrible might, and as it goes forward crushes everything in its path that offers resistance. It typifies, so to speak, the giant People, with all its enormous proportions, its brutalities, its emotions, and at times its refinement, its profound intuitions, its childishness, its thirst for, and its illusion of, knowledge. . . .[150]

Works such as these are forced upon their author rather than desired by him. Proudhon, more than others, was ruled by this law. He was conscious of it. Far from having his tools well under control, he felt that he himself was the tool of some blind and tyrannical force, which though within himself was yet beyond the control of his thinking powers, a force he could neither contain nor command. Hence, for instance, this plea for *La Guerre et la Paix:*

. . . It is my fault, I am not understood. I do not speak like everybody else. There is something strange in my style which disconcerts my readers. . . . I am not entirely the master of my own words. . . . If I sometimes happen to use strange words, borrowed from all the idioms, believe me, I do not set out to find them; it is the result of my mental impatience and a kind of despair.[151]

Finally we will quote from a letter to Bergmann, dated the year before Proudhon's death. He had just exhausted himself, hastily writing a book which " should have demanded at least six months' reflection ". He foresaw that his friend was going to blame him for this:

I was wrong, you will say. I should have let them bawl and taken the time to turn out a good book. You are right a thousand times over, as you will be able to see only too well. But you are well aware

[180] ***P.J. Proudhon,* pp. 201-2. The correspondence also allows us to follow from day to day the gestation of the other works, e.g. U./., vol. xii, pp. 253-8, 267-9, 288-93**

[151] **To X., June 5th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 113). To Chaudey, October 27th, 1860: " I rely upon your jurisprudence to explain to your readers the idea I wanted to convey but have been able only to stammer out. I have done my best, but I do not think I rose to the level of my subject; underneath it all there is something beyond all human thought" (vol. x, p. 183).**

that a pregnant woman cannot choose either the hour or the moment. She brings forth the child wherever she may be and as best she may, sometimes without any pangs, at others with horrible sufferings which leave behind indelible marks. That was my case: the child will be worth what it may, I had to go on,[152]

Thus we see Proudhon to the very end ruled by the same demands upon him—in other words, to the very end also burning with the same fire.

[1,1] **February 12th, 1863 (vol. xii, pp. 292-3).**

CHAPTER III

PROUDHON'S QUALITIES

PROUDHON was not without enormous faults. All the same, he was not the monster of pride and egoism depicted by Arthur Desjardins, " slandering all his friends, pulling dpwn everything around him, centring everything in himself".[1] Neither was he the sceptic imagined by Alfred Sudre, " striving to unsettle all beliefs, to cloud all truths, to blight all feelings ".[2] Such judgements are not even caricatures. Proudhon had a right to say, when he reached the end of his days: " As a popular writer and as a thinker I shall have been a demi-man; I care but little. But I have been, I think, an honest man; on that point I place myself without reserve on a level with all the masters. "[3] It is, nevertheless, only too true to say that he had a naive pride and was temperamentally violent, which led him into many errors and many injustices; as well as an habitual tendency to disparage people, an inclination to black moods,[4] which were increased and embittered[5] by his disappointments, his illnesses and also by his awareness of the " uncouth " in him. His love of independence quickly degenerated into touchy haughtiness,[6] his worship of right into a " quibbling " spirit.[7] Even his knowledge was at times somewhat restricted, somewhat vulgar;[8] his unduly sturdy common sense never opened to

[1] ***P.J. Proudhon, sa vie, ses ceuvres et sa doctrine*** **(1896), vol. i, p. 161. It is difficult to understand how M. Charles Maurras saw in this work an " apologia " for Proudhon: *VAction frangaise et la religion catholique,* p. 163.**

[a] ***Histoire du communisme,*** **chapter xix, pp. 405, 406. Cf. Proudhon, *Just.,* vol. iv, p. 446.**

[8] **To Bergmann, May 14th, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 93).**

[4] **To Villiaume\ July 13th, 1857 (vol. vii, p. 265). To Edmond, April 23rd, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 30). To Chaudey, March 24th, 1862: " My soul is full of bitterness "; and April 4th: " My chagrin, mounting up and concentrating for over ten years now, is turning to misanthropy and despair " (vol. xiv, pp. 216, 223). To Buzon, August 22nd: " I see everything gloomy, everything warped, everything ridiculous, everything absurd" (vol. xii, p. 175). To Delhasse, October 9th, 1864: " More and more I find everything unreasonable, absurd, everything I read, everything I hear, everything I see " (vol. xiv, p. 64). To Buzon, October 30th, 1864, about the work he is writing: *' It will have 360 pages, many useless repetitions and much underlying bitterness " (p. 83).**

• To Gouvernet, November 27th, 1860: " I was born under an evil star. Nature made me more awkward than intelligent: that is the root of my trouble. Why do I not succeed in pleasing ? I do not know . . ." (vol. x, p. 214).

• For instance, the letter to Madier-Montjau, January 1st, 1853 (vol. v, pp. 138-9). Cf, vol. i, p. 26: " A touchy young man with the most irritable self-esteem."

[7] **To Bergmann, June 9th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 78).**

[8] **Cf. to Bergmann, January 23rd, 1842 (vol. ii, p. 11), etc.**

certain fine shades of feeling or even to certain refinements of thought. Despite some astonishing insights—which were always fleeting—into the world of mysteries and the spiritual life, we find in him ordinarily a lack of spiritual depth which made him depend too much upon the current events of his century and made him liable to the withering effects of action. His irony, redolent of his native place,[9] too readily turns to mockery, and his plebeian uncouthness[10] did not know the limits to which frankness and brutality may go. " I have no bump for worship," he wrote, " and if I have one desire, it is to flatten it out on every mortal's forehead."[11] The distress he suffered, the torment of politics and his exile often falsified his judgement. Moreover, Proudhon was not a simple man, any more than any other in whom human nature, so to speak, wells over. Though hostile to all religiosity, he could not deal with any problem without delving down to its religious roots. In a flash he would pass from the enthusiasm of a Madame de Stael to the scoffing mood of a Voltaire. Though he constantly displayed immoderation in his frankness and spirit in his action, that did not prevent him from retaining something of a peasant's artfulness[12] and almost a delight in intrigue. With a very personal touch in all his appreciations, he was always influenced nevertheless by what he had read.[13] I have no intention, however, of drawing Proudhon's portrait. Neither do I desire to explore the secret recesses of his soul, still less to judge it. It has been said that Proudhon was the " great moralist of the working-class ";[14] let us say more simply that he is one of our great moralists. Today, when his name is so often mentioned, and in our pressing need to summon up all the treasures contained in our spiritual tradition, it may be not

• *Ironic comtoise,* **i.e. peculiar to the inhabitants of Franche-Comte.—*Translator.***

To Antoine Gauthier, May 2nd, 1841, he says that he is " frank and loyal, but a reasoning man, biting, caustic, fond of laughter and scoffing, merciless for all the *minus habentes* who want to be deluded " (vol. i, p. 324). He also describes himself as " unruly " and admits that temper and a feeling of injustice have embittered him: to Tourneux, September 1st, 1844 (vol. ii, p. 147). And to Maurice, February 26th, 1848: " I am so made that I want to make a little fun of everything, even of my beliefs . . . and that is the basis of my conscience " (vol. ii, p. 288).

[10] ***Lettre a M. Blanqui,* p. 97: " Well! when I am fighting a famous opponent must I say at the end of every sentence, like an orator on a platform, * the learned author', *the eloquent writer', 'the profound publicist', and a hundred other platitudes with which we are accustomed to make fun of people ? " To Edmond, March 6th, 1852: " It is my misfortune that, being a crag of the Jura mountains, I do not foresee in my letters the great consternation of my beloved correspondents . . ."(vol. iv, p. 230).**

[11] **To Madame X., July 25th, 1847 (vol. ii, p. 239).**

[11] **Paul Thureau-Dangm, *Histoire de la monarchie de Juillet,* vol. vi, p. 138, has pointed out " the instinct this peasant had kept for all the underling's dodges ".**

[18] **The resemblance to Nietzsche on these two points will be noticed.**

[14] **Edouard Berth, *Du Capital aux Reflexions sur la violence,* p. 16.**

without advantage to reveal some of the qualities which both the work and the life of this man agree in teaching us, qualities which are always involved, often paradoxical, but qualities which stimulate reflection and even fruitful reactions.

" Rustic blood "[15] ran in his veins. He had a horror not only of a pleasure-seeking life, but of any existence too easy-gqing; he also detested " Bohemian habits ",[18] free-and-easiness and sentimentality. If he had such a loathing for Rousseau it was no doubt because of the State-controlled tyranny which was the outcome of the latter's system, but also because Rousseau's book leads us to believe " that all constraint is immoral, that our passions are holy, that all pleasure is holy '\[17] If then he himself criticized Christian asceticism, it was because he misunderstood it. He knew and he declared that man is naturally selfish and unjust, and that man's first fight has to be against himself.[18] He readily assumed, without affectation, something of a Spartan and Roman tone, tempered, it must be added, by a Gallic zest and by a fondness for " mirthful ribaldry ".[19] The most genuine kind of progress, in his view, lay in gradual deliverance from the slavery of the senses.[20] He reminded those who wished to remain their own masters, that is, to be strong and free, that the first condition is to know how to control the senses and to be continent[21]. Even the heart must be mastered. He avowed that his own often beat violently, but he imposed a discipline upon himself and took refuge in " great philosophic speculations ", which at times became " a real passion "[22] with him. To everybody he recommended work. " Work induces chastity ", he jotted down in his Note-book in 1845; and also this short sentence, which must be taken rather in an imperative mood than as an established fact: " Man must always work." In his illness, when his attacks were at their height, he carried on, undaunted, with his task.[23] In the bad days of his exile, when he thought he was watching " the decadence of his nation ", he exclaimed: " I would die of grief if I did not beguile my sorrow by working."[24]

[15] *Just.*, fifth treatise (vol. ii, p. 328).
" To Chaudey, March 7th (vol. xii, p. 12).
[17] *P. M.*, vol. i, p. 351. " Pleasure " *(jouissance)* might also mean in this context " possession of property "—*Translator.*
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 352.
" To Gauthier, May 2nd, 1841 (vol. i, p. 323),
[20] P. M., vol. ii, p. 374.
[21] *Porn., p. 25.*
[22] Letter of June, 1844.
[23] See, for instance, his letter to Delhasse, November 23rd, 1864 (vol. xiv, p. 106),
[24] To Penet, July 2nd, 1860 (vol. x, p. 94).

In addition to work, he loved fighting. Arrogantly he wrote: "I am a man, and what I love most in man is that fighting spirit which puts him above all authority, above all love as well as above all fatalism, and by which he shows the earth that he is its rightful sovereign."[25] A greatness which is rather alarming. He also loved virile austerity. He wanted sobriety and was not afraid even to use the priestly language and speak of " mortification ". He advised the practice of it, " not because there is in that system any magic virtue, but because it trains us gradually to dominate our nature, and spiritualizes, so to speak, our being ".[26] He said flatly to one of his friends: " He who does not know how to suffer and to be patient is not a man,"[27] and, some time afterwards, applying the maxim to himself, he once, when suffering, told the same friend: " I must suffer a little, and meet with adversity from time to time. It sets me up, gives me fresh vigour and does me good."[28] Many another maxim reveals in him sentiments which might be called both Cornelian [i.e. in the spirit of Corneille, symptomatic of devotion to duty] and Pascalian [i.e. ascetic]. Is not this confidential remark to Pauthier, on August 13th, 1843, worthy of the *Cid* or of *Cinna:* " That word Fate stands for nothing in my mind; every time I hear it I seem to grow giddy " ?[29] Later again, after a year's illness which had much exhausted him: " This is another experience I am undergoing: man sees his machine breaking up; fundamentally, in his heart and head, he does not grow old."[30] If he had such a great admiration for Wellington it was because the latter " had fought alone against universal discouragement and had conquered a man who himself had ended by becoming indispensable".[31] Freedom as he conceived it was not any kind of freedom. He knew that when it had " neither ballast nor compass " it was the freedom " of every crime ". Above all he wanted it to have the power of mastering itself, of governing and inspiring even love: " French genius is freedom itself, and this no longer exists when the affections of the senses or the allurements of the imagination become dominant. . . . It is in freedom that our affections must find their source, bear it well in mind, not in the senses."[32] Is not such an idea in conformity with the doctrine of the *Discours sur les passions de Vamour* ?

" G. P., p. 464.
[26] To Madame X., July 13th, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 99).
[27] To Truche, July 27th, 1854 (vol. vi, p. 57).
[28] May 4th, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 58).
" Vol. ii, p. 95.
[30] To Maurice, January 8th, 1860 (vol. ix, p. 311).
[31] *Parallele entre Napolion et Wellington,* in *Commentaires sur les memoires de Fouche* (edit. Rochel, 1900), p. 158.
" To Chaudey, March 14th, 1859 (vol. ix, p. 33). To Neveu, October 1861 (vol. xi, pp. 263-4).

These few traits in Proudhon's character give us a better understanding of his attitude towards the family and towards poverty.

Earlier than Peguy, he had spoken in moving tones of man's misery. He analysed at length the social phenomenon of pauperism, and contrasted the famine suffered by some with the " insatiable voracity " of others. He described that " slow hunger ", that " hunger of every moment", of the whole year, of the whole of life, " a hunger which does not kill in one day, but which is made up of all the privations and of all the regrets; which incessantly saps the body, impairs the mind, demoralizes the conscience, debases races, breeds all the illnesses and vices, drunkenness among others and envy, a loathing for work -and for thrift, baseness of soul, unscrupulousness of conscience, coarseness of morals, idleness, beggary, prostitution an$ robbery ". It is this same slow hunger, he also said, " which keeps alive the veiled hatred between the working classes and the well-to-do and which gives rise in turn to the ferocity of rebellion and the tyranny of fear ".[33]

This hideous retinue is, however, that of destitution and not that of poverty. Poverty, very much to the contrary, is " the principle of social order and our only happiness here below '\[34] Here Proudhon was reacting against the madness of his century, " madder than all those that it claims to supersede ". Economic science, Socialist schools of thought and governments were all banding together to drive man to his ruin by instilling into him a false ideal of wealth and comfort. " Get rich ! " This was not only the cry of a Minister, it was the universal password. New ethics were nourishing the feverish desire for profit and inflaming all the lusts, and " the public conscience (was), so to speak, turned upside down".[35] Everywhere luxury flaunted itself or envy growled. Such ideas were against Nature. Man must " seek the dignity of his being and the glory of his life " in daily work and rigorous frugality.[36] His destiny, " wholly spiritual and moral", imposed a rule of moderation upon him. Far from seeking to withdraw from the law of poverty, he must find in it the principle of his joy.[37] He must learn that his work has as its purpose, even before it provides him with a means of subsistence, to make known his own nobility to him, for it is an " emission of the spirit", and it is by it primarily that man rises above the animal world.[38] There is no reason to be dazzled

[88] *G. P.*, pp. 349-50.
[84] *Op.* cit., p. 331.
[85] *Op. cit.*, p. 342.
[8e] *Op. cit.*, p. 353.
[87] *Op. cit.*, pp. 339, 340.
[88] *P. M.*, vol. ii, p. 362: " The power to work, which distinguishes **man from** the brute creation, has its source in the innermost depths of **our** reason. . . . The

by " this din of Banks, of Stock Exchanges, of millions and of milliards". To those saddened by their poverty Proudhon recalled that " this magnificence . . . is a deduction in advance from the workers' production, before wages have been fixed "; " accept as a man," he told them, " the condition in which you have been placed, and tell yourself once for all that the happiest man is he who best knows how to be poor ".[39]

Moreover, poverty is not easy circumstances any more than it is distress. " That would be already corruption for the worker. It is not good for man to be in easy circumstances; on the contrary he must always feel the stimulus of want. Easy circumstances would be more than corruption, they would be slavery; and it is important that man should be able, on occasions, to rise above want and to go without even the needful. But poverty has none the less its intimate joys, its innocent festivals, its family luxury, a touching luxury which accentuates the wonted frugality of the household." To hymn this poverty Proudhon becomes lyrical:

> Poverty is decent; her clothes are not in holes like the cynic's cloak; her dwelling-place is clean, healthy and snug; once a week at least her linen is changed; she is neither pale nor hungry. Like Daniel's companions, she is radiant with health while living on vegetables; she has her daily bread, she is happy.[40]

The " wisdom of the ancients " had glimpsed this ideal, but Christianity was the first to lay it down as a law, in a formal way. Proudhon felt obliged to make a reservation, in accordance with his usual idea about all that comes to man through mystical ways. For all that, he thought that " poverty glorified by the Gospel is the greatest truth Christ preached to men ", and concluded by saying that " if we lived as the Gospel recommends, in a spirit of joyous poverty, the most perfect order would reign on earth ".[41]

animals which, metaphorically, we call workers are but machines. They *conceive* nothing, consequently they do not *produce* anything. The exterior actions, which sometimes seem to create a fellowship between us and them, are indistinguishable in these animals, so far as morality is concerned, from the movements of organic life. . . . What difference can we discover, from the point of view of conscience, between the silk-worm's digestion and the construction of its cocoon ? What then is work ? No one has yet defined it. Work is an emission of the spirit." Cf. pp. 363-4 and p. 375.

[39] ***G. P.*, p. 337. As an example of the erroneous judgements on Proudhon so often made, we will quote this passage from Taparelli, in the *Civiltd cattolica* of 1862: " Convinced that they will be happy if they are rich, (the poor people) try to find short cuts to wealth without work or thrift; and the Proudhons are not lacking who teach them the theory " (Trans. Jacquin, 1943, p. 97).**

[40] ***G. P.*, pp. 338-9, Cf. letter to Suchet, October 3rd, 1854 (vol. vi, p. 76).**

" 0p. eft, pp. 338, 341.

Another detail makes one think of Peguy. Daniel Halevy relates that, when some of his companions, quite proud of their idea, proposed that they should back horses in order to swell the coffers of their charitable societies, Peguy replied in a tone of authority, which was unanswerable: " There will be no betting."[42] Proudhon was not less intransigent. He wrote to his friend Maurice, on July 29th, 1863:

I have never risked a sixpenny piece in a lottery, and shall never do so. I should be bitterly sorry if I lost it, and if I was lucky I should be ashamed of the pleasure the winnings would give me.[43]

We find again the same seriousness—" that great and unappreciated virtue known as seriousness "[44]—in Proudhon's teachings concerning the family,[46] the same virile austerity, the same joint heritage from ancient Rome and from Christianity, the same opposition to the ideas of the world. In this he parted company not only with the followers of Saint-Simon and of Fourier, who were, he said, " the disgrace of the century and the canker of Socialism ", but with many others also. " One of the deplorable errors of our democrats is in thinking that the family is a burden which puts a stop to self-sacrifice and action; on the contrary, it is the target which steadies us and gives us will-power."[46] Knowing by experience what love was, having had his own heartbreaks and having had to overcome his own feelings—he confessed this once to a correspondent whom he wished to rescue from a disorderly passion[47]—he did not hide his contempt for what he called " the nonsense talked by novelists ",[48] Not afraid of being scoffed at, he spoke witheringly of " that disgusting erotism which is ruining youth and the family ",[49] *' that beastly sensualism which gives us a horror for marriage and reproduction and is driving us through love to the annihilation of the species ".[50] " How stupid is this century," he

[48] Daniel HaleVy, *Piquy et les Cahiers de la Quinzaine* (1941), p. 34.

[43] Vol. xiii, p. 129. To Gouvernet, September 26th, 1858: " At Spa I visited the gaming-house; it was ignoble and dreadful" (vol. viii, p. 201). To Mathey, December 29th, 1852, speaking of one of their mutual friends: " I wept to see so intelligent a man, fundamentally honest, transferred, as he asserts, from serious undertakings to the intrigues and manipulations of the* Exchange, etc." (vol. v, p. 129).

[44] Paul Claudel, *Le Dauphine.*

[45] The " great principles " to which he appealed were, in addition to " personal dignity " and " the nobility of labour ", " the family " and " respect for women ". That, he declared, "is all I love and worship ": to Dulieu, December 30th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 274).

[46] To Robin, October 12th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 378). The Socialism which wants '* to abolish the family " and " change woman's role ", is going " against the unanimity of the human race " (P. M., vol. ii, p. 198).

[47] To M. D„ January 16th, 1859 (vol. viii, p. 375).

[48] To Maguet, January 1st, 1853 (vol. v, p. 135).

[49] *Just.y* ninth treatise, chapter 8.

[60] *Just.*, preliminary treatise.

exclaimed, "with its sophisms and its ranting about the family, marriage and the emancipation of women ! What senseless literature ! and what ignoble morals! "[61] He was not afraid to recognize the State's right to punish writers who were systematically immoral.[52] He was hard on George Sand, who, he said, picked out " from the world's refuse " the idea of a " love, alleged to be divine " which " was nothing but fatalism".[53] He was harsh about Michelet, whom he nevertheless admired as an historian and with whom he had had good relations.[64] He was equally harsh about Lamartine, whose *Jocelyn* seemed to him a " scandalous work " and his *Raphael* " obscene ",[55] Most of all he bore a grudge against Rousseau, the spiritual father of them all, whose " pernicious influence on our mind and on our moral sense" he denounced.[68] He reproached him for mistaking " the somnolence of the senses for chastity "; no doubt by his *Nouvelle Heloise* Jean-Jacques Rousseau *' had enhanced love and marriage ", but " he had also prepared their dissolution; from the publication of that novel dates for our country the weakening of souls through love, a weakening which must be closely followed by bleak and gloomy impudicity ".[57] The long treatise on *Love and Marriage* inserted in *Justice* is a challenge thrown out to all those who were on principle for the relaxation of morals (among whom he goes so far as to include, ridiculously, St. Paul and the Fathers of the Church). It earned him many criticisms and was partly responsible for the alienation of an important section of Socialism.[58] It brought down on him immediately charges of being a woman-hater and brought forth a whole series of replies—" What a lot of erotic babbling all this is ! "[59]—notably two feminine replies. Prevented for a long while from answering them, he did so at last from Brussels, shortly before his return to France; this was the origin *oiLa Pornocratie,* which was to appear posthumously. " I must finish with

[51] To Beslay, October 27th, 1860 (vol. x, pp. 192-3).

" To Langlois, October 16th, 1859 (vol. ix. pp. 202-3).

[58] *Just.*,, eleventh treatise, chapter 2 (vol. iv, p. 249).

[84] Thanking Michelet for his book on *Lore,* he confesses to him that he is sorry to see " here and there expressions of affection better suited to the public of a hundred years ago, but of which, it seems to me, in the present state of relaxation, cowardly souls cannot but take advantage ", January 23rd, 1860 (vol. xiv, p. 191).

[65] *Just.,* vol. iv, pp. 227-32.

" To Villiaume, March 19th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 45). He was nevertheless grateful to Rousseau for his *Lettre a d Alembert sur les spectacles: Porn.,* p. 379.

[67] . L.A, p. 119, note.

[M] Already in *P.* M., vol. ii, p. 381: " Socialism and romantic literature have set our generation rutting"; p. 374: "Socialism, which instead of raising man heavenwards sends him into the mud, has seen in the victory over the flesh only a fresh cause of misery; as it flattered itself that it had overcome the repugnance for work by distractions and flitting about, so it has tried to overcome the monotony of marriage, not by fostering affection, but by intrigue **and** changes."

" To Chaudey, December 30th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 341).

this question of loves," he wrote at that time to his publishers, the Brothers Gamier, " on which our generation is dragging itself along and rotting, as did the Greeks and Latins of old. "[80]

Resolute upholder of the father's and the husband's authority[61]—with a hint of excess in his convictions—yet he did not, as has often been attributed to him and as some of his tirades have led people to believe, believe that women were positively inferior. For him, though the two partners in marriage are not " equal", yet they are " of equal dignity "; they are " complementary ", each being superior to the other according to the point of view, the man being superior in power and the woman in gracefulness, and " the balance of the respective rights -and duties of man and woman must be made in such a manner that there is equality of well-being and honour between the two sexes."[62] Marriage appeared to him to be " a pact of chastity, charity and justice, by which husband and wife publicly declare themselves freed—both together and each by the other—from the tribulations of the flesh and from all courtship's cares, and therefore sacred to everybody and inviolable ".[6S] He also saw it as a " mystical union, the most astounding of all human institutions ",[64] Consequently he demanded that it should be " monogamous and permanent ": therein lies, he said, " the fruit of civilization ", " the expression of the citizen's individuality and dignity ",[66] He was always a resolute opponent of divorce. The *Programme Revolutionnaire* which he submitted to the electors of the Seine in 1848 included monogamous marriage, " the fundamental characteristics of which, whatever may be said or done, are permanency and inviolability. . . . I should consider any law concerning divorce as an encouragement to libertinage and a backward step ".[68] Shortly afterwards, in *Con-*

[60] January 29th, 1862 (vol. xi, p. 358). Proudhon was especially against feminism. Often people have wrongly taken for rank prejudice against women in general what was only a satire on emancipated woman. See his letters to Madame Jeanny d'Hericourt, October 8th and December 20th, 1856, in *Porn.*, pp. 327, 328. This last work shows signs of Proudhon's growing irritation.

[61] To Robin, October 12th, 1851: " My opinions on the family are nearer to those of the old Roman law than to any other theory. For me the father of a family is a *sovereign.* . . . I look upon all our dreams of *woman's emancipation* as fatal and stupid . . ." (vol.iv, p. 377).

[68] *Porn.*, p. 331. *Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 276, 319.

[63] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 299. And p. 64: " Without chastity, without sacrifice, without constancy, no love between man and woman."

[4] *P. M.*, vol. ii, p. 198. P. 377: " Chastity is the ideal of love."

[85] To Robin, October 12th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 377): " If the French Republic is to rise again one day, and our country figure gloriously in the annals of the human race, it will be only on condition that marriage and the family, freed from the fetters which capitalism has created for them, become the end and the state of the vast majority of the citizens. Outside marriage man is incomplete, and no irregular love can take the place of what is given by the title of husband and father."

[ee] *Con.*, pp. 302, 303.

fessions d'un Revolutionnaire, he wrote: " On the question of divorce, the best solution is still that of the Church "; otherwise, " the contract of marriage is nothing more in reality thana contract of concubinage ".[87] And in his Note-book, for November 19th, 1852: "Divorce. Deal with this question afresh, and solve it as the Church does, but through more human considerations."[68]

When he republished *Justice,* he added to it a *Catechism on Marriage.* He was not afraid to declare that " every attack on the family is a profanation of justice, treachery to the people and to liberty, an insult to the Revolution. The flood of crimes and offences against marriage is the most active cause of the decadence of modern societies ".[89] When he took up the cudgels on behalf of inheritances he did so in order to ensure the stability of the family.[70] Not that he was under any illusion about the hypocrisies which might result. He knew quite well how much mediocrity and even shame a certain middle-class respectability could cover in the family circle as much as, and even more than, in others. Once he had the opportunity of saying so.

[67] *Con.,* p. 112, note. *Just.,* vol. iv, p. 275: " You see, my Lord, it is Christianity, it is the Church, it is you yourself, who, unwittingly, are going to provide me with the theory of marriage."

[68] Cf. *Porn.,* p. 407: " The vows are the symbolism of marriage."

[69] *Just.,* vol. iv, pp. 295-308. *Porn.,* pp. 327-8: " Our moral decomposition is going on visibly; the more I study the symptoms, the more I discover that public liberties have for their basis and their safeguard domestic morals."

[70] He wanted "to make the family principle and the principle of inheritance more and more inviolable " *(T. I.,* p. 167). And pp. 142-3: " He who writes these pages himself belongs to the class which he called just now the outcasts of fortune. For more than twenty years, out of pity, out of sympathy, out of personal interest if you like, but above all, we venture to say, out of a spirit of justice, he has not ceased to defend their cause and to denounce the social iniquities with the most bitter vehemence. As much as others he has reflected upon property, upon the family and upon inheritances; he has recognized as well as others their anomalies and their abuses, in the present state of things. Well, the more attentive he has been in studying these things, the more he remains convinced that the principle of hereditary transmission, given in the first place by nature or the paternal instinct, is at the same time one of the best laws for the economic system, the administration and the policing of societies; and that it is not in that direction that we working folk, who live from hand to mouth and have no inheritance to receive or to leave, must look for reforms; that it is important for all, on the contrary, for those who have been disinherited of civilization as well as those who have entered into possession of it, to make the family principle and the right of inheritance more and more inviolable. . . . Certainly the present writer is far from sharing the opinion of those satisfied people who imagine that all is for the best in this best of worlds; he thinks, on the contrary, that if mankind since its origin has made fortunate steps in progress, there remain yet greater ones for it to make; for more than one reason he earned the right to be placed in the front rank of the revolutionary army. The more, however, he decided to get things moving, the more he attached importance to keeping them going in the right direction. A higher wisdom has laid down the rails along which mankind rims; we should smash those rails if we aimed a blow at patrimonial transmission."

It was in answer to the fears alleged to have been raised by the boldness of his social programme: would not his subversive teachings destroy the family as well as all established order? He drew himself up, and with all his brutal vigour delivered his blow:

We will begin, if you please, by ruling out the family. It does not behove you, middle-class people, who buy your wives and sell your daughters after exploiting other women remorselessly and without restraint, to talk to us about the family. As we have so many times said, Property has made the family a haunt of prostitution with the father as pimp and the mother as procuress. Carnal-minded men, before you pronounce the sacred name of the family, let me pass a live coal over your lips.[71]

With this " middle-class " conception—which was afraid to define itself but tended to creep into the ways of the people pending the libertarian reaction which all hypocrisy brings forth—Proudhon contrasted his ideal, in sober words which showed his perfectly balanced thoughts:

To set up a family, so that husband and wife find in it the joy and quietude for which they long and without which, brought together only by their desires, they would be but incompletely united, *conjugal faith* is necessary. By that I mean an idea of their mutual dignity which, by raising them above the senses, renders each sacred even more than dear to the other, and causes them to make of their fruitful community a religion sweeter than love itself.[72]

Beyond the family circle there was what we might call local patriotism, a love for his birth-place. This was always dear to Proudhon. He said that he was proud to belong to a family known for " its respect for the traditions of the Franche-Comte "[73] For a while he contemplated a *Revue de Franche-Comte'*. He looked unfavourably upon the *Revue des Deux-Bourgognes*, because, he said, " Burgundy has taken the lead over the Comte and Burgundians have incense only for themselves ".[74] He used to speak with pride[75] of " our nation of the

[71] *S. Q.* 5., p. 156.

[72] *Just.*, preliminary treatise, (vol. i, p. 253). " Marriage," he also said *(pp. cit.*, vol. iv, p. 231)," is something altogether of the moral order, into which the business of the senses enters only as an accessory.'* And in *Porn.*, pp. 88-9: " Marriage, in the purity of its ideas, is a pact of absolute self-sacrifice." Proudhon once wrote to a despairing man: " You loved hardly anybody but yourself, and that is the only way the debauchery of which you speak can be explained " (vol. vi, p. 217).

[73] To M. Abram, May 31st, 1848 (vol. ii, p. 332).

[74] To Ackermann, June 13th, 1838 (vol. i, p. 51). To Perennes, March 13th, 1839: " I am getting ready gradually for the only career which I think I can carry out for the benefit of my native place. I mean the publication of a *Revue de Franche-Comte'* etc."

[75] To Huguenet, March 11th, 1839 (vol. i, p. 95).

Franche-Comte' ". He declared himself ready to give up all personal ambition provided that " the men of his district shone in the front ranks of the sacred battalion of regenerators "[76]

When he considered the character of the inhabitants of the Jura, " serious and contemplative, religious though not over credulous, capable of enthusiasm but not of fanaticism ", it seemed to him that therein were to be found factors all ready for a " national regeneration ", and he wanted " our people of Franche-Comte to play their part in world affairs ". But, he added, do not let our young people " lower themselves by an unpardonable imitation of foreign vices " ! In that way " in the midst of the universal deluge, the Franche-ComtS may become an ark for mankind ".[77] On April 11th, 1839, he wrote from Paris to his fellow-countryman Huguenet: " I suffer in my exile; I detest the Parisian civilization, and to all who can' hear me I cry: *Fugite de medio Babylonis."*[78] When an unfortunate incident caused him to write against Cardinal Mathieu, he reproached his archbishop for not showing towards him " that spirit of compatriotism which animates all those of the Franche-Comte".[79] Later still, in a moment of melancholy, he wrote to his old friend Maurice: " I would like to be living once again in that region where my reason was formed, my imagination took on its special character, and I had the first inkling of good and evil."[80] In fact, whenever he could he went back there. There alone, it seemed, was he able to recover and set himself up again. A powerful instinct attached him to his native soil. He complained of " the desertion of the land " ;[81] and noted with sorrow that " man no longer loved the land ". For his part, his childhood as a peasant had marked him for life. The memories recalled by him in *Justice* are among the finest pages in the book.[82] Sainte-Beuve has compared the pantheistic sentiments about Nature, which are apparent in it, with those of Maurice de Guerin.[83] Without, however, ruling out the comparison, it can be said that he strikes a more realistic note. His

[76] **To Pauthier, April 9th, 1838 (vol. i, p. 46).**
[77] **To Perennes, February 21st, 1838 (vol. i, pp. 44-5).**
[78] **Vol. i, p. 115. And March 13th, to Perennes: " Since I came to Paris, despite all the care I have taken to create an empty space around myself, I have felt the strength and fertility of my mind palpably diminished; my horizon has contracted " (vol. i, p. 104).**
[79] ***Just.*, vol. i, p. 287. Praising his friend Chaudey to Langlois, he added, as though setting the seal on him: " Chaudey is a good Franche-Comte man,'* December 30th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 310). Cf. to Tissot, April 21st, 1842: "I wanted to honour a fellow-countryman, to honour the Franche-Comtd " (vol. ii, p. 32),**
[80] **February 15th, 1861 (vol. x, p. 321).**
[81] ***Just.*, vol. ii, p. 202-4.**
[82] ***Just.*, vol. ii, pp. 401-10, etc.**
[83] ***Nouveaux Lund\s*, vol. iii, p. 162. *Maurice et Eugenie de Gue'rin.***

experience as a man of the fields always makes itself felt, a man who " loves Nature as a child loves its nurse, concerned less with her charms than with her fruitfulness ".[84] Though he may speak of the days when as a young boy, wandering in the fields, he was scarcely able to distinguish " the ego from the non-ego ", yet when in the course of his narrative he comes to the years following his college-days and recalls the young proof-reader fleeing from the reeking workshop to run wild on the high peaks bordering the Doubs valley, he shows us a young man " crouching in a hole in the rocks " on stormy days, taking delight in " staring into the face of thundering Jupiter ", with the feeling that " every crisis in Nature is an echo of what takes place in the soul of man ",[85] Thus, for this man who believed in personality and in freedom the soul came first and Nature was but an echo. Moreover, as Georges Sorel has remarked,[88] these memories of childhood are not exempted from the normal law of mirages, and Proudhon colours them with reflections which are the fruit of more mature years. That in itself is a token of the depth of his feelings.

Were his feelings for his country of the same calibre ? It has been doubted. Some have even tried to deny it. In his *Mattriaux d'une thiorie du proletariat* (Materials for a theory on the Proletariat), Sorel, in more paradoxical vein, has tried to prove that Proudhon " was an internationalist as categorical as Marx himself ",[87] The motive behind this argument is easily understood. It was a question of reacting against those who wished to claim him as a supporter of their nationalism and also of throwing cold water upon the artificial exaltation of a certain kind of " French Socialism ".[88] Proudhon, criticizing the " mythologers" and the " flatterers" who without restraint were holding up France as " the chosen race ", had indeed said " we must beware of this nationalism ''.[89] He did on one occasion, in a letter to Herzen, which certainly went beyond his thought, say that he foresaw " a more radical revolution which would eradicate, together with all the big States, all those distinctions of nationality for which there was no longer any basis ''.[9°] We can also admit that he was not always

[84] *Just.*, vol. ii, p. 403.
[85] *Just.*, vol. ii, pp. 402-8.
[88] *Introduction a Viconomie moderne*, second edition, p. 152. *Les illusions du progres*, fourth edition, p. 379, note 1.
[87] *Materiaux*, pp. 434-49. Sorel admitted nevertheless that Proudhon had fought the Italian unification in the national interests *(Quelques mots sur Proudhon*, p. 26). Cf. Droz, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
[88] The same argument with the same design in Edouard Berth, *Du Capital aux Reflexions sur la violence*, p. 93.
[89] *Con.*, p. 346.
[9°] April 21st, 1861 (vol. xi, pp. 23-4).

a patriot" in the common fashion "[91] The numerous passages quoted by Sorel, however, merely show that he was no lover of the blind Chauvinism or jingoism of the mob and of several of his democratic friends, and that he upbraided them for giving in to a fault so natural to Frenchmen. He would, for instance, write with a bluntness which letters between friends allow: "We Frenchmen are always dropping into Chauvinism; we must cure ourselves of this national disease." He ended a long letter to Gouvernet, in which he explained the vicissitudes of the battle of Waterloo, after visiting the battle-field, with this exclamation: "We must laugh at the Chauvinists."[92] From certain other passages it is clear that, accepting the inevitable, Proudhon endured his exile with patience because in Belgium he felt that he was surrounded by honest folk who did him justice and allowed him to live in peace. *Ubi justitia, ibi patria.*[93] There is no blasphemy in that.

Moreover, he was not addicted to uttering extravagant praise. He readily depicted France as " the country of the *aurea mediocritas* ".[94] He likewise retained always his gruff and blunt manner of speaking and never gave up his right to criticize. In the *Revolution Sociale,* for example, he lets himself go in a satire on the faults of the French nation.[95] On other occasions, as, for instance, in 1861-2, he inveighed in his letters against a foreign policy which held many temptations for his fellow-countrymen but which seemed to him to be absurd. Thus he wrote to Chaudey: " We are a scurvy and insufferable nation ",[96] or " our poor nation sinks lower every day in the most deplorable manner ";[97] and he explained to Verdeau that the disease from which the country was suffering was " a chronic one which has

[1] **To Chaudey, October 27th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 184). Cf. to X., June 22nd, 1862: " The Chauvinist blunder of our compatriots " (vol. xii, p. 130). To Gouvernet, September 7th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 175).**

[91] **Edouard Droz, *P. J. Proudhon,* p. 80.**

[93] **To Bergmann, April 9th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 15). Cf. to Michelet, March 23rd, 1856 (vol. xiv, p. 183). To Beslay, April 7th, 1860: " The worthy Belgians are hospitable enough to me . . . I am losing my nationality, well, well! Where a man finds justice, there is his fatherland " (vol. x, p. 9).**

[94] ***Con.*, post-scriptum, p. 353.**

[95] **P. 167, But he is anxious above all to vindicate France (p. 112).**

[96] **March 7th, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 12).**

[97] **February 23rd, 1862 (vol. xi, p. 366). To Buzon, January 7th, 1862: " I no longer believe in France; her r61e is finished. . . . She is the centre of all the corruptions which pollute the old world. . . . She remasticates her glory just as her men of letters palm off the ancient writers . . ." (vol. xi, p. 334). To be sure, in his dark and bitter days, Proudhon should have recalled what he himself once wrote to his friend, Charles Edmond: " You stupidly repeat that France is rotten, gangrenous, etc. Leave all that false and unwarranted physiology alone " (January 24th, 1852; vol. iv, p. 197); or again to Trouessart: " Do you then candidly believe that this nation, so full of ardour, so full of life in 1847, has suddenly and completely changed in six years.? " (August 31st, 1853; vol. v, pp. 226-7).**

its roots in the character, the original weakness and the most distant past of our race "[98] Exile and illness made him bitter. But were these " curses upon France ", as Arthur Desjardins asserts, saying that he has " some difficulty in judging this peculiar patriot" ?•• It was rather a wounded love which spoke, as in this letter to Charles Edmond, written at a time when his last illusions about the social policy of the second Empire were disappearing: "I am sad; I am sick at heart. I seem to see France entering upon an unending period of abasement, lying and ridicule. . . ,"[100]

In reality, Proudhon was an ardent patriot. That is the explanation, for example, of his attitude towards Italian unity or against the " self-styled democratic press "[101] He warned people against a certain " patriotic mood " because he saw in it " the doom of patriotism ",[102] but " when the time came " he was able to say " it is not philosophy but patriotism we need ".[103] He was quite determined not to sacrifice anything in the way of French sentiment.[104] In France he saw " the most spiritual and the most generous of the nations ".[105] He lovingly extolled the French language, " the most perfect form in which the word of man has been clothed ", the expression of a national genius which he admired and the purity of which he was anxious to safe-guard. In literature as in politics he was against " the foreigners' party ". He rose up against those who " calumniated French genius".[106] His animosity against the Romantic School was caused by the fact that, according to him, they had deserted " the true French mind " and were taking lessons from other countries.[107] He spoke of his

•• March 7th, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 18).

[99] *P. J. Proudhon, sa vie, ses oeuvres et sa doctrine*, vol. ii, pp. 38, 96.

[100] September 14th, 1855 (vol. vi, p. 251). To Penet, July 2nd, 1860: " There is one thing which irritates me and saps my strength, it is to see the decomposition which is at work in the French nation " (vol. x, p. 94). To Verdeau, March 7th, 1862, writing on the " heart-rending " state in which he sees France: " I have held out as long as I could against this deadly and disheartening thought" (vol. xii, p. 18). To Morard, March 4th, 1863: his worship of " French honour" fills him with "anguish" (vol. xii, p. 334). To Langiois, April 12th, 1862: "I do not believe in France. . . . Her genius is to embroil everything, to spoil everything she touches, to make a din and song about her empty successes " (p. 47). M. J. L. Puech has said, quite rightly *{Porn.*, p. 453, note 1): " The appreciations and the criticisms of France and of the French by Proudhon would form a curious and magnificent volume, clear-sighted and severe, contradictory on the surface, exciting and scornful."

[101] *U. I.* (1862), pp. 15-17, 53-4. *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 646-8 *(Nouvelles de la Revolution).*

[102] To Chaudey, October 27th, 1860 (vol. x, p. 187).

[103] To Darimon and Edmond, February 26th, 1850 (vol. iii, p. 141).

[104] To Beslay, February 6th, 1859 (vol. ix, p. 13).

[105] To Ackermann, October 4th, 1844 (vol. ii, p. 155).

[106] *Just.*, vol. iii, pp, 623, 624, 625.

[107] To Clerc, January 2nd, 1857 (vol. vii, pp. 194-5).

own " Gallic innards ". For him, as for the comrades of Vercingetorix, the Roman was still the invader.[108] " Our land," he said, " which never suffered except under foreign control."[109] For her, as for himself, he was excessively touchy. A letter to Pierre Leroux, in which irony gradually changes into passionate feeling, forms a striking testimony of this:

No, I do not believe in the Triad, or in the Circulus, or in Metempsychosis, any more than I believe in the resurrection of the dead or in constitutional monarchy. I am not a Theist, or a Pantheist, or an Atheist. I have neither faith, love nor hope save in Liberty and the Fatherland. That is the reason I am systematically opposed to all that seems to me hostile to Liberty, foreign to this sacred land of Gaul. I want to see my nation restored to its primitive character, freed once for all from all exotic beliefs, from all alien institutions. For long enough the Greeks, the Romans, the Barbarians, the Jews and the English have left their marks on our race. One nation gave us its religion, another its law, this one its feudal system and that its government. And as though this long invasion of foreign ideas was not enough, now you offer us, in a revival of the fables of Hindustan, the Triad, the Circulus, Metempsychosis and the castes. You do not want this poor people, the first in the world, to take up again its lost autonomy on its own initiative. You forbid them to live their own life, to speak to the world out of the abundance of their heart and their genius. . . . Ah! you do not belong to your country. You have not heard, as I have, from childhood's earliest days, the oaks in our Druidic forests weeping for the ancient fatherland. You do not feel your bones, moulded from this pure calcareous Jura rock, quiver when our Celtic heroes are recalled. . . . You have not seen liberty appearing to you, by the banks of our Alpine torrents, under the features of the Gallic Velleda. . . . You bring us the Triad, the Circulus and the Doctrine![110]

Here the " religion of the fatherland " appears so strong and, so to speak, so primitive, that we may call it genuine paganism. It is a natural extension of that love for the native soil so deeply rooted in Proudhon, as it was in Peguy. Of each of them it may be said that " he was exclusively French, an aboriginal, a rightful son of our Gaul";[111] with this difference that Proudhon's instincts were more violent; they were also less under Christian influence and his love

[108] *Melanges* (1870), vol. iii, p. 33.
[109] /. *G. R.*, fourth treatise (1851), p. 132. *M.* L., (vol. xvi, pp. 115-16, note): " Since 1830, it is no longer the French spirit which rules in France. . . . It is all these accursed influences which come from abroad, which we take for revelations of humanitarian wisdom. . . . "
[110] To pierre Leroux, December 7th, 1849 (vol. xiv, pp. 285-6).
[111] Paul Claudel,, *Charles Peguy,* in *Contacts et circonstances,* p. 219.

had something of an exclusive and savage passion. In his writings a kind of racial theory may be found, provided that the word be taken in a crude, and not in a doctrinal, sense. Even so this racial theory has a Gallic flavour, glorifying a universalist genius[112] and a land of liberty. Even so this patriotism is stirred by a breath of ideals wherein Utopian ideas are intermingled with generosity, to give it greater force:

O my land, my French land, the land of those who sing the eternal revolution ! Land of liberty, for despite all your bondages, in no place on earth, either in Europe or in America, is the mind, which is the entire man, so free as on your soil! Land that I love with all that accumulated love which a growing son has for his mother, and of which the father feels the increase with the growth of his children, shall I watch while you go on suffering for a long time yet to come, suffering not for yourself alone, but for that world which requites you with its envy and its insults, innocently suffering, and suffering all because you do not know yourself? Every moment it seems to me that you are being tried for the last time! Awaken, mother: neither your princes, nor your barons, nor your counts can do anything for your salvation, nor can your prelates comfort you with their blessings. Keep, if you like, the memory of those who have done well, go at times to pray before their monuments; but do not look for successors to them. They are finished. Begin your new life. Oh ! first among the immortals; show yourself in all your beauty, Venus Urania; scatter your perfumes, oh ! flower of humanity ![113]

It may be a contrast, but it is not a contradiction: this patriot, at times so narrow in outlook, so exclusive, placed justice above everything else.[114] He gave a fairly accurate definition of himself when he wrote to Defontaine: " A certain love of justice, helped by a lot of passion, has made me what I am."[115] Those words, dated April

[112] **Cf. *Just.*, ninth treatise, chapter viii: " Another feature in the character of French writers is their universalism " (vol. iii, p. 629). Proudhon added, correcting the exclusivism which Pierre Leroux's intellectual exoticism had aroused in him for a while: " In the learned idiom which they create as well as in the subjects with which they deal, they absorb and assimilate Latins, Greeks, Orientals, Italians and Spanish, the best of everything that civilized languages have to offer in the way of figures of speech or the turn of a phrase, thoughts and constructions. That is their special catholicity.*'**

[113] ***R. S.*, pp. 296-7.**

[114] ***U. /.*, pp. 52-3: " My patriotism has nothing absorbent or exclusive in it; my devotion to my country would never carry me so far as to sacrifice mankind's rights to it. . . . If I were forced to choose between the two I should be man enough to sacrifice my country to justice.** But, " having made that declaration, to salve his conscience *', he immediately turned upon those patriots who were too lukewarm or not sufficiently clear-sighted and who seemed to him to compromise the interests of his country.**

[115] **Vol. x, p. 350. Cf. *infra* Chap, xiv, p. 280.**

11th, 1861, re-echo, after more than twenty years, a similar declaration which we read in a letter to Bergmann:

On the one hand, the love of knowledge beguiles me and orders me to pass on to something else, making me believe that I have done enough on the question of property; on the other hand, the feeling of injustice and the ardour of my temperament draw me towards a new war, and the social question offers me such a rich subject to handle that I cannot give it up, seeing in it an occasion to make use of all the wealth of style and all the forces of eloquence.[116]

In the kind of prayer with which he ended his first work on property, he exclaimed: " O God, who placed in my heart a feeling of justice before even my reason could understand it! " On more than one occasion he declared that if justice was granted to him he would give up fighting against religion. To Huet, for instance, on December 25th, 1860, he wrote: " Let justice, our common faith, triumph, and I shall not regret to see the world cast itself down again at the foot of the crucifix; I should feel neither contempt nor bitterness."[117] We have already seen that it was because he found justice for himself in Belgium that he was able to bear his exile there. " At the happy age of chivalrous feelings " he had felt " the zeal for justice " consuming him,[118] and towards the end of his life, stirred by certain painful incidents of which echoes reached him in the newspapers, he wrote: " I am fifty-three; for me youthful enthusiasms have died down, all chivalrous generosity has gone and I feel nothing but a burning desire for merciless justice."[119] When he espied in another a passion similar to his own, he could not contain himself for joy. Thus it was with Gustave Chaudey, his counsel in the *Justice* affair. He was happy to find him entering fully into his system of defence, " fighting for revolutionary justice and human rights, rather than for the acquittal of the accused ".[120] Shortly afterwards he received from him an issue of the *Courrier du dimanche* and wrote in reply:

I have just read your last article. After reading it, I said to myself: There is a man . . . who is happier upholding Justice than he would be receiving decorations . . . the power and gold of privileges. I said to myself, my friend Chaudey has developed a taste for the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, for the apple of Liberty and the wine of sacred wrath. For him there will be no turning back; let us

»• September 30th, 1840 (vol. i, pp. 243-^).
[117] Vol. x, p. 259.
[118] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 463.
"• To Buzon, January 7th, 1862 (vol. xi, p. 334).
"• To Cretin, May 2nd, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 47). Cf. to Maurice, June 12th (p. 87).

drink to his health ! . . . Oh ! my dear fellow, you are a true revolutionary ![121]

" Faced with a society which, intoxicated by its own good fortune, wished to hear of nothing but success, progress and pleasure ",[122] Proudhon, under the second Empire, made the rumblings of the voice of justice heard just as he continued to extol the virtues of the family without yielding anything. His revolutionary vocation is explained by his passion for justice (which, it must be added, was fairly complicated) much more than by any pity he felt when confronted with the suffering of his fellows. It was not so much that love for humanity stirred him, but rather that the service of what was right claimed him. He knew that mankind " went forward only reluctantly, and always through the impetus of individuals ".[128] He did not fawn upon the people, and despised those who did. Here again Desjardins' customary malice has led him astray: "He himself came from the people and often made much of their instincts. By flattering them the road to their hearts was opened ".[m] That is not true. Proudhon spoke many times about the people without any illusion. He told them bluntly the truth about themselves, and that not only in his intimate letters, but also in his public writings. In *La Philosophie de la Misere,* for instance, he declared that " the will makes man a tyrant or a slave before wealth does; the proletarian's heart is the same as the rich man's, a sink of boiling sensuality, a centre of lewdness and trickery". He also said that "the man who lives in distress . . . shares his master's corruption ", and " the greatest obstacle equality has to overcome lies not in the aristocratic pride of the rich man, but in the intractable egoism of the poor".[125] In the *Revolution Sociale* he protested in these words against demagogy:

It is time we saw the disappearance of the school of false revolutionaries who, relying more upon agitation than upon intelligence and upon attacks rather than upon ideas, think themselves to be all the stronger and more logical because they flatter themselves that they represent the bottom layers of the common people. Do you think

[121] **Vol. x, p. 52. To the same, May 10th, 1862: " Ah ! How rare are men of ideas and conscience ! I would willingly walk two leagues every day to see one ! " (vol. xi, p. 63). And on May 5th, 1862: " Your article on the Mires case is the best of your life. While I was reading it a breath of justice and honesty passed over my face which made my hair stand up, as it wouldon a man receiving an electric shock " (vol. xii, p. 63). This same Chaudey died as a victim of the Commune in 1871.**

[122] **Georges Sorel, *Les illusions du progrts,* p. 261.**

[188] **Note-books, 1846.**

[124] **Vol. i, p. xiv. Nevertheless a qualm of conscience made Desjardins add: " It was not that Proudhon invariably flattered the common people'* (p. xv).**

[126] ***P. M.,* vol. i, pp. 356, 359.**

it is to please such barbarians as these, such triflers, and not rather to fight them and make them better, that we are Republicans, Socialists and Democrats? Flatterers of the mob, you are obstructing the revolution !

The same thoughts and the same frankness occur again in *Justice,* If he defends the " working people ", they should know that it is *' for the family spirit first of all, but especially for justice' sake " and that he has " never unduly praised their virtues". " They are not very advanced in their education. You find in them stupidity, ingratitude, violence, everything that you can imagine that is most reckless."[126] Finally in *Capacity politique* there is " a whole portion" given up " to anger against the people ",[127]

Proudhon then was very remote from the sentimental love and the " cult of the people ", which won the devotion of some of his friends, companions in the struggle and co-exiles. He begged them to rid themselves of this " false religion ". No doubt he had no desire that the people should be despised, but neither did he want them to be enthroned: they were savages and had to be civilized. " I will hit out at the people, I warn you, until I have smashed into fragments this alleged dogma of their sovereignty."[128] He denounced not only [44] the democratic Utopia formulated by Rousseau in his ideal", but also " the illusion of Montesquieu and *tutti quant I* about the people's good behaviour, their good instincts and their happy choices ".[129] According to him, the proletariat was like slavery: " it is an evil I want to destroy, not a God to whom I offer incense ".[130]

But, my dear fellow, you should know that the most backward thing, the most behind the times in every country, is the mob,

[188] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 102; vol. iv, p. 474: " Nero—a horrible thing, which a democrat should never forget—Nero is the idol of the people."**

[187] **Maxime Leroy, *Capacity politique,* p. 23. Nevertheless, round about 1847-8 Proudhon passed through a phase of less reticent enthusiasm. In May, 1847, he wrote in his Note-book: " The people are better judges than all the critics. The people, with their practical instinct, are never mistaken save when they reason. . . . The people are chaste, moderate, serious. . . . A writer's rule is to find out what the people fare thinking and to express it in his own language." See also *S. Q. S.,* chapter i, *La revolution en* 1848. It is true that in the next chapter Proudhon made a distinction between the people and the mob, and confessed that the people were " almost reasonable beings ".**

[188] **To Madier-Montjau, December 11th, 1852 (vol. v, p. 111). To the same, January 1st, 1853 (p. 139). *La Guerre et la Paix,* p. 19: "I do not want a plebeian Hercules any more than I want a governmental Hercules."**

[189] **To Boutteville, October 8th, 1852 (vol. v, p. 57). " Whenever the masses have done anything that is tolerably good," he added, " they have always been driven or pulled, openly or secretly, by master minds formed from among themselves, and every time the people have been left to themselves they have been able only to . . . make society take a backward step " (pp. 57-8).**

[180] **To Beslay, October 25th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 247).**

For him that was the real meaning, the only one that could be accepted, of the word democracy,[139]

Towards the close of his life, six months after he had returned to Paris, it was rumoured that he was working for the police. A violent indignation drew from him then this protest:

If only I had the brain I had when I was thirty ! If only I could make the sparks fly, as I did at thirty, and answer them all at once ! But I am really ill. I can neither think nor write; I have to be content to clench my fist in my pocket and choke down the swear-words I want to use. You cowardly and witless human beings! Riff-raff, senseless fools ! Oh ! If I had in mind nothing but the deliverance of this vile mob, I should be foremost among those who take advantage of them. But there are *rights*, there is liberty, there is human dignity, there is the inviolability of our person, of our minds and of our consciences; that is why I steel myself, and, have no fear, I shall **not** let go.[140]

The man was steadfast and neither disillusions nor annoyances could make him bend. Here we find again, towering above a fit of melancholy, the principle which he had laid down eleven years previously: " Liberty and morality must be served for their own sakes ".[U1] It was loyalty to this principle which kept him always both from being led astray by demagogic wiles and from slavishness to power. He was constantly ready, as he himself quaintly said, " to rub garlic into the nose of any prejudice '\[142] This, it must be added, was much less an acquired attitude on his part than a natural aptitude. Already, in 1848, he had not concealed his disapproval of the Socialist tendencies momentarily triumphant, but in the reaction after the bloody days of June he did not deny that he was inclined towards the people, and he refused to " insult the dying lion ". " I have always had," he concluded after recalling these memories, " and for all eternity I shall have, the powers against me." [143] He may have been mistaken, and at times grievously mistaken; he may have allowed himself to be carried away by passion;

[m] March 4th, 1862 (vol. xii, pp. 6-7). *R. S.*, p. 152. It is worth noting that in his judgement of the people there is no hide-bound pessimism. He wrote in his Note-book on October 8th, 1852: " We assert that the education of the people is possible," and he never gave up the idea.

[140] To Buzon, June 1st, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 91).

[141] To Madier-Montjau, December 11th, J852 (vol. v, p. 111).

[142] Speaking about his book on the *Revolution Sociale*, which was a success, he wrote to Beslay, July 29th, 1852: " Today my book is lauded. In six months' time, if I should happen to rub garlic into the nose of a prejudice, I should again be left in the lurch " (vol. iv, p. 300) (garlic irritates a nose thus treated, the sense therefore is " to run counter to a prejudice ").

[143] *Con.*, p. 185. '

he may have been wrong in thinking that he was serving Justice, but at least it was this spirit which made of him, in the noblest sense of the word, an independent man.

With all his defects and his miseries he was a fine type of man. He shows himself through the pages of his books, but he was much better than his books. Neither his aberrations nor his fits of anger could effect any serious alteration in that nobility of soul, of which his life is full of examples. It was not only for the needs of his friends or men from his own part of France that he provided, as occasion arose; the help he gave the artist Courbet is an example (this was the origin of his very curious book, *Le Principe de l'Art).* An opponent of Pierre Leroux, he yet took it upon himself to make a collection for him when he knew that Pierre was poverty-stricken in his old age.[144] Though he was opposed to the government of Napoleon III which had condemned him to exile and which, through its courts, treated him as though he was a criminal in public law, he yet wrote to Beslay, on April 15th, 1861: " Between ourselves I confess that when I see the Imperial government led astray so dreadfully and France a victim, I have not the courage to kick the sufferer. Others can carry out that sorry task. By nature I fight against the strong; I do not crush the weak."[145] There is a lesson in that for all ages, but especially for our own !

With men against whose ideas he waged war he was sometimes violent and frequently scoffed at them. Nevertheless he knew how to speak to them as a man and not as a bigot. This letter of December 10th, 1863, is an example:

My dear M. Jottrand, I number you among the opponents I like.... If anything in this world could make me eclectic, or even doctrinaire, if not quite indifferent in matters of politics, economics, religion, etc., it would be that eminent respectability, which because it forces me to esteem my adversaries always ends in making me despise somewhat my most intimate convictions.[146]

Or again this declaration to La Chatre, in August, 1856:

You see how it is possible for two men to conceive an esteem and a liking for each other without agreeing for all that on their principles, which are nevertheless the same in their hearts. But they do not work them out in the same way, that is where they differ.[147]

[144] **To Defontaine, September 29th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 149-50). Cf. to Boutteville, March 11th, 1859 (vol. ix, p. 29). Among instances of this kind: to Mathey, February 8th, 1864 (vol. xiii, p. 234).**

[145] **Vol. xi, p. 9.**

[146] **Vol. xiii, p. 182. Or to Girardin, February 29th, 1863 (vol. xii, p. 323).**

[147] **Vol. vii, p. 113.**

It will be seen that he had every right to request " that the hardness of (his) heart should not be judged by the inflexibility of (his) reason ". We find no difficulty in believing him when he adds: " My sentiments, I venture to say, have always been what friend or foe would desire them to be." We can only regret that his reason was not always as reasonable as he believed it to be, and that his profound sentiments did not always prevail over others, even outwardly, in his writings. As for the writings themselves, we agree with him that " however gloomy they may appear to be, they were after all only the expression of my sympathy with all that is human and everything that comes from man ".

This human sympathy, which blended very well in him with the severity of the moralist and of the disillusioned observer, flourished frequently in friendship. Had it been really necessary, he would have been saved from misanthropy by his devoted attachment to friendship, which remained very much alive in him until the very end. " I believe only in study and friendship,"[148] he once asserted, and on another occasion: " I am sick and tired of publicity; what I need are the bracing joys of close friendship."[149] He had numerous friends, some of them very faithful, and he made new ones—which is an unusual thing—at all stages in his life. " The characteristic of friendship," he said late in life, " with those who take it seriously to heart is that the more it spreads the deeper it penetrates."[150] Among the friends of his first youth in Besancon were his college friend and future employer, Antoine Gauthier; Gustave Fallot who had discerned his genius and whose premature death he deplored ;[151] Haag, Guillaumin, Tourneux, " that excellent Dessirier, whose heart is perfect", though " his mind is not sufficiently well-informed",[152] who zealously took care, of his first publications and visited himin prison; Micaud, with whom he had serious differences of opinion though these did not part them; his future associate Maurice; Maguet, the doctor with whom he kept up a long correspondence and who received his last letter. There were also Ackermann, an Alsacian Calvinist, with whom he loved to discuss his philosophic thought; and above all Bergmann, who soon afterwards became Professor of Comparative Literature at Strasburg. It was to these, and to a few others as well, that he addressed these words which he managed to bring into his first work on property: " Kindness degenerates into tyranny, admiration into servility; friendship is the daughter

[148] **To Edmond, December 19th, 1851 (vol. iii, p. 150).**
[149] **To Milliet, November 2nd, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 223).**
[150] **To Suchet, June 27th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 131).**
[151] **Cf. the letter full of memories sent to Weiss in 1836 (vol. i, pp. 17-23).**
[152] **To Bergmann, December 22nd, 1839 (vol. i, p. 173).**

of equality. O my friends, let me live among you without rivalry and without glory; let equality bring us together and let fate decide our places. May I die before I find out which of you I should most esteem."[163]

They were healthy and strong friendships, proof against everything, delicate friendships which never lost their first freshness. Sometimes remarks, spontaneously uttered, revealed them for what they were, such as this ending in a letter to Suchet on October 3rd, 1854: " I clasp both your hands, and when I am writing to you I believe it is a song of my soul in my innermost heart."[154] To Bourges he wrote, on April 15th, 1861, that soon both of them would be together again " with a certain aroma of old friendship of which, in 1858, we were not yet aware".[165] Once, recalling the time when he was suffering from cholera (1854), he said: "When the pain held me prostrate on my pallet I used to say to my friends who were looking after me, hold my hand in both of yours, that gives me back life, that makes my body better through friendship. "[156] Again, in 1861, he told Beslay, " there are a score of men in the world whose regard is dearer to me than life itself; for those men I would burn myself in the fire. . . . "[157] And what candour, what unreserved confidence, and at times what sincere humility can be seen in his numerous letters to Bergmann ! Of all the friends Bergmann was undoubtedly the most intimate, the one upon whom he could rely even more than upon himself, the one whom he venerated and whose regard meant more to him than anything else, but also the one before whom he could not put on any airs. He was " the friend for all time ". On every serious occasion Proudhon consulted him, told him his faults, gave him an unvarnished description of himself, and thought and evoked his memories in Bergmann's presence as though he was alone by himself.[158] Bergmann was not only his

[188] ***Prop.*, p. 311. He wrote to Ackermann on October 4th, 1844. " Of all the members of our former little circle, I am the only one to have kept up the philadelphic bond. It is through me that all our friends have news of one another . . . " (vol. ii, p. 158).**

[154] **Vol. vi, p. 76. And on September 22nd, 1853, he reminded him of " those splendid days of touching friendship which we spent together in the shadow of St. Louis' palace . . . " (vol. v, p. 254).**

[155] **Vol. xi, p. 14. See also the beautiful letter of apology which he sent to him on November 27th, 1857, after an angry scene (vol. x, p. 361).**

[158] **To Suchet, October 3rd, 1854 (vol. vi, p. 75)..**

[157] **April 15th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 9).**

[158] **He once wrote to him, on October 22nd, 1846: "I have a dozen friends (that's a lot for one man) whom I never forget in good days or bad. They form an essential part of my existence and I think of them first of all in anything I undertake and whatever happens to me; you are always the first on the list" (vol. ii, p. 222). Especially worthy of notice are the letters of March 5th and April 9th, 1854, after a silence of seven years (vol. vi, pp. 5-10, 14-18).**

confidant; in a way he was his conscience. " After Gustave Fallot," he wrote, " you have been the man whose judgement and opinion have had the most authority in my eyes, and whom in my heart I have always been most afraid of displeasing. "[159]

More often than not his friendly relations were founded on mutual esteem, ideas and memories in common and family connexions, without any great depth of intimacy. He was anxious to retain all his independence, which showed itself from time to time in his reproofs. When need arose he could treat those he liked roughly if they seemed to him to be at fault in any way.[180] He showed a certain delicacy of feeling in dealing with them as, for instance, when he insisted upon paying for some wine which one of them had sent to him.[161] If,.however, an opportunity presented itself, a bereavement or a misfortune, his great heart opened wide and he was no longer self-conscious. We see this in the letter to Herzen, who wrote for *Le Peuple* with him and who had just lost his mother and his son in a travelling accident. The letter was sent from Sainte-Pelagie on November 27th, 1851.

I am a father like yourself, my dear Herzen, and soon I shall be a father a second time. It is my wife herself who feeds her children at the breast and brings them up before my eyes. I understand what this fatherhood of second by second is, a fatherhood which seems to be increased by a continual discharge of the heart. I feel already, at the end of two years, how strong are the fetters which chain our whole being, as though we were slaves, to these little creatures who appear to sum up in themselves the beginning, the end, the whole reason of our existence ! You can judge then whether I have felt for you in your appalling calamity . . .

Herzen, Bakunin, Edmond, I love you ! You are all there, beneath this breast which for so many others seems to be made of marble !.. .[162]

Among Proudhon's friends, some were Catholics. Generally speaking, they were not among the most intimate (and when one is aware of his anti-clericalism that is not surprising), and they do not appear to have kept up a very close correspondence with him. Nevertheless a tone of affection characterized his relations with several of them. To one of them, Penet, Proudhon once sent a charming letter, reproaching him in a friendly fashion for having doubted Proudhon's faithfulness

"•January 2nd, 1857 (vol. vii, p. 193).

1.0 For example, to Madier-Montjau, January 1st, 1853 (vol. v, pp. 138-47); to Maurice, April 1st, 1859 (vol. ix, pp. 55-9).

1.1 To Ballanche, August 24th, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 121). Here we might point out that Proudhon's skill in letter-writing is seen at its best in letters of thanks, e.g. for a partridge, pie (vol. iii, p. 41), or again for a gift of wine (vol. x, pp. 161-2). As regards wine, he liked it and was a connoisseur, but was a sober man.

162 Cf. Raoul Labry, *Herzen et Proudhon,* p. 123.

because the latter had been so long answering him.[163] It were better perhaps to close this chapter with a quotation from the beautiful letter in which he consoles and exhorts Penet with a great nobility of soul. Penet, who was growing old and suffered from bodily infirmities, found himself condemned to inaction and gave way to querulous melancholy. Proudhon wrote to him, on December 31st, 1863:

Now is the moment, however little you may be able to understand it, for you to live the real life of a man, and here you are, speaking like a man summing up his last wishes and writing his will. Are you then one of those folk for whom man's existence has but one end, production, acquisition and pleasure? It is none of these. We must work because such is our law, because it is only on that condition that we learn, strengthen, bring under control and assure our own existence and the existence of our people. But that is not our end; I am not speaking of a transcendent, a religious or a supernatural end, I mean even an earthly end, our present and quite human end. To be a man, to rise above the misadventures of life here below, to reproduce in ourselves the divine image, as the Bible says, in short, to bring about the reign of the spirit on earth: that is our end. Now it is neither in youth nor even in manhood, it is not by great works of production nor by business struggles that we can attain it, but only, I say it again, in complete maturity, when the passions begin to die down and the soul becomes more and more untrammelled and spreads its wings towards the infinite.

What a strange moral standard yours is ! Having earned your comfort and your rest, you say: " I am no longer good for anything, I am finished." It is shameful! I tell you that you are only beginning, and, if you are able to understand your duty, that your real r61e, an absolutely spiritual and moral role, begins from this moment. . . . I am preaching to you, my dear fellow, but you force me to do it. With your choice conscience and first-rate intelligence I blame you for keeping yourself below your own level and for burying yourself in a kind of softness. Bear this in mind then, that when I speak to you of your final role, of your higher destiny, of your end where mankind is concerned, I am not only speaking from the point of view of your individual perfection, but that I have above all in mind the improvement of our whole race. Better than any other, you know how hard-headed and hard-hearted that race is; do you think then that is an excuse for your faltering? No, no; you must help this depraved and wretched human race as you do your own children; you must tell yourself that your glory and your happiness lie *in* putting down the wicked, encouraging the good and making everybody better. That is the law of the Gospel as well as the law of philosophy, and you bear the responsibility of it here before Christ and before all men.[164]

[163] To Penet, July 2nd, 1860 (vol. x, pp. 90-5).
[164] Vol. xiii, pp. 217-18.

Rarely has the desire to console inspired finer speech. When we read a page such as this we can forget the whole context which explains it; we can forget all the particular characteristics which set the writer apart, the harsh struggles he went through, even the century in which he lived. We can see that this great worker was not an " activist", an advocate of militant politics, that this " Socialist" did not limit his efforts to the social surface. He himself invites us to follow him beyond the zone in which his ideas and his work might lend themselves to so many criticisms. With him, when he has fully discovered himself, we are in the kingdom of the spirit. We are among the most real of all temporal things because we are already in a region of eternity.

PART TWO

THE ANTI-CLERICAL AND THE THEOLOGIAN

CHAPTER IV

PROUDHON THE ANTI-CLERICAL

IN 1832 Pierre Joseph Proudhon was twenty-three years old. He was working at Arbois as a printer. One evening he wrote in his Notebook:

Clerical inf. (influence) Delenda Carthago.[1]

incompatible with -i [

[human dignity economics civil liberty

He was therefore anti-clerical very early on. Despite a few hesitations during his youth, he remained so until the end, and his public declarations as well as the outbursts in his letters show that his anti-clericalism was of an ardent, and even virulent, kind.

Like many men of his century, he thought that the days of the Church were over and that Christianity was for ever doomed. Some indications to the contrary had no effect upon him. " I heard Mass on Easter Day at St. Eustache," he wrote on April 12th, 1839, to his friend Maurice; "the priests and the Carlists will tell you that France is returning to the faith. Lies! Indifference takes people to church, just as formerly a spirit of opposition kept them out."[2] He gave the same assurance in letters to Bergmann in 1842[3] and in 1844,[4] and to Darimon in 1850.[5] It could be seen already in his *Creation de l'Ordre* in 1843; believers argue from the fact that religion is universal, but that is a " grave mistake; religion, which is the first form of human thought, a kind of preparation for knowledge, has a tendency, not to live, but to die. In order to appreciate its transitory nature, we must consider not the universality of its existence, but the universality

[1] The same slogan appears again in 1852, concerning the " priestly party ", *Correspondance,* vol. v, p. 9. (To Darimon, September 3rd.)

[2] Vol. i, p. 121.

[3] May 9th, 1842: "Our archbishops are enjoying their repose. They do not know that it is too soon yet for the ignorant people to make an end of the Church. . . . But a man will be found, for religion as for property, to give it the final blow " (vol. ii, p. 36).

[4] October 21st, 1844 (vol. ii, p. 169).

[5] August 21st, 1850: " You can tell Cheve\ from us all, that it is too late to take up the defence of Catholicism; that the Revolution, Socialism and the democratic conscience have condemned it irrevocably, and that in future we shall have but one feeling towards it, the one Voltaire expressed in two words: *EcrasonsVinfdme!* (Let us crush the Beast!)" (vol. iii, p. 337).

of its decay ".[6] The same assurance was naively flaunted in a page of the *Idee gene'rale de la Revolution,* written during his imprisonment in 1851:

Catholicism must be resigned to this fact: the supreme work of the Revolution, in the nineteenth century, is to eradicate it.

I do not say this from a spirit of incredulity or out of spite: I was never a free-thinker and I do not hate anybody. I am expressing a simple conclusion, I would even say, since the subject justifies me, a prediction; everything conspires against the priest, even M. Foucault's pendulum.[7] Unless the reaction can succeed in restoring society from top to bottom, in its body, its soul, its ideas, its interests, its tendencies, *Christianity has not twenty-five years to live.* Possibly not half a century will have passed before the priest is prosecuted as a crook, for exercising his ministry.[8]

In the same year he wrote to Weiss: " Inside another ten years, perhaps, there will not be a single priest left in France to administer the holy oils to the religious-minded. . . ."[9] But we should not smile too quickly. Was Proudhon any more naive than M. Dubois, Inspector General of the University, who, shortly before, had foreseen within a very little while " the obsequies of a great creed " ?[10] Or more than Cuvillier-Fleury, who in the *De'bats* of 1835 put forth his opinion, that Christianity had just breathed its last? Or more than Balzac in the days when he published his two novels, *Jesus Christ en Flandre* and L'*Eglise,* as well as his *Traitd de la vie elegante* ?[11] At all events he was less naive than Auguste Comte, from whose pen came similar statements in much greater numbers and more firmly supported, without ever giving any one an inkling that he was being carried away by catch-phrases; neither did he offer others an opportunity to correct

[e] **C. *O.H.,p.* 65.**

[7] **L6on Foucault (1819-68), French physicist, born in Paris, demonstrated the rotation movement of the earth by means of a pendulum.—*Translator.***

***ld6e ginirale de la Revolution* (1851), pp. 287-8. And shortly afterwards in the *R.* 5., p. 189: " No. There is no longer any priesthood; there is no longer any faith. Christianity now clings only to that phosphorescent instinct—the continuous extinction of which I have pointed out to you since the days of Voltaire —which is maintained, under pretext of art' by a sensualist literature. . . . " Again to Cretin, on August 26th, 1852: " I told old Weiss, and I shall repeat it in the *Presse:* let the devout souls take their passports in advance, because before possibly ten years are out there will not be a single priest left in France to administer the holy oils to them! " (vol. iv, p. 324).**

•August 28th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 92). Cf. to Cretin, August 26th, 1852 (vol. iv, p. 324).

[10] **L'*Ami de la Religion,* August 4th, 1831.**

[11] **Cf. Bertault, *Balzac et la religion,* pp. 187, 197. Balzac depicted the Church as a toothless old woman, covered in mud, tumbled into a stream. " ' That's as round as a priest's skull-cap \ said a passer-by. * Yes, it's black and empty. It was a ruling religion with a remnant of life still in it.' "**

him from his own works.[12] Proudhon, on the other hand, almost at the very time he was writing the passages we have quoted, was also saying: " Catholicism is the oldest organic element, and still the most powerful in modern societies; being the oldest and the most powerful, it cannot be revolutionized except as the very last."[13]

He was not satisfied, however, with foreseeing this " revolutionary movement": he demanded it, he wanted to hasten it. No doubt, he meant to be respectful to religion. It was against the Church he railed: "To restore religion, gentlemen, you must condemn the Church."[14] The Christianity of the theologians, and not that of the Gospel, was his target. " As regards religion, most certainly not one single line of mine will be printed which does not aim at destroying Christianity such as the theologians have made it."[15] He wanted, so he claimed, " to resurrect and defend the old Christianity against the satellites of the new ".[16] If at times he became blasphemous in tone,[17] it was only on rare occasions and under the passing influence of writers such as Diderot, and nothing hurt him more than to be taken for one of the low-down anti-clericals. His judgements on the Church of his day are none the less, generally speaking, unkind satires. In the *Creation de l'ordre,* for instance, he wrote: " The habit of obeying and believing produces in the priest a remarkable sluggishness of his faculties and a great timidity of mind."[18] Or, in *Justice:* "While religion is dying out for the people, for the rich it is becoming, like music and the fashions, an adornment of their existence, I would almost say a luxury article. What can be the cause of this swing round? Is it Voltaire's fault? Is it Rousseau's fault? Or is it not the fault of the Church ? "[19] There were some, like Trouessart, author of a small work on St. Bartholomew's Day, who wanted to lay all the blame on the Pope: those were false tactics, " a garbled version ";

[12] **Cf. *Le drame de Vhumanisme athie,* second part.**
[18] ***Con.*, p. 134.**
"*Prop.,?*. 122.
[16] **To Muiron (vol. i, p. 14). Cf. *Je'sus.***
[18] **To Edmond, April 5th, 1855 (vol. vi, p. 146).**
" In his letter to Mathey, for instance, February 13th, 1853: " I am working without respite to bring out my philosophic work. I have never done anything but skirmish with Catholicism, leaving aside theology and confining myself to attacks upon the Church. This time I am going to put all my heart into it. I give you my word beforehand that the like of this blow has never been given, in the French tongue, to our holy Mother the Church, to Ma4ame Gossip, as well as to Mr. Being, as Diderot put it. And this will be printed, this will run through France. I am going to take good care of it, and theology will have to unsheathe its sword once for all, instead of calumniating and burning. Yes, there must be a judicial inquiry into Catholicism's case in full view of the nations " (vol. v, p. 182).
[18] **C. O. *H.,t* p. 376.**
[19] **just ., vol. ii, pp. 330-1.**

papal intolerance is but the expression of " the real foundation of Catholicism ", and it is that foundation itself which must be attacked.[20]

Among the clergy the Jesuits were a special target. Proudhon wrote to Bergmann, on May 24th, 1844: "The Jesuits distress us and I foresee that we shall have to begin Voltaire's and Rousseau's fight all over again. You can rely upon me for that."[21] A letter to Guillemin, of November 10th, 1852, speaks of the " infernal genius of the Jesuits ", in the style of Michelet or Quinet.[22] The *Revolution Sociale* shows them as " sworn enemies of reason, falsifiers of history, partisans of bad morals, on religious principles ".[23] In *Justice* it seems that Proudhon is endeavouring at first to be a little fairer. He is ready to lay the blame on Pascal, the Gallicans, the Dominicans in China, the kings and the Popes who were severe on the Jesuits. The Jesuits " have understood the Christian system better than anybody ", and they must themselves be understood before judgement is passed on them: " Forced to give way to the needs of the time and the drift of the human mind, they manoeuvred as best they could."[24] Nevertheless in the final reckoning they had come down to "justifying theft, lewdness, assassination, perjury ", to taking intention as the only criterion of good and evil and thus justifying the means by the end.[25] They were the " pretorians " of the " new Babylon ". *Justice* also has a description of the Society of Jesus, in keeping with the best stereotypes of the period :

We can forget the individuals, all more or less unconscious of the guiding thought: we need see only the body in the culminating peaks of its history. What is the aim of the Society of Jesus ? The reduction of mankind to slavery, by a combination of ignorance, superstition, force and corruption of the heart. . . .

Does the Society of Jesus believe in the truth of Christianity? What does that matter to the Society when all is said and done? Every religion is good which fulfils the end laid down. To master

[80] **To Trouessart, August 31st, 1853 (vol. v, p. 225).**

[81] **Vol. ii, p. 127.**

[88] *** The Jesuits rule, are masters everywhere. . . . In Paris, everything which displeases the Jesuits is annulled, revoked, etc." (vol. v, pp. 86, 87).**

[88] ***R.* 5., p. 178. In *Con.* the enemies of Christ are called " Jerusalem Jesuits " (p. 203, note).**

"*Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 222-5. Cf. *Con.*, pp. 309-10: "The Society of Jesus was founded to bring kings and peoples back to papal authority, by means of sermons and instructions, and to reconcile, as far as possible, the progress and needs of the world with the sacred and indefectible rights of the vicar of Jesus Christ."

[86] ***Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 222-5. Besides, in this the Jesuits were only being more logical in their application of the system common to all sects based " upon a principle and end other than Right" because they were unable to rise to ** a rational knowledge of Justice ".**

conscience and reason, to make the will submissive, to take possession of man—all religious truth consists in that. Christianity or paganism, it is just a matter of time and place. The Jesuits behave accordingly: they are ready for all sorts of dealings, it is only where the end is concerned that they never vary. Through them the faith in Christ has continually shrunk; it changes into Lamaism, into idolatry. . . .[26]

Proudhon, however, was not content with these speculative judgements. He professed a militant anti-clericalism which he was not afraid to translate into action. In his first attempts as a young exegete he had taken a malicious pleasure in interpreting the *Miserere,* the psalm which serves today as "an expression of repentance and a hymn of penance", the psalm he had been made to sing with the other students during the Jubilee procession in 1826, as "a masterpiece of artfulness and hypocrisy" and "the greatest mockery of history",[27] At the end of 1842 Pere de Ravignan had just preached the Advent sermons in the cathedral,[28] and it was announced that Pere Lacordaire would preach during Lent. Proudhon wrote:

If our archbishop ventures to bring him here, I will give the people of Besangon a new entertainment. I propose each week to publish, together with a report of the sermons, a concise and unanswerable criticism of the whole Christian system, and we shall see who will be left high and dry, the preacher or the reasoner. I have some excellent material ready, and without offending religion or the coterie, I hope to turn out some delightful pamphlets.[29]

From 1847 onwards he was a Freemason. Not very fervent, to tell the truth, and, from the date of his entry into the Besancon Lodge, "Sincerity, Perfect Union and Constant Friendship", he figured somewhat as a heretic.[30] He gave a very free interpretation of the signs of the craft and never took office. During his exile, when he was invited by some Belgian friends to visit the Namur Lodge, he put his chequered life forward beforehand as an apology for not having got'beyond the degree of apprentice, and his comrade in exile,

[26] *Just.,* vol. ii, pp. 444-5.
"The *Miserere, in fine {Works,* vol. ii, 1876, p. 306).
"To Bergmann, December 30th, 1842: "We have had Abbe de Ravignan, a talker, for the whole month. . . . You know that the preachers are running round France and are preparing the Lord's vineyard for the Orleans dynasty. All the fashionable world, the leisured class, the Bench, followed the sermons. . . . Only the people were missing. I went five or six times" (vol. ii, p. 70).
"Ibid.,p.71.
[80] For this initiation and Proudhon's speeches, see *Just,,* vol. iii, pp. 63-4.

Madier-Montjau, was obliged to coach him in details so that he would not behave " too much like an uninitiated ".[81]

He did not accept, then, the yoke of freemasonry any more than he did any other yoke. It was against the Church, however, that he kept up in himself and in those around him a fighting spirit. During a visit to Morny after the coup d'etat of December 2nd, he said to the Minister: " Let me wage war against Catholicism and I will forgive you one third of your coup d'etat."[32] When he feared that his friends were weakening he reprimanded them.[33] His marriage and the birth of his children were all so many means for demonstrating his hostility by his actions. He once explained this to Tissot, the philosopher who translated Kant and whose feelings, he knew, corresponded with his own:

When I got married I began that earnest warfare which I intend to carry on against the clergy; I made my wife promise that we woujd not go to the church; my daughter has not been baptized; the second child will be handled in the same way; and if I live, I flatter myself that I shall give them principles so that they will have nothing to fear from any distorted wiles.[34]

There were days when he seemed to be haunted by a fear lest " in her days of triumph " the Church should legally impose the practice of religion. " On that day," he declared, " my last hour will have sounded. Defenders of the family, I would then show you what a father of a family is ! I am afraid of nothing for myself, neither prison nor the galley-oars would drag an act of worship from me. But I forbid the priest to lay a hand upon my children; if he does, I will kill the priest."[35]

It can be seen how heated he became over his own fancies. Even when he was cool-headed, the Church's reconquests were painful to him. In Brussels he became interested in the activities of " two societies for the suppression of religious services at funerals ", the *Society d'affranchissement* and the *Socitti des solidaires.*™ He was anxious to

[31] To Madier-Montjau, June 22nd, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 125). After his visit, he wrote to the Belgian, Felix Delhasse, on August 8th: " You know that I have been to visit the masonic brethren at Namur; they received me cordially, simply, just as I wished. There is an excellent man there, the Master, M. Alphonse Gerard, to whom we are indebted for very reputable and very felicitous propaganda. An excellent old man, simple, but full of incomparable dignity and kindness" (vol. xi, p. 160).

[32] Note-books, December 28th, 1851. Cf. to Edmond, January 1st, 1852 (vol. iv, pp. 174-5). To Chaudey, December 30th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 338).

[33] To Darimon, September 24th, 1850 (vol. iii, pp. 359-60).

[34] To Tissot, October 28th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 124).

••R.S. 5., p. 201.

****Just,* notes and explanations (vol. ii, p. 458): "Burial outside the Church is the symbol of the social resurrection/***

rob the priests of the last moments of dying people who had lived without their help.[37] He had an old cousin, named Proudhon the same as himself, who had been ordained priest towards the end of the old regime and who had apostatized during the Revolution. He grew anxious about him when he heard that he was ill. " I can already see," he wrote to Truche on September 2nd, 1855, " the priestly rabble besieging him, tormenting him, exhorting him on his deathbed. How horrible ! "[38] The old man died, reconciled to the Church, in 1860, at the age of ninety-three. Proudhon demanded all the details of his death. These annoyed him and he tried to get over it by reminding himself how very old the deceased was; a conversion *in extremis* such as that could be explained by " senile decay ".[39]

What were the reasons for such anti-clericalism in him ? They were a mixture, general reasons and personal reasons, intimate experiences and tilings he had observed in his own world. Here, as everywhere else, Proudhon's reflections were a reaction against his own day; and he was passionate in his thinking.

First of all we must make an allowance for his natural inclinations which account for his failure to recognize the true meaning of many things in religious matters. There can be no doubt that it was with sincerity that he wrote, in his letter applying for the Suard Award: " I was conscious of God, my soul was filled with Him; this great idea had gripped me from my childhood's days, it overflowed in me and dominated all my faculties ",[40] and, alluding to the time when he ceased to believe, he said that he had " known a laceration of conscience when it passed from the state of religious belief to that of philosophic justice ".[41] All things considered, however, there was very little of the mystic in his temperament, as he himself admitted. Cares of a social order were predominant in him and often stifled real religious feelings. So he saw and enlarged upon the abuses, the childishness, the shortcomings, which, as a matter of fact, are never lacking in the life of so great an institution as the Church; he was less able to appreciate the spiritual reality, the presence of which was all the same ensured, as well as it could be, by means oft-times indifferent. That is why so many of his judgements seem to show a vulgar bias. There was also in him a kind of instinctive paganism, stronger than in other characters. His rustic childhood developed him too quickly, and he thought he could

[87] **To Delhasse, August 8th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 165).**
[88] **Vol. vi, p. 238. Cf. to Maurice, January 18th, 1854 (vol. v, p. 322); January 3rd, 1855 (vol. vi, p. 103).**
[89] **To Gouvernet, June, 13th, 1860. To Maurice, July 4th (vol. x, pp. 71-2, 96).**
[40] ***Suard Award,* p. 10.**
[41] **To Tilloy, September 22nd, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 134). Cf. *infra,* p. 290.**

discern a contrast between *' the real life suggested by Nature " and " the artificial education given by religion ". At the end of the long passage in which he gives such a lively description of that childhood, he added these reflections:

When I remember that that word pagan, *paganus*, means peasant, and that paganism, the peasantry, ii* other words, the worship of the pastoral divinities, rural pantheism, is the last name under which Christianity condemned Nature at the same time as mankind, I wonder whether, by dint of taking the opposite view to fallen religions, the Church has not reached a point where she takes the opposite view to common sense and good morals; whether her spirituality is anything other than the spontaneous combustion of souls; whether Christ, who was to redeem us, does not happen rather to have sold us; whether the self-styled thrice holy God is not, on the contrary, the God thrice tainted; whether while you cry out to us: lift up your head, *sursum*, look up to heaven, you are not doing precisely all that is needed to cast us, head downwards, into the pit.[42]

His early education was not very Christian. " At home we practised with lukewarmness."[43] Once when family prayers were being said quite by chance—it was during the holidays, with some cousins of the pious branch of the family—one of those present made a joke; nothing more than that was needed to upset him to such an extent that never afterwards was he able to say his prayers quite simply and sincerely.[44] The reading of some theological books at an early age developed his doubts. He discovered atheism, for instance, when he read F£nelon's *Traits de existence de Dieu* (Treatise on the Existence of God), which he had received as a prize on leaving the third form in upper school,[45] and Lamennais' work, *De Vindifference en matiere de religion* (Indifference in Religious Matters), gave the final blow to the very much tottering structure of his beliefs.[46] The majority of the doctrinal and devotional books of which he corrected the proofs in the years after he had left college were not such as to give him a very high or a very accurate idea of Catholicism. The prevalent metaphysics, originating in Descartes, also led him astray. At that time he met no outstanding priest who enjoyed his confidence. Despite a few slight inclinations to return, and although he declared that he believed for a while that

[48] *Just.*, vol. ii, pp. 408-9.
****Just.*, vol. ii, p. 328. Cf. to Maurice, June 10th, 1845: " We papists, coarse-grained Catholics, business men with a simple faith, we prefer to believe the Gospel rather than to go and see for ourselves " (vol. ii, p. 181).
[44] *Just.*, vol. ii,
[48] *Suard Award*, p. 10. *Just.*, vol. ii, pp. 328-9.
[4f]/art., vol. hi, p. 201.

he was " called to be an apologist of Christianity ",[47] he never seriously altered his plan to combat the Christianity " of the theologians ".

In manhood, the religiosity and the sentimental Christianity which were in vogue in the romantic period jarred upon him. Apologetics in the style set by Chateaubriand had the worst effect upon htm. In *Justice* he wrote:

The Corpus Christi procession provided Chateaubriand with his most beautiful development. It was with an anger that knew no bounds that I read, when I was twenty, the works of this phrasemonger devoid of conscience and philosophy, whose whole worth was in the gift of the gab. It is with that then, I said to myself, that the nations are led ! The men of '89 . . . would not have been dupes of all that tinsel. In 1804, it sufficed for a Jacobin soldier to declare himself Emperor for all the sentiments and ideas to be changed. Those whom philosophic reason had emancipated were led astray in turn by literary fancies.[48]

He detested those whom he called " neo-Christians ", " those fools who admire Christianity because it has produced bells and cathedrals ". The caricature which he drew of them turned to violent satire: " Cowardly souls, corrupted hearts, dissolute in their senses and in their intelligence, the neo-Christians look everywhere for the outward shape and admire religion as they love women, for physical beauty."[49] The same sentimental religiosity which was a characteristic of the Socialist movements of that period provoked in him many ironical reactions.[50] " The word has been passed round," he wrote, " among all who hold a pen to gull the people."[51] He let himself go especially

[47] *Suard Award,* May 31st, 1838 (vol. i, p. 27). Cf. to Muiron (vol. i, p. 11),

[48] *Just.,* vol. ii, pp. 53,408-9. Cf. Khomiakoff's judgment: " talkers like Chateaubriand and his school, who want to show the truth of Christianity by the pomp of its ceremonies, the beauty in the sound of its bells, particularly at the twilight hour, and the poetical character of its legends " *{(L'Eglise Latine et le Protestantisme au point de vue de l'Eglise d*Orient,* p. 7).

[49] L.B., p. 119, note. "They believe," he added, "in a revelation shortly to be given, as well as in a transformation of Catholicism. Gorgeously spectacular Masses will be sung in the phalanstery." (Allusion to Charles Fourier's Communistic ideas. His plans were to be carried out by local communities or " phalanxes ", who would all live together in one large building called the " phalanstery ". —*Translator.)*

[50] For instance, *P.* A/., vol. ii, p. 302: " A thick fog of religiosity presses heavily today upon the heads of all the reformers "; vol. i, p. 351: " Gospel style ", " hypochondriac theism ", etc. Or *Just,* preliminary treatise: " Fallen into the hands of dreamers, tub-thumpers, gastrosophers and hermaphrodites, Socialism has become, instead of the justice-loving movement which the Revolution wanted, sentimental, evangelical, theocratic, Communist, erotico-Bacchic, omnigamous; it has been everything that the reaction could desire it to be for its own benefit and for our shame." In *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 312, he stresses the contrast between Christianity and " the quite freakish religiosity, which we are witnessing ".

[51] P. *M.,* vol. i, p. 352.

at the expense of poor Pierre Leroux, whom he called the " mystagogue", the " theologus of Socialism", " theosopher ", "theomancian", "theogloss", "theogaster", "theomantic"; "the holy man," he also said, " aspires to take the place of the Pope in his functions as God's vicar; there are some who go as far as to say that he remembers the time when he was Jesus Christ '\[62] The religious dress adopted by the followers of Saint-Simon was not less displeasing to him. He had no love for these " neo-mystics ",[53] and had he known Sainte-Beuve's saying, he would have used it, "their gnosticism weighted with industrialism ".[G4]

Chafing under every yoke and much more inclined to rebellion than to servility,[65] he saw first of all in religion the Church, and in the Church an authority at which he jibbed. " When nobody speaks to me about anything," he once wrote,[56]" I have a simple faith. But as soon as they want to make me believe my mind kicks against it; my nature is such that I always contradict authority. I have a great esteem for the clergy, as I have for all civil servants; but I have always been a rebel against the Church as I have been against the government." That being so, he was always ready to shudder at the slightest shadow of religious pressure.[57] He liked to be Liberal, but was always afraid the Church would abuse the liberty she was allowed. " The Church has scarcely been set on her feet again by the secular arm before she wants to dominate it. The antagonism between the two powers, the spiritual and the temporal, is beginning all over again: the issue can easily be foreseen."[58]

The fight against the Church was, in his mind, a counterstroke, and as a matter of fact his most violent passages were often inspired by some incident which aroused his indignation. Above all, he could not tolerate what he looked upon as a hypocritical exploiting of religion by those in power, and we must here confess that the political principles of the nineteenth century furnished him with ample matter. In the *Creation de VOrdre* he denounced " the mania, I might almost say the hypocrisy, of religiosity so common today in teaching, in the

" La *Voix du Peuple*, from November 25th, 1849, to January 28th, 1850; in *L. G. R.*, pp. 363-88.

[M] *P. A.*, vol. i, p. 365.

[54] Sainte-Beuve, letter to Edgar Quinet, December 18th, 1831 *(Correspondance generale*, vol. i, 1935, p. 277). Cf. Proudhon, C. *O. H.*, p. 72.

[65] *Just*,, vol. i, p. 387: " If I had the honour of living in the Church of Saint-Simon, my first impulse would be to box the Pontiff's ears." It is true that in that case he would have had good reasons for doing so.

[56] To M. Abram, Notary in Orchamps-Vernon, May 31st, 1848 (vol. ii, p. 333).

[57] *R. S.*, pp. 128-30.

[58] *Op*, cit., p. 200.

press, but above all in the government". On this topic he waxes strong:

While philosophers announce a religious reformation, radicals and conservatives speak of spiritual interests and headmasters recommend to their students (who smile at them) the frequentation of the sacraments and give prizes for religion, the powers that be are favouring the clergy's action with all their might, and through their Attorneys-General and Prefects they are preaching against impiety and *evil doctrines.* Bewildered by the accusations of corruption and anarchy which are raised on all sides, they can imagine nothing better for the people than a return to religion, and for themselves, nothing better than an absolute royalism. But no one is deceived, and the same blow which strikes down scepticism will also end this comedy.[59]

He was particularly vexed with the Eclectics, with the part Victor Cousin was playing at the University. " These gentlemen " have no faith in the Church; but instead of taking a stand frankly against it, " they have preferred to imitate Voltaire, who wrote against the Beast even while he was making his Easter duties ".[60] " The University fondles the priests, the powers that be favour them, and our middle-class government, of Voltairian origin, are turning into short-frocked Jesuits. Ah ! Basile (i.e. vile slanderer) . . ."[61] These reflections are dated 1842. Fifteen years later Proudhon revived them in *Justice.* He denounced the " evil intentions " of an " inconsiderate press " which distinguished itself by a " fresh outbreak of religion ": this, he said, " had its beginning in self-seeking interests threatened by the Revolution of 1848. Religion offering itself as a safeguard to the middle classes, isn't that a lovely sight ? "[62] He also upbraided Cousin " for taking part in a schools' entertainment and shaking hands with the Archbishop of Paris ".[63] Faced with such a symbolical sight as that he could not help giving vent to a cry of revolt:

We must have a religion for the people, it is necessary at all costs. And why is a religion necessary for the people ? Because the people, who have not had the better part, but who, like Martha, have got to do the waiting, must learn through religion to be satisfied with

[59] **C. *O. H.*, pp. 71-2. Cf. to Maurice, August 13th, 1844: " While the head of the community goes in one direction, the people go in another. The powers turn to religiosity; the people are giving up Catholicism" (vol. ii, p. 134).**

[60] **To Bergmann, May 9th, 1842 (vol. ii, p. 37).**

[61] **To Tissot, July 31st, 1842 (vol. *ii,* p. 59).**

[62] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 231. For Cousin's attitude towards the Church, see Barthelemy Saint-Hilaire, *M. Victor Cousin,* vol. ii, *passim.***

[63] ***Just.*, vol. vi, p. 28.**

their slavery. That is the secret of all this hullabaloo in the newspapers.[64]

We will not go into the details of Proudhon's two essential grievances here, for that would be to examine his thought, and that is the aim of the following chapters. Knowing little about the Church's true teaching, he complained that she subjugated souls by the submissiveness which she preached to them.[65] Enamoured of justice as well as of liberty, he found it difficult to distinguish them from total independence and total equality, and he could not stand anything which limited the latter any more than he could anything which curbed the former. Now, was not the Church—unmindful of her attitude in other days—wrong at that time in acquitting " that economic machine " which " inevitably produced inequality " ?

There were two periods, during the course of Proudhon's life, which were pre-eminently periods of outward success and apparent domination for Catholicism, the last years of the Restoration, and the end of the second Republic and the beginnings of the second Empire. He received the backlash from both of them. He suffered from them personally. Now he spoke of them with ironical clear-sightedness, now he complained bitterly.

The first of these periods centred, in a symbolical way, in a recollection of his youth, the recollection of a Mission preached in Besangon in 1825 and of the Jubilee of 1826. He was then sixteen. He dated his first serious doubts from that time.[66] This recollection he jotted down in his Note-books.[67] He recalled it in the *Confessions d'un Revolution"*

[64] *Just.,* vol. iii, pp. 232-3. Cf. vol. i, p. 441, for the thought of all the inventors of new religions (he is hitting at Pierre Leroux, the Saint-Simonians, etc.): " That thought, it is that a religion is necessary for the people." Moreover, he was only re-echoing the criticisms already formulated by Pierre Leroux, in 1841, in *De V&lecticisme:* *' M. Cousin has formed an alliance with all the powers. . . . M. Cousin has become a courtier of kings and priests. . . . On every big occasion, out comes his rosary. . . . Philosophy, says M. Cousin, is patient. . . . Glad to see the masses, the people, in other words, the whole human race, in the arms of Christianity, it is content to hold out its hand gently to them, and to help them to rise higher.still. . . . A h ! that is hypocrisy! . . . Don't you see that the hypocrisy you are teaching is the destruction of all religion ? " (pp. 85-6, 269-70).

[65] *Just.,* vol. i, p. 441: " Look after yourselves, you good people. Don't allow yourselves to be led away into these insolent religions. . . . Remember, morning and night, that man's glory on earth is to be sufficient unto himself; that you possess within yourselves all the conditions of virtue and happiness; and that your first law is to keep your soul and not to bow yourselves down before any diyinity, whether of heaven, of earth or of hell." Cf. *infra,* chapter xii, p. 251.

[66] Cf. Auge-Laribe, Introduction to vol. i of *Works,* **p.** 29.

[67] '* **1825.** Mission at Besangon. Great bluster. Great piety. Last sighs of religion in **the** Franche-Comte. From this moment onwards it is no longer religion, it is **hypocrisy** or stupidity." (Cf. *R. S.,* p. 187, note 1.)

naire [63] he brought it up again in the *Revolution Sociale*™ More than one allusion to it occurs in his letters, and in a letter of March 6th, 1852, to Charles Edmond, he tells the story over again. During those days of great religious demonstrations he " clenched his fist in his pocket", as they say in his district.[70] You feel that the impression on his imagination has remained vivid, and his anti-clerical outburst of 1830, though it does not lessen his resentment, allowed him to add an irony, quite philosophical, to his indignation:

The year 1825 was the famous year of the Missions. It was followed by a general Jubilee. I was then sixteen. The whole of France, swept away by the Missioners, went to confession, received Holy Communion (save your humble servant), became sanctimonious, Jesuitical, churchwardens, in a word, they carried out a counter-revolution. At that period Rousseau and Voltaire were cursed, the young men wore scapulars, the young girls were all enrolled under the banners of the Virgin; Louis XVI's will was hung up in every home; it was all a universal adoration of God, the priests, the king and the princes; the Liberals were in the wrong.

This fresh outbreak of devotion, piety and royalism lasted until 1829. I had witnessed the fervour, I also witnessed the slackening off. The sight was not less curious. The young men stopped going to Vespers and began to hymn Beranger, the young girls gave up the choir and started running to the opera; the fathers and mothers went in for impiety of a pretty lowdown kind; in short, in 1830,I saw our decent citizens, who had carried the Mission cross on their shoulders, dressed up as National Guardsmen, on their way to pull that cross down . . . and singing the Marseillaise . . .[71]

If it had been possible for the Comte de Montlosier to know this rebellious young man from Besancon and to see into his soul, when he was writing his *Denonciation aux cours royales* in 1826, more especially if he had been able to see the traces left in that soul many years afterwards, what a confirmation would he not have found for what he was then writing! After speaking of the noisy methods used for the Missions and the celebration of the Jubilee, and after giving an example of the sermons which rang out from the cathedral pulpits, he ended by saying:

[68] *Post scriptum*, pp. 359-60.
[69] Pp. 109-10.
[70] To Buzon, July 15th, 1864 (vol. xiii, p. 339).
[71] Vol. iv, pp. 237-8. Proudhon drew a lesson from this fickleness: " My dear fellow, you don't understand our barbarians. For the last ten or twelve years their emotions have been successfully aroused—will posterity believe it?—on behalf of authority, religion, capital and all that follows therefrom. Better still, all this has been done in the name of heaven knows what philosophism which has produced the same illusion, between '48 and '52, as was produced, between 1815 and 1825, by the Romanticism of Chateaubriand, de Lamennais and de Maistre. That will all die away, just as it came; I swear it to you by my Gallic innards."

" If a spirit as turbulent as this . . . continues to spread, I guarantee that the spirit of irreligion will soon gain a part of France. I have been reproached for speaking *of atheists made by the priests:* all the Diderots and d'Holbachs were never such clever apostles of atheism as are some good priests today."[72] It is a fact that many other Frenchmen besides Proudhon and Montlosier—he was a cross-grained Gallican of the old regime and a witness of the people's revolutionary aspirations—received a shock at that time. The memorandum presented to Gregory XVI in 1832 by the editors of L'*Avenir* soon afterwards put forward the same grievance.[73] Later still, Lamennais referred to it, but his testimony bears obvious exaggerations.[74] In the letters he sent to his friend Virieu, Lamartine also spoke of " political Missions " and of " police Congregations "[74A] which, according to him, were doing " frightful and irreparable harm ". He denounced " with a kind of shame " the great lords, such as M. de Fitz-James, whose " orthodoxy at the same time arrogant and sceptic " was upholding " the Church party, without believing in Jesus Christ ".[75] On April 10th in that same year he wrote to Fontenay: " *Corruptio optimi pessima.* I would like to see religion as a thing entirely between God and man and outside all

[72] ***Denonciation aux cours royales relativement au systeme religieux et politique signald dans le Memoire a consulter* (1826), pp. lxiii-lxiv.**

[73] **" An immense change took place, especially in the youth, whom fear of a despotism apparently desirous of relying upon religion drove towards the philosophy of the eighteenth century. . . . The government . . . encouraged missions, although it imposed a political character upon them which made them dangerous for religion. (In 1830) the mission crosses recently set up were pulled down because they bore the fleur-de-lis at the ends and because the missioners had often introduced purely political subjects into their sermons . . . '* (in Lamennais, *Affaire de Rome; Works,* vol. xii, pp. 40, 41, 51). Lamennais, it is true, forgets that in 1820 he had protested against the " invectives showered upon the missioners, true soldiers of the crown as well as of the altar ". *Sur les causes de la haine qWinspire a certains hommes la religion catholique (Works,* vol. viii, p. 173). Cf. Gerbet and Montalembert, in *LAvenir,* January 17th and February 21st, 1831 *(Melanges catholiques,* vol. i, pp. 182-4 and 356).**

[74] ***Des maux de VEglise:* ** The clergy, by a fatal mistake, took up the cause of absolutism. It was christened Legitimism, and Legitimism rang out from all the pulpits and made the round of all the confessionals; missions were held in order to preach Legitimism; it was sung at the foot of the altars, its emblems desecrated the august simplicity of the cross. . . . Who could be surprised at the reaction produced by so many vexatious causes? . . ." *(Works,* vol. xii, pp. 264, 266). For the results of the religious policy prior to 1830, see also the long letter from Tocqueville to Lord Radnor, May, 1835 *(Complete Works,* vol. vi, pp. 41-8). For the " missions ", see d'Eckstein, in *Le Catholique,* vol. iii, pp. 320 *ssq.*; cf. A. Nettement, *Souvenirs sur la Restauration,* and *Histoire de la Restauration,* vol. vii. *Mdmoires de Vabbe" Liautard, recueillis et mis en ordre par Vabbi A. Denys,* vol. i (1844), *Le trone et Vautel,* p. 349: " See what marvels the missioners have accomplished ! . . . How they rallied round the king men of every opinion ! . . ."**

[74A] ***A Allusion to the famous " Congregation " which was a pious association, but which came indirectly to play a political rdle and at times more or less acted as police.—*Translator.***

[75] **February 18th, 1827, and April 1st, 1828. Henri Guillemin, *Lamartine, Vhomme et Vauvre,* p. 99.**

politics. Governments desecrate it when they make use of it as a tool."[76] That is a negative formula, obviously incomplete as a definition of the religious ideal, but only too accurate an observation on a widespread abuse.

The clerical and middle-class reaction which followed the disturbances of 1848 and which was carried on into the beginnings of the second Empire exasperated Proudhon. Here again his imagination often magnified things and distorted them. So we find numerous references in his letters from 1852 onwards which show us an anti-clericalism more and more anxious, more and more frantic.[77] In 1852, he jotted down in his Note-book:

> Pastoral letters from bishops rain down upon us, and so do the *Te Deums*. This loathsome priestly rabble which in '48 gave its adherence to, and sang the praises of, the Republic, gave it its blessings and offered up its Masses for it; this whore of Babylon, as Luther would have called it, whose incense and caresses are all for the conquerors, and its curses all for the conquered, is piling up on its head the most inexorable vengeance. There is not a single honest man who does not say to himself today: shall I die without killing a priest?[78]

Poor Proudhon ! That he took this tone is partly explained by the fact that the reaction then prevailing affected him personally. Three lawsuits in succession, each of which he lost, appeared to him to be due each time to the power which the Church had regained over the State.

There was the case which he lost at Besangon in 1852, against a dishonest publisher who had obtained from a grocer and released to the public copies of his *Essai de Grammaire Gdnerale, a*, work of his early youth, badly received and long since repudiated by him. The losing of this case he attributed to the " priestly rabble ",[79]

[76] **Quoted by Guillemin, *be. cit.***

[77] **"What assurance have I , " he wrote in *R.* 5., p. 201, " that in the immense raid which followed December 2nd, the crime of lack of piety was not for many citizens the first reason why they were transported and exiled ? " To Guillemin, January 22nd, 1855: " It is not . . . a Napoleonic government that we now have, it is an ecclesiastical and reactionary government, that is a fact" (vol. vi, p. 119). Cf. Desjardins, vol. ii, pp. 274-5.**

[78] **And towards the end of the year: " Clergy. They reign at this moment by the grace of H. M. Napoleon I I I. The plan is admitted, it is to stupefy the French race by tyranny, pleasures, ignorance and superstition." At this time, Proudhon was reading *L'Univers*, which caused him to react violently.**

[79] **The incident is related and commented upon in *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 202-11. Cf. to Salieres, May 9th, 1855: " . . . I t has been said that I suppressed the first edition of my little linguistic work because of certain passages favourable to the Bible and revelation which were in it . . ." (vol. x, p. 356). A. L., vol. xvi, pp. 30-1, note.**

Ten years previously, at the time of the lawsuit which resulted from his third book on Property, he had thought he could discern " the intrigues of the clergy " against him.[80] Now he thought that in everything he was the object of these intrigues, the influence of which seemed to him to be increasing. Hunted down, persecuted by the powers, living with difficulty, always anxious about his family, this thought became at times an obsession with him. " Where would you have me go ? " he wrote to Charles Edmond on March 6th, 1852. " Am I not on the index in Rome, in London, in the whole of Christendom ? " And to Suchet, on October 19th: " As the clerical tyranny is always growing, I cannot guarantee to end my days in France."[81]

Then there was the affair of the *Revue du Peuple*, which he tried in vain to publish. The Minister of the police, Maupas, refused him authorization. In this fresh setback, which was due, it appears, to the Minister's personal feelings, he still saw the Church's hand. " The ostensible reason, but not the written" one, is that in this *Revue* I had set my mind on crushing the Jesuits and Catholicism ! "[82] This obsession took root in him. Hence this fresh outburst, in a letter to Mathey, on January 13th, 1853: " It is war to the death between the priestly rabble and myself. They will hunt me down everywhere, taking from me work, bread, etc.! "[83] The same complaints, in general terms, are found throughout the following years. Thus, on January 14th, 1855, he wrote to Bergmann:

The tyranny of the priests is worse today than in 1815-25; their admitted plan is to kill knowledge, to stifle all liberty and all light. So

[80] To Tissot, February 28th, 1842: " I had a narrow escape. . . . I could see by the clergy's intrigues that you cannot with impunity offend them in their pretensions. . . . This lawsuit has enlightened me on . . . the alliance of the clergy with the new power; on its growing influence in affairs, its ill-will and its incurable inability. Like you, I now think that it would be stupid to deal gently with all that Catholic and *indulgenced* nonsense, all for the sake of not upsetting a few good folk; and I am now getting ready to let them have it good and proper " (vol. ii, pp. 16-17). And already to Bergmann, on December 22nd, 1839, speaking of the *Celebration du dimanche:* " The pious people are sounding the alarm. . . . I learn from Besancon that the clergy have stopped the sale of my booklet" (vol. i, p. 171).

[81] Vol. iv, pp. 69, 238.

[88] To Maurice, January 1st, 1853 (vol. v, p. 132). To Mathey, December 29th, 1852: " . . . effect of the hidden influence of the Jesuits, which, I fear, will henceforth dog my steps and raise an outcry against all my publications " (p. 129). To Maguet, January 1st, 1853 (p. 135). To Madier-Montjau, same date (p. 143). To Mathey, January 13th: " It is the clergy, as Prince Napoleon distinctly told me, who had the licence for the *Revue* refused to me " (p. 169).

[88] Vol. v, p. 170. To Maurice: " The clergy warmly recommended the opposite side." To Maguet: " The speeches lasted three days. The room was full of priests. It was a stroke of luck that they should make me lose a just case and compel a work full of errors' to be put into circulation, but in which they pretend there are some passages favourable to Biblical myths, which I long ago refuted.'* To Mathey: " It is the clergy who made me lose my case " (pp. 131, 136, 169).

anger increases as their power increases. . . . If ever democracy can find another quarter of an hour, and if I stand for anything at all, it will be all up with Catholicism in France. . . .[84]

Such was Proudhon's state of mind, a state of mind already somewhat unhealthy, when the third case occurred. It was the big case Mirecourt-Mathieu, the consequences of which were to be so serious. His first indignation against his " biographer" was fully justified. M. " Eugene de Mirecourt's " book was an incredibly scurvy production.[85] According to him, Proudhon was devoid of all human feeling. His mother's death had left him indifferent, and he had enjoyed the bloody riots of June, 1848, as though they had been an entertainment. Gall overflowed from his soul. He was a " lying sectarian ". His alleged continence " was planned for selfish motives ". As for his social ideas, nothing was easier to explain: " Yes, juicy steaks, the belly, gluttony, a fondness for all material things, for eatables, for palpable things, for anything that gives sensual pleasure, the neighbour's dinner, his wine, his bed, his house, his gold, there you have, whatever others may say, the first and the only motive of these great reformers."[86] You see the tone of it. The remainder is in the same vein. It is a mixture of insults and platitudes, a series of interpretations as stupid as they are spiteful. A third edition of this pamphlet appeared in 1870, after Proudhon's death, for the edification of the Catholic public. Meanwhile, Mirecourt published a defence of his book, in the shape of *Lettres a M. P. J. Proudhon.* The defence is about as good as the first pamphlet.[87] A man who wished to refute Proudhon's *Justice* found himself obliged to part company publicly with this calumniator.[88]

[84] Vol. vi, p. 111. See also the letter to Guillemin, January 22nd, 1855 (vol. vi, p. 119).

[85] This Mirecourt, whose real name was Jacquot, is the man who, at about the same time, wrote a biography of Louis Veuillot which was insulting to Veuillot's mother; cf. Veuillot, *Le biographe Mirecourt et son ami Lavedan* (February, 1856; in *Melanges . . .*, second series, vol. ii, pp. 515-21). In this business, too, there was episcopal intervention. Mgr. Dupanloup had to step in and stop publication of the book as a serial in an Orleans newspaper, the editor of which thought he was thus paying homage to the bishop. In 1857, Mirecourt lost another lawsuit brought against him on similar grounds by Mires and Bocage.

"1870 edition, pp. 13-14.

[87] *Lettres a M. P. J. Proudhon, en riponse a son livre de la Justice* (1858) (Letters to M. P. J. Proudhon, a reply to his book *Justice).* The second part, in which the author said he had been helped by a certain Gilbert, claims to be " philosophic and scientific ".

[38] *Quelques notes sur Vouvrage de M. Proudhon* (1859), pp. 445-6 (A few Notes on M. Proudhon's Work): " As M. de Mirecourt, by his latest lawsuits, by the sentences given against him, and by the character he has given to his recent writings, has impaired his reputation in public opinion, and because he shows himself to be a man who no longer respects private life and characterizes it more often than not unjustly, who no longer keeps within bounds, etc."

Why was it necessary for Cardinal Mathieu rashly to reply in writing to the demand for information which Mirecourt had sent to him? Mirecourt was already more than suspect. He hastened to publish the archbishop's letter at the beginning of his pamphlet, and naturally it was the first thing that Proudhon noticed.[89] So, this time, it was the Church herself who was challenging him ! Less than a week later his mind was made up; he would accept the challenge, he " would tear aside all the veils ". " M. de Mirecourt receives communications from the episcopacy: so much the worse for the episcopacy."[90] With no thought for incidents or minor characters, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau tackling Christophe de Beaumont,[91] but with much more bluntness and fire, he marshalled his thoughts, which were the very thoughts of the Revolution, against those of the Church:

I took as my model the Danube peasant speaking in the Roman Senate; I placed myself in my mind's eye before the Church, with my workman's overall, my peasant's clogs and my journalist's pen, and then my only thought was to hit out straight and hard.[92]

The proceedings instituted against *Justice,* the impossibility of finding a printer to produce an account justifying himself,[93] his condemnation and his escape to Belgium were not calculated to soothe the anger of this passionate fighter. Until the very end he kept the wound open, and fostered the reflections which were suggested to him by the means certain people adopted to disgrace the man who had left the Church:

If you go back on the faith in which your fathers were brought up and which you have imbibed with your nursing-mother's milk, the Church declares you traitors and cuts you off from her communion. She will go further. She will look up the promise you made to her at the age of ten; she will publish your first attempts to think, she will use them against you as a trophy of shame. And when she has con-

•• To Mathey, May 25th, 1855: " A biography about me has just appeared by a gentleman called de Mirecourt, who is in touch with our archbishop, who gave him the information " (vol. vi, pp. 171-2). On the same day, the same news is given to Darimon (p. 173).

•°To Dufraisse, October 28th, 1857 (vol. vii, p. 294). *Just.,* vol. ii, p. 1. He certainly said *(Just.,* vol. iv, p. 346): " For a long time I thought out what I am doing today "; all the same, we are within our rights in thinking that the tone would have been noticeably different had the occasion been different.

[91] To Edmond, June 1st, 1855 (vol. vi, pp. 175-7). To Boutteville, September 5th: " My book to Beaumont, as you call it, is almost finished " (p. 240).

•* *Just.,* vol. iv, p. 440. As far as Cardinal Mathieu himself was concerned, Proudhon was quite willing to agree that " while de Mirecourt thought only of making money ou't of this shameful business, the Archbishop of Besancon, we have no doubt about it, imagined he was doing a pious deed " (vol. i, p. 337).

[92] To M. and Mme. X., July 16th, 1858 (vol. viii, p. 97).

demned your ideas, she will come down upon your intentions, she will wither your will in its innermost recesses. Look at these philosophers, she will say, in the depth of their soul; you will see, in every case, that the loss of faith was preceded, accompanied and followed by loss of morals; among all these lost children who leave Christ there is not one honest man, *non est qui faciat bonum, non est usque ad unum.*[91]

However lively such controversies may be, we can say with Droz: " These are civil wars, in which the rebel shows a remnant of subjection by the very violence and conduct of his rebellion."[96] Proudhon belonged " to the people, who ", he said, " invented God", and in whose religious indifference he had no greater faith than he had in their political indifference.[96] He sometimes gives the impression that, had not causes of a more solid order come into play, all his thinking and all his reading would have failed to alienate him completely from his mother the Church. There are at least moments when it hurts him to feel himself " cut off from her communion ". We must not consider as a mere flight of fancy the passage in *Justice* in which, demanding certain privileges for his cause, he declares himself ready to cast himself, with his wife and children, at his archbishop's feet to receive his blessing, if they are granted.[97] At all events, despite the zest he displayed when it was a question of the clergy or things to do with the Church, he hardly ever lapsed into vulgar anti-clericalism. He who saw in Voltaire one of the best representatives of French genius passed a severe judgement upon the Voltairianism of some of his contemporaries.[98] Despite its heavy irony and its violent passages, *Justice* is not the " abominable pamphlet" which *UAmi de la Religion* denounced.[99] It is not the lying and slanderous work which the apologist Michel made out he was refuting; "passion and error " are " evident" in more than one passage, but it cannot be said that " the book falls from one's hands *in* disgust ".[100] This serious work, the epitome of

[94] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 212. To Salieres, May 9th, 1856 (vol. x, pp. 355-7).
[95] Droz, *P. J. Proudhon*, p. 237.
[96] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 476. To Muiron (vol. i, p. 15).
[97] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 445.
[98] To Chaudey, June 18th, 1859, with regard to Edmond About: "About's thought is not lofty enough; he would willingly put his signature to *Ecr. Vinfdme*, (Voltaire's *Ecrasez Vinfdme*, i.e. Crush the Beast), which means that he imitates Voltaire; he does not carry him on. Modern philosophy has raised the Church above ridicule and pamphleteering. . . . Criticism of the papacy must be more than ever criticism of the whole society; otherwise it is lies, small-mindedness and a lack of genius " (vol. ix, p. 103).
[99] Cf. J. Michel, *op. c//.*, pp. 475-6; and again: " an indescribably degraded thing for which there is no longer any name ", " an impure exhalation of all the corruptions gathered together ", etc.
[100] *Op. cit.*, pp. 423-33.

Proudhon's thought, was, in his eyes, a " philosophic epic ",[101] On its publication he staked his life's reputation,[102] and it was with justifiable astonishment that he protested to the police when, having received a warning from " practical jokers ", they prepared to stop the printing of the " anti-religious pamphlet" which they considered his book to be.[103] In *Justice poursuivie* he likewise appealed against the sentence of the judges who had " put him on the same footing as a rake for whom sacrilege was the spice of immorality".[104] No doubt he might have asked himself whether he had not been the first to be guilty of confusing things just as badly, but in the opposite sense. Still let us admit the truth. He was often immoderate, passionate, violent, wrong. He allowed himself to be carried away by controversy.[105] Sometimes, though seldom, he descended to tittle-tattle.[106] All this explains why some of his criticisms were nonsensical. But he was never base. Remember, too, that he stood all alone, that the Church he was attacking was a triumphant Church, or, at the very least, a powerful one. In his Liberalism he was sincere.[107] He would not have made common cause with the revilers of a persecuted Church.[108]

He hardly ever, as we have said, deviated from the high ideals which inspired him to write certain beautiful pages. We should like to be able to quote some of the pages glorifying the Church and her work in history. If the Church seemed to him to be no longer anything but" an aged and disgruntled Sister of Charity ",[109] she appeared sublime to him in bygone ages, and those who wished to take her

[101] **To Dufraisse, October 28th, 1857 (vol. vii, p. 294).**

[108] **To Darimon, February 14th, 1857 (vol. vii, p. 218).**

[108] **To Larramat, November 3rd, 1857 (vol. vii, p. 296). Cf. to M., November 4th (pp. 298-302), and to Beslay, November 13th (p. 304).**

[104] **/. P. {Works, vol. xx, 1868), p. 129.**

[105] **In his criticism of monastic legislation, for instance; *Just.*, vol. ii, pp. 26-30. Through sheer lack of understanding, Proudhon here lapses into the ridiculous. That happens to him more than once.**

[106] **Cf. *Just.*, vol. ii, pp. 40-53.**

[107] **To Madier-Montjau, June 8th, 1862: " When I see liberals voting for laws to restrict the freedom of preachers, and that at the gate of the Empire, for no reason at all, but just to attack the Church, I lose all confidence in the Belgian middle classes " (vol. xii, p. 117).**

[108] **In 1860, he refrained, "although the temptation was great", from joining in the little war which the Imperial government was waging at that time agamst the episcopate (17. /., p. 103). In 1861, he did not want anybody to bother about anti-clericalism. " Leave the Doctrinaires and the Jesuits alone," he said; '* it is the masses we must prod today, the whole of the Liberal party needs to feel the spur; the community itself needs branding " (to Demoulin, September 17th, vol. xi, p. 193); " it is no longer . . . at the clericals that you must throw your lectures and your sarcasm, but at the degenerate revolutionaries " (p. 194). Later he wrote to Morard, on March '4th, 1863: " For over thirty years I have got into the habit of upholding lost causes " (vol. xii, p. 333).**

[108] **To Edmond, October 18th, 1852 (vol. v, p. 66).**

place in his day were to him like pretentious children.[110] It is known that towards the end of his life he scandalized a number of his friends by being of the same mind in some of his political views as the conservative Papacy. For his part, this was nothing new, nor was it merely a political attitude. In 1847 he had written: " I am much more afraid of the Deists after the manner of Robespierre, of the neo-Christians, of the State religion and of Eclecticism than I am of Ultramontanism." Again in 1856, approving Napoleon's concordat," Would those who reproach him with having re-established the Church have preferred that he left the nation in the materialism into which the Directory had thrown it ? "[111] He was therefore always in favour of the clergy receiving a salary. He said so in his election address in 1848: "As long as religion is alive in the people I want to see it respected outwardly and in politics." In *Justice* he again reminded Cardinal Mathieu of the fact, though in a somewhat contemptuous tone: " I say that since for nine thousand years Religion has been the source, the form and the sanction of Justice, it deserves well of mankind; unless there is an obstinate breaking-away on your part, the Revolution will not refuse an alimony to this ancient Church."[112] He was man of the world enough to realize that what was lost by the Church was largely gained by superstition and immorality, " the worship of quaint figures and charms ",[113] He was anxious then to preserve "Christian symbolism" and "the ecclesiastical ministry", while imposing severe limits on the clergy's activity.[114] Moreover, he looked upon " religion as being, like marriage, not something statutory and purely disciplinary, but something organic and therefore outside the direct action of the powers ".[115] He knew that " you cannot

[110] Cf. *Con.*, p. 12.

[111] *Just.*, vol. IV, p. 419. *Con.*, p. 133: " The concordat of 1802, in spite of what has been said, was not the result of Consular reaction; it was a simple reparation exacted by the immense majority of the people after the futile displays of H6bert and Robespierre.'*

na *programme Revolutionnaire,* 5: worship (pp. 331-2). *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 441. To Delarageaz, November 15th, 1861 (vol. xi, pp. 281-2).

[113] C. *D.*, p. 476.

[114] *Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 494-5: " If a deplorable relapse into mysticism and even into superstition is to be avoided, the most effective means is to retain, as far as the principles of the Revolution will allow, the ecclesiastical ministry. . . . In France, notwithstanding the philosophy of the eighteenth century, Catholicism held on until well beyond the Revolution, and received its first shock—I am still speaking of the masses of the people—only around 1830. . . . Since that date, free-thought has gone on growing, and morals have collapsed together with faith. Innovators of all kinds have begun to talk of new cults, mysteries, miracles; at the present moment, mediumistic manifestations are favoured. I think therefore there would be a real advantage, for the instruction and raising of the moral standard of the people, to retain, on the terms and conditions set out in the text, the Christian symbolism " (Note N).

[115] *Con.*, pp. 112-13.

destroy a religion, a Church, a priesthood by persecutions and diatribes ", and he condemned without reserve both the methods of Voltaire and those of the Terror.[116]

Finally, this everlasting rebel had a sense of loyalty, which explains, for instance, his very severe judgements on Lamennais.[117] Despite the off-hand and mocking tone he adopted in other passages, keen sincerity can be felt in this page taken from *Justice,* in which the regrets expressed foreshadow similar complaints coming from august lips:

If the Church had resolutely taken up the cause of Justice, she would always have been queen; the hearts of the people would have remained with her; she would have seen neither heretics nor atheists in her bosom. The distinction between the powers would never have been drawn; Pius IX, sole sovereign, would have reigned over ideas as well as over interests. Nobody would have cast a doubt on the authority of the priesthood, any more than on the certitude of its revelation; for nobody would have been tempted to doubt by the sight of social calamities, ecclesiastical tyranny and heaven's inclemency. It is the misfortune of man's lot which drives him to indict his religion and his God. Do you not see, at this moment, that your flock consists exclusively of rich people, and that those who are leaving you are the poor? *That's disappearing,* was the answer I one day received from a peasant whom I had known to be most regular in attending Church services and to whom I had expressed my surprise at his lack of devotion. Yes, *that's disappearing,* and much more quickly, I fear, than is good for the happiness of our nation. O Holy Church, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman and Gallican Church in which

[116] ***U. /., p. 162. " In 1793, we tried to abolish Catholicism by means of banishment and the guillotine; the revolutionary storm, in purifying the clergy, only served to give the Church greater strength. Never did she rise more flourishing than people beheld her under the Consulate. Thirty years previously, Voltaire had undertaken to make her *infame* (foul, unspeakable); it was Voltaire himself and his school who were proclaimed as dissolute and free-thinkers. Thanks to the licentiousness of her enemies, the Church was able to seize the standard of morality, and since then no one, neither democracy, nor philosophy, nor the Saint-Simonians or the Phalansterians, has been able to wrest it from her. In 1848 we all of us paid homage to her and held out our hands to her. All we can do today is to win back again, by developing our principles and practising freedom and morality, the ground lost to us by Voltaire, the Terror and our innumerable miscarriages. Any other line of behaviour would place us ourselves outside the law, outside science and consequently outside politics."***

[117] **On May 16th, 1841, he wrote to Ackermann: " I gave a very lively criticism of Lamennais' philosophy. . . . Whatever they may say about that man, I shall always answer that I do not like apostates. He was free to change his opinion, but he should not have waged war on his brethren in the priesthood, nor on Christianity, which it is no longer a question of attacking, but of studying more deeply " (vol. i, p. 333). To the same, November 15th, 1840: Lamennais is one of the " scourges of France "; his philosophy is made up of** Robespierreian abstractions " (p. 255), etc. For Lamennais; see also, for example, *Second Memoire sur la Propriiti,* pp. 135-42; to Micaud, July 18th, 1841 (vol. vi, p. 311); April 3rd, 1847 (vol. vi, pp. 362-3); and in *C. O. H.,* pp. 59-61, a pastiche of his style.**

I was brought up and which received my first oath ! It Is you yourself who have made me lose faith and confidence. Why, instead of finding in you a mother, did I find only a cruel step-mother ?[118]

This page is not quoted for its theological accuracy, but is it not one of those which painfully explain and justify the historic words of Pius XI on " the great scandal of the nineteenth century " ? In the same work—though with the same hugely mistaken outlook but with a similar feeling of regret—Proudhon notes that the people " have lost their God ". " The priests," he says, " have taken him away from them and have made him the God of the privileged classes, of the rich and of the middle classes, an exploiting and reactionary god."[119] Indeed he was not the only one who noticed that at that period when the middle classes were getting on top everywhere and establishing themselves, they " wanted their workmen and their womenfolk to be religious, but were not anxious that they themselves should be; they wanted then to control the clergy, even if they had to pay them well and give up the people to them ".[120] Historians who have studied the social movement in the last century confirm, in general, this observation. But—and this is something infinitely more serious—Proudhon furthermore believed that such a design had succeeded, at least for a time. Thence came, he thought, that " hostile mistrust between the people and the priests " to which he referred in the first of his letters which has come down to us.[121] Thus he wrote one day, for his own eyes alone, those terrible words, " The Church does not love the poor."[122]

There were other criticisms which he made against the clergy. They were often apposite, though overdone; at all events they were inspired by serious considerations. Among these criticisms there are three which are worth noticing and which it might be good for us to consider, for at least they call attention to temptations which seem to be those of every age.[123] They are: the neglect of healthy simplicity

[118] *Just.*, vol. ii, p. 135.

[119] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 477. They are almost P£guy's own words in *Notre Jeunesse.*

[120] To Bonnon, May 5th, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 71).

[1,1] To Muiron (vol. i, p. 15). And in his Note-book of 1847: "The people keep the Christian spirit which the priests are giving up for outward ceremonies and the language of a hypocritical philanthropy."

[122] Note-book of 1843-5. "We shall never desist from gravely censuring such conduct," said Pius X I, in his Encyclical Letter *Quadragesima anno.* "Such men are the cause that the Church, without deserving it, may have the appearance and be accused of taking sides with the wealthy, and of being little moved by the needs and sufferings of the disinherited." (C. T. S. translation, p. 56.)

[188] There are also some satires, which are not absolutely devoid of truth either. Thus, *C. O. H.*, p. 62, referring to certain priests (Lacordaire, Genoude, Mgr. Affre), or to apostate priests (Lamennais, abbes Chatel, Constant, Pillot): "Accustomed to the figures and pomp of the Hebrew books, they mistake their excited feelings

in divine worship, a contempt for knowledge, and a lack of understanding of the Gospel.

The subject set by the Academy of Besanson, *De la calibration du dimanche,* gave Proudhon an occasion in his early years to outline the first of these criticisms. He regretted "the deplorable rivalry" which led priests to imitate certain secular customs: " Operatic music introduced into the Church, theatrical effects, the pursuit of unknown devotions and of new saints, all this . . . more and more degrades the majesty of Christianity, and completes the destruction, in the nation, of what little faith was left after the free-thinking of the eighteenth century."[124] It seems to us that there is something else in that besides an exaggerated severity, something else besides a musty smell of Jansenism. Later still, the same criticism was further underlined, taking on an air of caricature or of lampoon. Thus, in 1852, in this page from the *Revolution Sociale:*

Under Louis-Philippe the clergy silently strove to set themselves up again: they recovered their position, even if they did not find favour. The faith became more bitter, that was a revenge due to it. . . . But by what mighty works, by what deep studies, by what moving words are they going to capture the attention of the multitude, redeem their incompetence in the past, rejuvenate the power to believe, fight against the folly of progress ? O adorable Providence ! The priest is looking for religion and he finds superstition. He runs away from novelties, he falls into senility. Devotion to St. Philomena and to the heart of Mary, the miraculous cures of M. de Hohenlohe, God and the purest love, fashionable books of devotion, passionate, voluptuous or nauseating: there you have the creations of that Word which in olden days produced an Origen, a Tertullian, an Augustine, a Hildebrand, a Bernard, a Thomas ! The great work of the modern Church is that of Abbe Desgenettes, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Victories, founder of an association in honour of the Virgin. . . . For a halfpenny a week each member shares in the prayers of the association. . . . *Ab uno disce omnes.* Estimate for yourself, from M. Desgenettes' practices, what a powerful inspiration Christianity is to our clergy. Calculate its influence upon a century ten times more learned than that of Constantine. . . . The priesthood is collapsing, I tell you, and religion, which is on the wing, is going back to the heaven from which it came.[125]

for grandeur in ideas; because they are deeply moved, they imagine that their intelligence is strong, and always, after their grandiloquent orations, they relapse into lifelessness and helplessness, without ideas.**

[124] *C. D.,* pp. 43-4.

[125] *R. S.,* pp. 111-12. In his Note-book, already in 1850: The Jesuits have introduced too many amusements into religion. " Look especially at their confraternities, their devotions, their pictures of the Virgin, and all the sweets of a piety which is only a form of Epicurean sensual pleasure.**

As for contempt of knowledge, Proudhon points out especially two aspects of it: on the one hand, the abandonment of even theological studies by the clergy; on the other, the continual alarms given by the authorities who feared lest orthodoxy be compromised.

As for the abandonment of theology Proudhon had a particular reason for noticing it—and for complaining about it. His Besangon printing-house possessed an edition of Bergier's *Dictlonnaire thiologique.* At that time there was no other work of a similar nature to take its place, yet he could not get buyers for it. He makes several allusions to it in his letters to his associate Maurice. On March 29th, 1844, when he had just learnt that Bergier's volumes were not selling, he wrote to him saying that that hardly surprised him, " the clergy bury themselves more than ever in devout platitudes and turn their backs on sound studies ". "I certainly would never have started such an undertaking," he added, " if I had known the clerical mind in 1837 as I do in 1843 ",[126] etc. The following year there were fresh complaints. He went to see two booksellers in the capital who were his last hope for the disposal " of the accursed Bergier "; both of them politely showed him the door. The truth is that " the Catholic clergy who, in 1827, seemed to be turning towards serious studies, soon grew tired of learning; they fell back into the most stupid monachism. The ecclesiastical bookshop no longer contains anything but absurd devotions, and illustrated, gilded and embossed prayer-books . . ." " There is antipathy," he suddenly concludes, " between pure reason and the faith; we must get that well into our heads."[127]

It is certain that intellectual life in the Church in France in the first half of the nineteenth century was poor indeed. Auguste Comte also noted " the extreme speculative mediocrity in the living instruments of Catholicism ".[128] The traditions had been broken by the revolutionary storm and had not yet been renewed. Imagination and sentiment prevailed over methodical reflection and learning. Attempts at restoration, not very thorough or very reliable, were individual efforts. They were not within the traditional framework and came from minds which had themselves at times been only haphazardly moulded. This is at least a partial explanation of the alarms and

"• Vol. ii, p. 121. To the same, already on August 4th, 1843 (p. 88).
i" January 2nd, 1845 (vol. ii, p. 170). In 1853, when winding up his printing-house, he had to send the unsold edition to the " pulp merchants "; to Eugene de Monzie, October 9th, 1864 (vol. xiv, p. 58).
[128] *Letters to Stuart Mill,* p. 216 (December 23rd, 1843).

condemnations which Proudhon ridiculed so much in his *Creation de l'ordre:*

In our days certain choice minds have imagined that by impregnating the still quivering remnants of Catholicism with learning they would be able to bring about a happy revolution in the community and at the same time do a service to religion. It was not difficult to be convinced of the intense dislike religion had for all movements of thought. Some Christians, too far-sighted for the peace of their faith, offered to place at the service of religion all we have learnt in the way of historical, economic and natural science: and the Pope has repudiated M. de Lamennais, imposed silence on M. Bautain; M. Buchez' progressive and tendentious theories startle the Catholic papers; M. de. Genoude begins to offend by his semi-democratic royalism and his Gallican creed; Pere Lacordaire, who is inspired in his sermons as much by worldly ideas as by the Bible, was seemingly dangerous. Rash priests who think you are wise ! Do you want to please religious people ? Do not learn anything, do not speak, close your ears, burn your books, and say your breviary.[129]

Finally, concerning the Bible—which he himself, alas, scarcely understood—Proudhon let fall a remark which was aimed at the priests, over the masses of the people. Unfair in its generalization, it seems at least to give evidence of a noble regret. The text *giwen* below is taken from a bundle of notes which were published in 1896 by Rochel under the title, *Jesus*:

Since the Revolution, Christ is no longer understood, at least in France. In my own home I have seen my mother, my aunts, etc., reading the Bible and following the preacher of Nazareth, like the holy women; today the people no longer understand the Gospel and do not read it at all.[130] The miracles make them laugh and all the rest is Greek to them. As for the moral side, they no longer feel it in their hearts. The form, the setting and the conditions in which Christ appeared are no longer in keeping with the present day.

As a preliminary, the Gospel should be explained to the people; for that, the priests would have to understand it themselves. . . .131

These are not fleeting and belated thoughts. In writing his first work on property, when it was clear to him that Christianity had not succeeded in destroying the old pagan law of force and cunning, Proudhon said: " We must not blame the Gospel, which the priests,

"• C. *O. H.,* pp. 44-5.

[180] The Gospel was the first thing he read. At the age of ten, he said, he had read " only the Gospel and *Les quatre fils Aymon* ". (Thirteenth-century story dealing with the legends of four knights of old.)

[191] *Jesus, p. 110.*

as badly inspired as the jurists, have never been able to explain or understand."[132] There we have another tirade, another exaggeration. From this terrible man we are accustomed to them. But underlying those words of criticism, can you not feel a love, a nostalgia, and heaven knows what disappointed hopes?

Nothing, no doubt, throws a light on Proudhon's sentiments so well as his attitude towards Renan. These two men were almost contemporaries. They were as unlike as possible. The judgements they delivered on each other make the contrast stand out. Renan speaks of Proudhon in *UAvenir de la Science* (The Future of Science). He was willing to recognize in him " a very distinguished philosophic intelligence ", but he could not forgive him, he said, " for his airs of atheism and irreligion ". " As the term God has enjoyed mankind's respect and has been used in the finest poetry, to suppress it would be to nonplus mankind."[133] In 1848, in a letter which he himself afterwards published, Renan, who was impressed by the sitting of the National Assembly in which Proudhon so startled the middle classes, went so far as to call him " an absurd person " and " a poor fool ",[134]

In return Proudhon dubbed Renan " a smooth-tongued renegade ". Previously, in *Justice,* alluding to *Etudes d'histoire religieuse* (Researches in Religious History), which had just been published (1857), he criticized in it " the pretension, so felicitously expressed, that learning was aristocratic and that the people's natural substitute for it was religion ". "what is the meaning," he asked, " of this division of folk into two categories of intelligences, those who know and those who believe ? Up till now the idea of relegating religion to the multitude was considered to be revolting Machiavellianism; M. Renan makes it the beginnings of philanthropy."[135] In the controversy resulting from the publication of the *Vie de Je'sus,* Proudhon wanted to make his voice heard. Among his papers was found an unfinished one " dealing with

[132] *Prop.,* p. 334. Note here the paradoxical influence which Proudhon had upon Tolstoi's " Evangelicalism ": a delightful example which shows that one cannot always answer for one's disciples. We also know that Tolstoi's *War and Peace,* for part of its " philosophy " as well as its title, comes from Proudhon's *G. P.* Cf. Nicolas Brian-Chaninov, *La Guerre et la Paix de Leon Tolstoi,* pp. 20-5, 128.

[133] L'*Avenir de la science,* pp. 474,475.

[134] August 1st, 1848. *Nouvelles lettres intimes* (1923), p. 226. In *Marc-Aurele,* indulging in his liking for anachronistic parallels, he said of Epiphanes, son of Carpocrates: " His book *On Justice* was much praised; what has come down to us is in a sophistically and closely dialectical vein, which reminds us of Proudhon and the Socialists of our time " (p. 124).

[135] *Just.,* vol. iii, pp. 231-2.

M. de Parisis' book against Renan ". Its stern indignation is an echo of that which sounded in all the ecclesiastical replies of that date:

There is one thing which continues to exist, in spite of Kant's Critique and all the atheistical arguments, and that is the universal belief in the divinity, the primordial and constant phenomenon of that faith which, without bothering about scientific accuracy or logic, clutches at everything, makes an argument of everything, sees God everywhere, and perceives in the slightest things signs of his presence, memorials of his action, his will and his wisdom.

It is this phenomenon of mankind's belief, which it is now a question of attacking, that strikes me; it stands as the highest, the most primordial and the most indestructible instinct in our nature, and one by no means gets the better of it with metaphysical analyses or blasphemous jokes, such as M. Renan's " Good old word, somewhat heavy ".[136] What is heavy here, and in the worst taste, is this superficial manner of tackling the question. For, after all, this belief in the divinity is our very self, our own soul, our own conscience, our own reason, at least in its primitive form; so that, from the most rigorously scientific and positive point of view, we cannot deny God, deny the belief in God, without denying our own selves, without condemning our own soul, our own mind and our own intelligence.[137]

The intensity of Proudhon's reactions could probably be explained in part as the jealousy of an author. He himself quite simply recognized that there was that element in it. For over twenty years he had been collecting notes hoping one day to deal thoroughly with the subject himself, when the *Vie de Jesus* appeared. Renan had got in ahead of him, and it was only natural that he should feel " a certain resentment ".[138] But anyone who cannot see beyond that explanation is to be pitied. It was really from the depths of his thoughts, from the depths of his nature, and from the very depths of his being that Proudhon opposed Renan. In the same paper, from which we have already quoted, assuming as an admitted fact the distinction between " those who know " and " those who believe "—for making shift with which in such an off-handed manner he reproached Renan—he wrote this page, the sturdy sincerity of which leaves the finest literary passages of

[136] **Renan's famous saying, referring to the word " God ".—*Translator.***

[137] ***Jesus*, pp. 86-7. Proudhon's feelings when faced with Renan's hypocritical pretences remind us of Nietzsche's. The latter expressed his disgust with this kind of scholar, " half-priests, half-satyrs, smelling of Renan "; he classed Renan among the ** lustful eunuchs of history " *{The Genealogy of Morals)*. " Let us guard ourselves against a knowledge of men such as that shown by a Sainte-Beuve and a Renan, against this way of sounding and nosing out souls practised by these spineless intellectual sensualists." Cf. Charles Andler, *Nietzsche et l'histoire de la civilisation*, in the *Revue de mitaphysique et de morale*, 1928, p. 167.**

[138] **To J. Buzon, July 9th, 1863 (vol. xiii, pp. 112-13). To Bergmann, February 15th, 1864 (vol. xiii,p, 238).**

his opponent far behind. It is still unfair, no doubt, but how significant! It may be used as a conclusion. Here we are really in the presence of tragic greatness:

> . . . It is clear that the mankind which believes sees things that the mankind which knows does not perceive; it conceives, reasons, and judges in another way; it draws its conclusions differently. . . .
>
> No reconciliation is possible. . . .
>
> That is the great modern cleavage. It is irreparable. There is no getting over it. To make society possible, the unbelievers must make efforts to be tolerant, while the others, the pious folk, must make efforts to be charitable.
>
> We must, all of us, recognize in good faith what we are and accept our position, we must respect one another and help one another, just as though we were all, all of us together and in the same degree, people who know and people who believe, pious and lovers of justice.
>
> There is only one moment when reconciliation between us is possible, and that is the moment of death, the moment when the living man passes into eternity. At that moment, the man who knows, who has thought things over for a long while, who has carried on the fight for a long time, who has devoted himself without payment to justice, who has lived without any ulterior hope, a hero of self-sacrifice, a real man, can hold out his hand to the man who believes and accept his farewell.
>
> As for the men of M. Renan's school, who flout belief and revile the revolutionary spirit, they are *enemies* to us all. Their idealism is nought but corruption, it spells the death of right as well as of devotion; it spells *contempt for everything divine and human* set up as a dogma; it spells selfishness, that prisoner and coward, who pollutes with his poison everything that man respects, whether it be under the name of law or under the name of inspiration. . . .
>
> God and men, religion and justice, Christ and the Revolution, are equally insulted in this book, and the success it has enjoyed will be the eternal disgrace of our century.[139]

[189] *Jesus*, pp. 94-7. In the same collection, p. 298: " He has degraded the person of Jesus "; and, pp. 317-20, against Renan's " idealism ".

CHAPTER V

PROUDHON THE THEOLOGIAN

" WE HAVE a right to say," Georges Sorel wrote,[1] " that if Jean-Jacques (Rousseau) owes a good deal to sentimental Christianity, Proudhon is an inheritor of French theology. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the revival of these researches into Proudhon's life and works, which we see today, may be a factor in leading laymen's minds back to theology, just as Rousseau's books did much towards restoring the prestige of devout literature."

That would be a splendid result. Truth to tell, we should be too hopeful if we counted upon it. The " revival of researches into Proudhon's life and works " has not been carried on outside certain restricted circles. We must also admit that here, as usual, Sorel's judgement has more vigour than balance.[2] It remains true, nevertheless, that our anti-clerical Proudhon deserves in his own way, and under more than one heading, the name of theologian.[3]

He was, we must first of all observe, a man of wide culture. Thrown in spite of himself—though even more by natural inclination than by circumstances—into the political arena, he always remained a man of study, meditative, seeking the truth. And his intellectual work, intense and assiduous, was always disinterested. Spurred on by an insatiable curiosity, his reading covered an immense field. It embraced philosophy, law, history, economics, religion, politics, science, the fine arts and literature. Despite his incomplete education—which he could make good only by studies somewhat ill-regulated, and which always was a trial to him—he was not at all a self-taught man who crammed everything into his head without digesting anything. His critical mind was unceasingly alert. He ploughed through everything but moulded his own thought. He knew how to judge and how to discuss anything,—he knew how to *appreciate* things. His prose, sometimes a trifle high-flown, a little confused also at times and slowed in its movement by

[1] ***Matiriaux d'une theorie du proletariat*\ p. 241, note 1.**

[2] **Sorel gives us another example of these judgements, also on Proudhon, when he says, *op. cit.*, p. 416, that he was " the only great philosopher France had in the nineteenth century ".**

[3] **Cf. Andre Rousseaux, *Proudhon et nous, loc int.*: " This frantic anti-clerical is an unsatiated theologian."**

dialectics,[4] is not only the prose of a born writer, it is the prose of an accomplished man of letters. Literary criticism several times tempted him, and Sainte-Beuve wanted him to give himself wholly to it.[6] No doubt he would have made a success of it, with that moralizing note which is hardly ever absent, whatever subject he tackled; the passages of this nature, scattered here and there throughout his works, are proof of that. In a century of Romanticism, instinctively he was all for the classical authors[6]—but not for their colourless imitators. He relied upon the old writers. His recollections and his impressions of country life found spontaneous expression in the words of Virgil, of that Virgil whom he loved above all others. For him, the *Georgics* were " the masterpiece of antiquity and perhaps of all mankind's poetry ". He had a great admiration for the A*Eneid.* " This poem, in substance and in form, surpasses the *Iliad" ;* is subject was wider and the finest there is—the general idea was not only, as in Homer, " virgin nature and the new-born gods, but man and his sorrows ". The A*Eneid* seemed to him to have been " for the western world as much a book of destiny as the Bible ". Nay more, he already saw in it, in a sense, " Christianity itself": therefore it needed Christians to understand it properly. Right up to the moment when the Revolution was drawing near " everybody lived on Virgil", so much so that in history the Christian cycle, which had lasted nearly eighteen centuries, could be called " the Virgilian cycle ".[7]

There we have one of those passionate excesses by which Proudhon allowed himself to be carried away, in admiring as well as in abusing. On September 26th, 1856, he wrote to his beloved Bergmann:

I spend my long and sad days reading some of the classics. I have read Tacitus, Suetonius, Horace, Sallust, Justin, and a few fragments of the Greeks. Chance having provided me with an Anacreon, I have made a very serious study of this Greek. I cannot tell you all I have discovered in these original texts, of which the substance is so well known and so much used. They seem to me to be still virgin quarries. We scarcely know the old writers except through the classical interpretations of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But if we read them with a mind sufficiently well prepared and broadened by

[4] **He once wrote to his friend Buzon: "I am disgusted with myself when I read you, and I compare the lifeless heaviness of my sorry dialectic with your sparkling and pyrotechnic display which never weakens." March 11th, 1864 (vol. xiii, p. 267).**

[6] **Cf. *Correspondance,* vol. ix, p. 233; vol. x, pp. 114, 230, 235.**

•To Ackermann, September 20th, 1843: "Literature is being reborn; the Romantic nonsense is crumbling every day ** (vol. ii, p. 103).

[7] ***Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 594-617. In this cult of Virgil, Claudel was later to agree with Proudhon: cf. the selected passages gathered together by A. Blanchet in *Paul Claudel, Pages de prose,* pp. 145-0.**

modern philosophy and the economic sciences, we discover a whole world at present forgotten.[8]

Now, in all this vast reading and this deep study the theologian is not missing. You have only to cast an eye over his works to realize that. In them the religious writers of the day are constantly quoted, criticized and commented upon, the Catholics, Maistre, Bonald, Chateaubriand, Lamennais, Nicolas, Wiseman, Bautain,[9] Lacordaire, Blanc Saint-Bonnet, Dupanloup, as well as the independents, Benjamin Constant, Michelet, Quinet, Renan, Sainte-Beuve. It is the same for the older authors, especially the great classical religious writers of the seventeenth century[10]; Bossuet, whom Proudhon admired more as a writer than as a thinker,[11] Fenelon, whom he began to read at a very early age. It is the same also for the professional theologians more or less in vogue at the time: Bergier, Dom Calmet, Berruyer, Frayssinous, la Luzerne, Abbe* Pluquet, Abbe* Lenoir, or the Anglican Spencer.[12]

During his first stay in Paris, though scarcely thirty years old, he was expert enough in these matters to be able to offer his services to Parent-Desbarres, the editor of a Catholic Encyclopedia.[13] We have already seen that this did not provide him with the livelihood for which he had hoped.[14] To a priest who sent him for consideration a manu-

•Vol. vii, p. 138.

• In 1839 he thought of going to spend a year in Strasburg, where he would hear " the only philosopher France possesses today, the abb6 Bautain " (to Pdrennes, March 13th, 1839; vol. i, pp. 104-5).

[10] Proudhon professed the greatest admiration for Catholcism in Louis XIV's reign. *M. L.* (vol. xvi), p. 87: " Under the pen of Bossuet, Fenelon, Fleury, Arnauld, Pascal, Bourdaloue, and Dom Calmet, Christianity gained a rationality and a splendour such as it had never had, even in the days of St. Augustine and St. Paul. Philosophy, the exact and the natural sciences, poetry and eloquence all helped in this Christian transfiguration. There was a pride and a joy then in professing the Gospel: the believer could say that divine reason and human reason were on his side. Christianity was more than a belief: it was the world's system, and man's and God's."

[11] *L. B.*, p. 52: " Bossuet is admirable as long as he is describing things. But when the lordly historian tries to hark back to causes, his philosophy is at fault." *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 629: " Your great style, however, and your unrivalled mould are left to us, like the dies and matrices of Gutenberg. . . ."

[11] See, for example, in *C. O. H.*, pp. 101-2, a theological summary after Bossuet, F&ielon, Bergier, la Luzerne, Frayssinous, etc. He knows Pere Hardouin; *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 599. For the first books Proudhon read, see Auge-Laribe, Introduction to the *Suard Award*, p. 3.

[18] To Maurice, March 24th, 1839: " I knock up an article from time to time for M. Parent-Desbarres' *Catholic Encyclopedia* " (vol. i, p. 106). To Huguenet, June 23rd: " Every day I turn out articles for Parent-Desbarres at seventy francs a page " (p. 134).

[14] To Maurice, August 18th, 1839: " Parent-Desbarres is suspending the printing of his *Catholic Encyclopedia*, and I shall not even be paid for all the articles I have supplied " (vol. i, p. 148). He will not be caught again for a similar task; to Bergmann, January 1st, 1841: " A publisher has offered me two thousand francs to work on a *Catholic Encyclopedia.* But he wanted eight two-column quarto pages a

script on " the mysteries of the Virgin " he gave a delicate and very apposite criticism.[16] Later, when Sainte-Beuve's *Port Royal* appeared he was able to give his opinion on the Jansenist quarrel,[16] etc. But more significant than these pot-boilers or occasional writings are Proudhon's pronouncements concerning the special interest he attached to theology. We have an instance, even before 1840, in the first letter from him which has come down to us. It was an answer to his fellow-countryman, Muiron, who had asked him to collaborate in a newspaper he was editing. In it Proudhon declared that " his own particular inclinations made him completely unacquainted with political quarrels and discussions". " What use could you make, sir, of a man who has done nothing all his life but metaphysics, languages and theology ? "[17] When he arrived in Paris in December, 1838, he presented himself to Droz, saying, " I have been doing dogmatic theology, and I think I should make a pretty good seminarist."[18] No doubt he denounced " the mania for theologizing " of some of his rivals ;[19] he refused to " mix theology with political economy, or, as the proverb says, to mix God with the plums";[20] but that did not prevent him from noting that " it is surprising that we always find theology at the bottom of our politics ".[21] No doubt also he affected to have a great contempt for classical theology; it pleased him to see in it only a distortion of Christ's teaching, as regrettable from the intellectual as from the moral point of view. He said, for instance, that it was " the science of the infinitely ridiculous ",[22] and that it had " damned more Christians

month, plus the revising of all the manuscripts and the reading of the proofs, which implied an already acquired universal knowledge, and fifteen hours a day. I refused. Besides, the man has already deceived me once and does not inspire me with any confidence " (vol. i, pp. 261-2).

[15] To abbe" X., June 22nd, 1839 (vol. iv, pp. 345-52).
[16] To Sainte-Beuve, April 25th, 1860 (vol. x, pp. 28-9).
[17] Vol. i, p. 2.
" To Pdrennes, December 9th, 1838 (vol. i, p. 70).
***[19] Just.*, vol. i, p. 412.**
[20] To Pierre Leroux, December 14th, 1849: " Whenever you like, my dear Pierre Leroux, I will give you a sermon on God, his Spirit and his Word, fit to make all the bluestockings of Socialism and their attendants weep; I can play as well as you or M. de Lamartine on that instrument. But allow me not to mix, etc. . . . This abuse of religiosity is one of the hoaxes of our day and Socialism must clear it out of literature and the press " (vol. xiv, pp. 291-2).—" *Meier le bon Dieu avec les prunes."*

[21] *Con.* (1849), p. 61. This text is quoted by Donoso Cortes right at the beginning of his *Essai sur le catholiclsme, le libiralisme et le socialisme.*

[22] *Prop.*, p. 146. " *The seed of the Son of Man,* fallen into idolatrous hearts, brought forth only a quasi-poetic mythology and innumerable dissensions. Instead of sticking to the practical consequences of the principles of morality and government laid down by the *Word of God,* they began to speculate about his birth, his origin, his person and his actions; they cavilled at his parables, and from the conflict of the most extravagant opinions about insoluble questions theology was born, a

than charity had nourished ".[23] That did not prevent him, however, from writing, with evident sincerity: " Let them laugh, if they want to, at my theological pretensions: it is a study I have never abandoned, and which still seems to me to be the most beautiful and most fruitful of all."[24] Moreover, though he was a great fighter against the Church, he did not cease to admire her teachings. Though he spent his life criticizing religion, the religious problem always haunted him. " I have been thinking of God since I began to exist! " he once exclaimed.[25]

Throughout his whole life, Proudhon maintained his interest in theology. It might be thought that his partiality for it had been fostered by his relations with the clergy. As a matter of fact, though not non-existent, those relations were neither numerous nor outstanding. Abbe* Astier, who taught him philosophy,[26] does not appear to have exercised any real influence over him, nor to have kept in touch with him; it is more likely that the spiritualizing philosophy which Abbe Astier taught appeared weak and insipid to the young man. Abbe Doney (afterwards Bishop of Montauban), who was a member of the Academy of Besancon, in reporting on the *Celebration du dimanche,* had recognized its exceptional merit, though qualifying his praise in his own way. Proudhon no doubt remained grateful to him, but he had no intellectual regard for him.[27] He must also have been grateful to the superior of the seminary, M. Brocard, who, with a few others, had upheld his cause when he had been obliged to defend himself before that same Academy of Besancon, in January, 1841.[28] He seems to have had, in 1850, cordial relations with the Chaplain of the Conciergerie, who even offered to collaborate with him.[29] Among the number of his Catholic friends

science which might be described as *the science of the infinitely ridiculous."* The contrast developed by Lessing and Herder between the *Evangelium Christi* and the *Evangelium de Christo* may be compared with this.

[23] *C.O.H.,p. 55.*

[24] *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 201. He added something which is not altogether without point in determining his sort of theology: " It is to my longing to probe the religious myths that I am indebted for having learnt the little I know."

[25] *Just.,* popular philosophy (vol. i, p. 283).

[24] A few years previously Astier had been Gerbet's master.

[27] To Tissot, October 10th, 1840: " I have never seen anything more pitiable, more iniquitous, more stupid than that article of the abb6 Doney (in the *Revue des Deux Bourgognes)* on the philosophic method and the Catholic method. I boldly expressed my thoughts about it, and this appears to have scandalized people. . . . Cheer up, philosopher; you are hitting hard, and you are hitting the mark, since the theologians are getting angry'* (vol. i, p. 232). Cf. *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 45.

[28] To Bergmann, January 31st, 1841 (vol. i, p. 296).

[29] To Darimon, August 21st, 1850 (vol. iii, p. 338). In a letter sent to Ackermann from Besancon on August 20th, 1838, he also speaks of an abbe Dartois, saying that he is very pleased with his hospitality and finds him much better than his reputation and thanks his friend for having " obtained " for him " such a pleasant acquaintance " (vol. i, p. 55).

was Abbe* Lenoir, who was very dear to him, and to whom he remained loyal until the end, though they do not appear to have corresponded very much.[30]

Another circumstance, already known to us, was a more determining factor, the demands made on him by his work. Compelled as he was, from the time he left college, to provide for the needs of his family, for nearly twelve years—save for a few intervals of unemployment—Proudhon was a proof-reader, a printer and master-printer. What was being printed at that time at Besancon was mostly works of theology. Just as Voltaire and Rousseau were being re-published, so were Bossuet and Fenelon and a host of less famous theologians. In the letter which he sent to the Academicians of Besancon applying for the Suard Award, Proudhon could well say: " The works of Bossuet, Bergier, etc., passed under my eyes; I learnt the laws of reasoning and of style from those great masters . . . I professed in turn all the heresies . . . recorded in Abbe Pluquet's Dictionary ".[31] In fact, the memory of that dictionary came back to him when he wrote *Justice* and held forth on the " Millenarian Gnostics ", the " Circumcellions ", the " Donatists ", the " Albigensians " and the " Little Brothers, the Beguins and the Turlupins ".[32]

When he established his own printing-house, we know that one of his chief concerns was to get rid of an edition of Bergier, which gave him a lot of trouble. Some people perhaps may be surprised to find him ranking this Bergier with Bossuet among the " great masters ". The truth is that the theologian Bergier was one of the glories of his own region. He was a priest of the diocese of Besancon (1718-90) and had twice been crowned by that same Academy to which Proudhon applied for help. The latter had not to " choose " Bergier as being particularly representative of the Catholicism he wished to fight because he was more " Roman " or more " absolute "[33] by nature; in that case la Luzerne, for instance, would have suited him better. He very naturally knew Bergier's works, grew accustomed to them and made a point of consulting them whenever any idea of controversy came into his mind. The *Traiti historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion* (1780) (An Historical or Dogmatic Treatise on the True

[80] **Cf. vol. xi, pp. 11, 265. He was one of the friends named by Proudhon as a member of the little circle who were to carry'out his last wishes. Together with Bourges, Boutteville and Neveu he formed one of a small group particularly dear to Proudhon. To Neveu, January 6th, 1862 (vol. xi, p. 323); to Bourges, December 31st, 1860 (vol. x, p. 377).**

[81] ***Suard Award*, p. 11. While with Gauthier, Proudhon also worked upon another edition of Berruyer's famous *Histoire du peuple de Dieu.***

[8]* ***Just.*, vol. ii, pp. 23-5 and 30.**

[88] **M. Guy-Grand seems to say that he had to choose him. *Justice*, vol. I, p. 34.**

Religion) was republished at Besancon itself in 1820. Proudhon himself helped in the printing of another of Bergier's works, his *Latin Bible,* in 1835. He republished Bergier's *Elements primitifs des langues* (The Primitive Elements of Languages), which had first appeared in 1764, and it was in this same volume that he published his own *Essai de grammaire ginirale,* which won for him the Suard Award. Finally he republished the Besancon theologian's *magnum opus,* the big *Dictionnaire theologique* (three volumes, 1788-9), which originally formed part of the scheme for the Encyclopedia. This forerunner of our present *Dictionnaire* (Vacant-Mangenot) was directed especially against Protestants and Deists. It formed a veritable *Summa,* in which Proudhon can be said to have learnt his theology. After a second edition, published in Liege in 1789, a third edition was brought out at Besancon, in 1826, thanks to Gousset. This third edition, recast, propagated the doctrine of Lamennais, then in vogue, which Gousset had later to retract in his *Thiologie dogmatique.* In 1834-5, Abbe Doney published a fourth edition, at Besangon again, which reproduced Gousset's edition, but certain passages, which savoured too much of Lamennais, were suppressed, and various articles added.[34] This was the edition which Proudhon helped to print. Subsequently, he often quoted the *Dictionnaire* of the " candid theologian "[35] and loved to refer to it to clear up a point of doctrine.[36] In *Justice,* when he had to speak about the dogma of predestination, he wrote: " This is how Bergier, the classical theologian, sums up the dispositions "[37]; and elsewhere[38]: " I quote my usual theologian, Bergier."

It may be said that Proudhon's theological readings and studies, however great the part they played in his life, were undertaken more from a political and social than from a really religious point of view. That is true, at least broadly speaking. Proudhon was more " prophet " than " mystic ", and the things of heaven seemed to interest him more especially in their repercussions on those of the earth. Such a frame of mind, however, he shared with the majority of the religious writers of those days, Catholics as well as Deists or unbelievers. Did they not all consider religion, more often than not, " in its relations to the political and civil order " ?[39] It would, moreover, be equally true to

[34] There was a fifth edition, further expurgated and completed, by Lefort at Lille; then a sixth, by Pierrot and Migne (1850).

[35] *Just., vol.* ii, p. 17.

•• For example, *Just.,* vol. i, pp. 319-20; vol. ii, pp. 192-3.

[37] *Just.,* vol. ii, p. 192. Notes and explanations (vol. iii, p. 285), "the honest Bergier ".

[38] *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 192.

[39] Title of one of Lamennais' works (1826).

say that he delved into the social and political problems until he came at last to the religious problem. Man's origin and original sin,[40] predestination, the redemption,[41] free will and grace[42]—without mentioning the problem of God Himself—all these were theological questions which he felt he must needs tackle. The *Creation de VOrdre* contains, for instance, a short sketch of Monogenism, which is not lacking in force:

> Did all the human races come from the same couple, as was for a long time believed on account of a false interpretation of Genesis? . . . The answer has already been given in Metaphysics. What does it matter whether man was born in one corner of the world, whence he spread to all the points of the globe, or whether he was a native of every latitude and every country? The unity of the race does not depend upon genealogical unity, but upon organic and especially upon teleological identity. What produces unity in the series is not the fact, for the fact is always different; it is the idea.[43]

In *Justice,* too, at the beginning of a statement on the mystery of predestination: " I ask the reader," he says, " kindly to go down with me for a moment into the depths of Christian theology; it is not any harder than going down a coal-mine."[44] There is perhaps not a single one of the traditional dogmas which he has not " explored " in this way.

In the days of his youth the traditional school (of which Bergier was one of the chief sponsors) was full of the glamour given to it by such names as de Maistre, de Bonald and de Lamennais. He was much influenced by it and believed, far too much, that a genuine expression of the Church's traditional doctrine could be found in it. This is largely an explanation, as we shall see later, of the criticism of Catholicism which he employed to introduce—and which, in his eyes, justified—his theories of immanence.[45] This also explains certain features of the doctrine with which his first writings are imbued. He accounted for " the sublimity of the Mosaic system ", for instance, by the fact that

[40] *P. M.*, vol. i, pp. 368-9; *Just.*, vol. i, pp. 455-60; cf. pp. 382-3.
[41] P. *M.*, vol. i, pp. 371-2.
" P. A/., vol. i, p. 374, etc. For Jansenism and Quietism, see *Justice,* vol. iii, pp. 465-9.
[48] *C. O. H.*, p. 251 (note to second edition). .
[44] just ., vol. ii, p. 191.
[45] Cf. *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 203: " As for (the Bible), as it has been explained by de Bonald and a host of apologists, it is the eternal Word himself who first transmits speech to the first man. . . . " For Joseph de Maistre, see *C. O. H.*, pp. 49-51. For Lamennais* *Essai, ibid.*, p. 62. Cf. his apostrophe to Bossuet, in *Justice,* vol. in, p. 629: " You are still in existence; you still live; whereas the Chateaubriands, the de Maistres and the de Bonalds are not worth anything save through the Revolution, which they ape while they contradict it."

" as, in virtue of the laws of human understanding, every primitive idea was necessarily universal, so all primitive legislation was bound to be a summary of philosophy '\[48] He saw in " revelation " " the substance of a universal and quite practical philosophy, of which the dogmas . . . have survived all social revolutions and all the corruptions and degradations of mankind "; unfortunately the understanding of them had been lost, and " our reason alone is not sufficient to defend them ".[47] With this idea in mind, he even roughly outlined for a while a quasi-system of apologetics, after the style of Joseph de Maistre, an ambiguous system which could equally well be turned into Naturalism:

There exists a primitive philosophy or religion, of superhuman origin, which became distorted before all the historical eras but of which the various races have preserved authentic and homologous traces in their worships. The majority of the Christian dogmas themselves are but the summary expression of so many demonstrable propositions; and by a comparative study of the religious systems, by attentively examining the formation of languages, and independently of all other revelation, the reality of the truths imposed by the Catholic faith can be established.[48]

These leanings to apologetics, however, already rather complicated, were not long in giving way to anti-religious tendencies. In 1851, in his letters on *La Philosophie du progres,* Proudhon, with Lamennais in mind, began criticizing this idea of a universal revelation and thus removed whatever was ambiguous in the passages we have just quoted. "Evidently," he then said, "to look upon Christianity in this way ", as being confirmed by the various forms of worship, would be to belittle it while seemingly exalting it, and the " wider Catholicism " thus created would lead, after all, only to " mystification ".[49]

Where another system of apologetics—concordism—was concerned, Proudhon was uncompromising. In the *Creation de l'Ordre* first of all,[50] and then in *Justice,* he explained how the system worked and showed how futile it was, with perfect clearness. His forceful style, without respect for anybody, should not make us ignore the soundness of his

[46] *C. D.,* preface, p. 32.

[47] To PSrennes, February 21st, 1838 (vol. i, p. 41). He would like to do a " philosophy of language " and he is thinking of a big work to be called " Researches into Revelation, or a philosophy to be used as an introduction to a universal history " *(ibid.,* pp. 42-3).

[48] *Suard Award,* towards the end.

[49] Second Letter, 1 *(Works,* vol. xx, 1868, pp. 86-8). Cf. Lamennais, *Essai sur Vindifference,* vol. ii, preface, etc.

[50] C. 0. H., p. 57 (Proudhon cites Cuvier, Buckland, Wiseman and Duclot's *Bible vengie);* cf. p. 155: " We know the unsuccessful attempts made recently to harmonize the cosmogonic days or periods of Moses with geological discoveries."

criticism. " How pitiful it is," he exclaimed, " to see the contortions of these would-be harmonizers who try to adjust their mythology to the demands of unyielding observations, which every day bring forth fresh discoveries! "[51] The Concordists or Harmonizers were " muddlers, who are kept busy from century to century continually making a fresh start upon their exegesis ". Whether it was a question of the days of creation, of the deluge, of the age of mankind, or of Monogenism, etc., they had always in reserve an interpretation which would show the marvellous foreknowledge of Moses. " We are ready," they seemed to say, "for any eventuality; whatever science may say, our text can be made to agree. *Quidquid dixeris, argumentabor"* Proudhon went so far as to call them " charlatans ".[52] He recognized, however, that many of them were honest men, and that if their apologetics were based upon falsehood, they themselves were the first victims. His fundamental grievance against them was their desire *a priori* to harmonize everything, and this he attacked on grounds other * than that of exegesis. Like the majority of the opponents of Catholicism —like Renan, for instance[53]—Proudhon was an " integrist ". He was suspicious where orthodoxy was concerned, and the liberal tendencies of the " young clergy " made him uneasy and he denounced them to his archbishop. He complained of " the relaxed dogmatism of Pere Lacordaire ". He did not agree with putting a " silencer " on certain dogmas, or with interpreting them "in a softer tone ". Could it be tolerated, for instance, that theologians should receive " into any kind of paradise unbaptized innocents ", or that they should abandon the doctrine on the small number of the elect ?[54] And how much some of them compromised with the spirit of the world ! All that Proudhon would concede was that they were often " more to be pitied than blamed ", for " reason speaks to their conscience, and every religious soul's first movement is to make its reason agree with its religion ",[55]

In his zeal, Proudhon slightly forgot that the most offensive thesis is not always the most orthodox, and that there are several ways, not all of them religious, of running counter to reason. *Non ideo rectum*

[51] *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 216-19.

[hi] *Loc. cit.*, p. 229; cf. pp. 17-19.

[58] Cf. Renan, *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse,* binding the whole Catholic faith up with the authenticity of Daniel or facts' of a like nature.

[5i] *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 219-20. For another example of this " integrism ", see p. 440.

[58] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 229-30. '' After all, a man of faith who, like Bautain, Lacordaire, Felix and Ravignan, makes a step towards science already gives proof of his goodwill and can scarcely be blamed for the confusion of which he is both the cause and the victim. The faith is so strong in his heart that it will not let him see how unworthy his fallacies are."

quia durum: it might have been useful for him to know that saying of St. Augustine.[56]

On the other hand, his fondness for straightforward statements and bold logic stood him in good stead in some of his other criticisms. Led astray for a while, as a youth, by Deism,[67] he was not long in seizing upon the inconsistency of this " would-be philosophical Theism ",[58] He explained its " popularity " to himself by saying that it was " convenient " for feeble souls who " while they give up the Christian faith and give themselves rationalistic airs, nevertheless desire to retain an element of religion '\[59] Confronted, however, with the " sublime thought" of a God concerning himself with man and following him in all he does, as the Book of Job shows him to be, he considered the idea of a God indifferent to mankind's affairs, of a Creator devoid of foresight, to be " the height of absurdity ".[60] Moreover, pure Deism was an impossible position to hold. " Once the idea of God, however metaphysical it may be, has been introduced into social practice, it tends to take on a physical reality, to set up a priesthood for itself and to bring back idolatry, Messianism and all the superstitions ", that is the inevitable chain which is forged if one is not prepared to drop the first link. For " civilization does not live by religious fictions any more than it does by legal fictions, it seeks the truth in everything, in other words what is real and positive. Place the idea of God in the forefront of a constitution and soon the people will want to see that God; they will enter into communication with him and assign to him prophets, apostles and a Christ ". The Utopians are the only ones who do not see that: this " taking on of a physical reality is fatal ".[61]

Proudhon was not less severe upon Protestantism, which, in his eyes, was the height of illogicality and instability.[62] His criticism, it must be added, was often unfair.[63] Without depth or originality, it

•• *De Civitate Dei,* lib. 14, chapter 9. Augustine adds: *aut quia stupidum, ideo sanum.*

[67] To Muiron (vol. i, p. 14).

[88] *Just.,* preliminary treatise (vol. i, p. 273).

[69] *Just.,* notes and explanations (vol. iii, p. 123).

[60] *Just.,* vol. iv, p. 353. He often expressed his contempt for the Eclectic school; for instance, his letter to Perennes, March 13th, 1839 (vol. i, p. 102).

*/ *Just.,* notes and explanations (vol. i, pp. 438, 441, 445).

[68] *P. M.,* vol. i, p. 369. *Just.:* " Protestantism, in virtue of its principle, necessarily tends, under pain of inconsistency, towards Deism." *.France et Rhin,* new edition, 1868, p. I l l : " Catholicism-Protestantism: absurdity of contrasting them. Protestantism is a sect, an inconsistency in its principle; today, a pure hypocrisy "; etc.

••Thus in *Federation,* p. 22: "Protestantism is dead: there is nothing now but Teutonic botchers who may call themselves Christians while denying the Church's authority and the divinity of Christ." To Ferrari, November 7th, 1859: " I believe that Protestantism, which is pedantic, sanctimonious, hypocritical, anti-poetic, iconoclastic, is repulsive to the Italian mind " (vol. ix, p. 222).

reproduced the commonplaces of controversy. Most frequently he spoke like a man attached to the traditional lines, like a Catholic outside the pale. In his utterances we can detect the influence of Joseph de Maistre, and even more that of Auguste Comte, though he did not follow them in the way they applied criticism of " private judgement" to things of State, which is valid only for the faithful within the Church's fold.[64] His national instinct at least made him admire the way in which the French writers in the age of Louis XIV, " with perfect sense and superior reason " had been able to divert heresy from France, and the manner in which he explains the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, if it does not entirely satisfy delicate consciences, at least has the merit of being by no means paltry:

> The lustre whjch had been reflected upon religion by science and letters was bound to produce a revival of piety and to give rise to a breath of intolerance. For my own part, I look upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes as being, under the circumstances, as necessary as Luther's protest had been one hundred and sixty-eight years previously. It was the whole of France which, after its clergy's brilliant works of controversy and exegesis, took up the idea of establishing unity in religion just as it had been established in the State, an idea essentially French and which I am astonished to see continually reviled by the Jacobinical democracy. Catholicism was so great and so beautiful in the writings of the new Fathers of the Church ! . . . As is always the case, royalty was an instrument of the nation: it is absurd to ascribe an act such as that to the tittle-tattle of pious women. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes was no more the work of Madame de Maintenon than the expulsion of the Jesuits was later that of Madame de Pompadour. It was the result of our centralizing genius, led astray for a moment by religious fervour.[65]

It might be thought that the strong national feeling in Proudhon, which made him oppose French Protestantism, would lead him to pass a favourable judgement upon Gallicanism. His shrewdness saved him from that. On the contrary, he had nothing but contempt for what he called " the most stupid of all oppositions, the most inconsequential of all happy mediums ",[66] It was either free thought or Ultramontanism ![67] The Revolution or the Holy See ! It will be seen

M. L., (vol. xvi), p. 43: " I know no greater disgrace for any period than that horror, private judgement, which betokens much less respect for established things than hypocrisy of conscience."

[65] *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 633, 634.

[66] *Conf.* cf. 360.

[67] *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 228-9: The Gallicans cry out against Ultramontane " inventions " and " superstitions ": " Can anything be more idiotic? Disputes of that kind were all right eighteen centuries ago. . . . The liberties of Gallicanism ! The tradition of the Concordat! As though the people stood to gain anything because their parish priest is the Prefect's man instead of the Bishop's man 1 "*

that, though he had a pretty poor understanding of Catholicism, his fondness for clearly defined positions made him at least appreciate the boldness and the strong internal logic of the Church. So he was able to justify—as also did Auguste Comte though in a different spirit—the extension of the Popes' power in the Middle Ages, and he had less reluctance than many of the faithful of his day in sharing the point of view of those who. upheld" infallibility.[68] His justification went much further than even the Church demanded, for the principle of the papacy, in its strictest sense, meant for him " the necessary supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal", in other words, " the preponderance of the Church over the State, of the visible head of that Church over all the heads of nations ". Since Christianity had "become the soul of civilization ", it was " rational and just" that " the sovereignty of the world " should be placed in* the hands of the papacy.[69] But what used formerly to go to the Church now went entirely to the Revolution. The truth was that Proudhon did not admit the Gospel division between the kingdom of Caesar and that of God. He who was so fierce in his strictures on the *Contrat social,* nevertheless yielded on this point to the long doctrinal tradition which had led Rousseau astray.[70] He regretted that Christianity, which had been able " to give back to the world the spiritual power which it had lost", had not been able to bring about a better union between Church and State. In his opinion, theology, in making a distinction, as it had done, between the two realms of the spiritual and the temporal, had exaggerated the implications of Christ's words, with grievous results for the community, for this division could only lead, in fact, to the setting up of two spiritual forces in opposition to each other, that which stood for the principles of civil order and that which stood for those of the religious order. From this a series of insoluble conflicts arose, as well as "the disorder, insurrection and regicide" which " afflicted Christendom ". What was more serious still, in countries like France which had been modelled on such a doctrine, it had given rise to a duality which was disastrous for the national conscience: "We have no general conscience, no judicial honour, no family spirit ".[71] Religion itself had gained nothing by it. The priest, en-

•• Cf. *Le drame de Vhumanisme athe*e*, second part.

•just ., vol. iv, p. 477.

[70] Cf. *Contrat social* Book 4, chapter 8. P. M. Masson, *La religion de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, vol. ii, chapter 5, pp. 178-204. Charles Maurras linked himself up with this same tradition when, in *Anthinea,* p. 60, he deplored " the unhappy cleavage which happened in the Christian era between the religious order and the civil order ".

[71] ..U.I., (1862), p. 97; cf. p. **21:** "The separation between the temporal **and** the spiritual, **pushed to extremes, amounts in theory to an absurdity, and in**

trenched in dogma and morals, could not speak of the conditions obtaining in the social sphere without drawing down upon himself reproaches from all and sundry. Consequently his preaching remained abstract and boring, and so did the ceremonies which he performed; they were meaningless for the people, who were not interested in the end for which prayers were offered, and who " on going into the Church thought they were passing out of one world into another ".[72] The division between temporal and spiritual took ail life and reality out of worship: was it surprising then if drowsiness and boredom were the outcome?[73]

There was one book which outdid all others in the moulding of Proudhon. It was the theological book *par excellence*, the Bible. It has been said that Proudhon was well acquainted with " Scripture and the Fathers of the Church ".[74] He had very little acquaintance with the Fathers, but was certainly acquainted with Scripture. A thesis might be written on " The Bible in Proudhon's works ", similar to those written on Bossuet, Hugo and others, and there would be an abundance of material. Not only could the numerous quotations be cited, but also a Biblical turn of mind which is everywhere apparent. The Biblical influence, as we shall endeavour to show, is strongly marked in the central idea of this work, to wit, the idea of Justice.

Working for Gauthier, at Besan^on, Proudhon had been employed upon an interlinear translation of the Bible from the Hebrew. He had also printed Bergier's Latin Bible, a copy of which followed him everywhere. On August 8th, 1858,—three weeks after he had been obliged to escape to Belgium without any luggage—he wrote to his friend, Gustave Chaudey, asking him to tidy up the things he had left behind in Paris and to send him a few books. " Among my books," he said, " I have a quarto Bible, in Latin, with notes in the margin in my own hand-writing, which I would not dispose of for a thousand crowns."[78]

His first work was very Biblical. To stress the benefits of the Sunday he appealed to Moses and the institution of the Sabbath. He drew

practice to hypocrisy " (*Just*, vol. iv, pp. 400-1,409). By reuniting the two powers the Revolution must put an end to this distressing situation.

[72] C. *D.*, pp. 46-7.

[73] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 366. This theology helps us better to understand Proudhon's attitude towards the clergy. In C. *O. H.*, he found the priests' position strange, they were " salaried servants, but not civil servants ", and he was anxious that an attempt should be made cautiously " to bring the Church back into the State " (PP, 375, 376).

[74] G. Guy-Grand, *Just.*, vol. i, p. 26. H. Moysset, too, *G.P.*, p. 72; Lucien Maury, *Lapensie vivante de Proudhon*, vol. i; J, L. Puech, *Porn.*, p. 304, and *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 94, note. There is some exaggeration there.

[75] VoLiriii,p.l35.

upon the Pentateuch for many items of the doctrine he outlined in his books on property. There, too, his " Socialism " must be sought, for that is the source from which he drew it. He gives his own explanations of this in *Confessions (Tun Re'volutionnaire*:

For light I did not go to the Socialist schools which existed at that date, and which were even then beginning to be out of date. I likewise ignored party-men and journalists, who were so wrapped up in their own struggles that they did not even dream of the consequences of their own ideas. Neither did I know or seek the secret societies: all these folk seemed as remote from the end I had in view as the Eclectics and the Jesuits. I began my work of solitary conspiration by studying all the old Socialist remains, which I considered necessary if the theoretical and practical laws of the movement were to be determined. These remains I found first of all in the Bible.[76]

During the course of the following years he carried on with his exegesis. Some young men had just founded at Besancon a sort of literary association for the region of the Doubs. They asked him to contribute an article to the magazine they intended to publish. He saw in this a splendid opportunity to satisfy at the same time his scientific bent and his spite, but he met with a discretion on their part which he had not anticipated. On July 31st, 1842, he told the story to Tissot, who was, he knew, always ready to encourage him in his fighting anti-clerical mood:

I offered them a little thing on philology which seemed to please them; there was some Greek in it and some Hebrew. There was something else also, the article in question turned upon the biblical exegesis in use in the Church, and the conclusion absolutely denied the understanding of the Scriptures by the theologians. As proof I cited, among other passages taken from the Prophets, three Psalms of which I gave a complete translation, together with a grammatical, logical and historical analysis, etc. (The article was refused.) I told myself that by myself alone I had more courage than the whole town of Besancon, for, mark this well, not one of the members was a better Christian than I.[77]

He had his revenge shortly afterwards. In March, 1845, the *Revue inddpendante*[78] published an article by him: " The *Miserere,* or a

[7e] *Conf.*, p. 173. Cf. Moysset, *G. P.*, p. 68: " The Mosaic legislation is at the root of his conception of law. In his early writings he gave almost a literal interpretation of it, but subsequently this was blended, without completely disappearing, with contributions from other sources." In his works are also to be found certain elements of " a polity drawn from the Scriptures "; thus, in *Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 488, 490.

" Vol. ii, pp. 58-9. Cf. to Antoine Gauthier, July 5th, p. 54.

" pp. 203-229. The article is reproduced in *Works*, vol. ii, (1868), pp. 273-306.

King's Repentance. Letter to Pere Lacordaire on his Lenten Sermons for 1845." Lacordaire was used only as a pretext. Proudhon had followed the Lenten sermons in the cathedral at Lyons, but, as regards the substance at least, his article was ready beforehand. The essential idea in " this sample of sacred philology " was that people were denied an understanding of the Bible texts if, instead of looking for the obvious meaning, they were read always with a view to finding in them figures and prophecies of Christ. Preachers should give up talking, as they had become accustomed to do, " about the insufficiency of reason, the necessity of faith and the metaphysics of the Trinity ". They should go back to the study of the sacred books. If they could then " show one word in the Old Testament which refers to the New, this pre-existence of Catholicism in Judaic thought is the greatest of miracles ". But a serious examination would take away that illusion. They would be bound to recognize that there is nothing in the Jewish Scriptures which refers " to the mission of the God-man, to St. Paul's journeyings, to the persecutions by the emperors or to Christian institutions", and the relationship between Catholicism and Judaism which they claim to establish would be seen for what it is: " a critical delusion, a false statement of history "[79]

The eternal controversy! It was this which in bygone days led the apologist St. Justin and the Jew Tryphon to cross swords. *Mutatis mutandis,* it still today places in opposite camps the experts in exegesis and the enthusiastic readers of Claudel. As often happens, the opponents cannot understand one another because they are not on the same level, neither are they speaking about the same thing. Proudhon did not help to clear up the misunderstanding any more than a good many others had done. By denying that the Jewish Bible contains in any way whatsoever the external details of the facts of Christian history he put aside a simplistic conception and an all too mundane view, but he did not even state the problem of scriptural symbolism and the figuration of the New Testament by the Old. It is to be regretted that he was not able to map out a *via media* between the " delusions " of the theologians and the preachers and the shortsightedness of positivist historians. He who was not impervious to the principles of symbolism, and who even made use of them to define the relationship between the Revolution and the Church, such as he saw it, he who one day wrote, " all history is figurative ", yet found himself blinded by his rank irreligious prejudices, just as others are

[79] *Works,* vol. ii, pp. 279-82. *M.L.,* vol. xvi, p. 26: "The Bible, in passing from the Israelites to the Christians, has been, as it were, travestied."

by their rank prejudices concerning methods. His narrow and too spiteful criticism had at least this to its credit, that it brought back to a scientific study of the Bible a clergy who had neglected it far too much.

He himself did not confine his labours to this analysis of the *Miserere,* In 1844 he was hoping soon to bring out a collection of his exegetical articles, and he flattered himself with the idea that such a volume would be for France " what Strauss's book had been for Germany ",[80] Again in 1853 he planned to publish a new book which, " improved by the addition of some Biblical studies on the lines of the *Miserere* ", would make a big octavo volume.[81] He wrote to Tissot that " now and again " he was doing " a little Biblical philology, to give our clergy a treat ".[8a] He kept up his knowledge of Hebrew. Occasionally he made use of it. Thus, in *Justice,* for instance, in the course of a treatise on moral sanctions, he put in a translation of, and a commentary on, the Eighteenth Psalm. The current translation of the first verse did not satisfy him. He translated it:

The heavens unfold the glory of God
and the firmament displays the work of his hands,

and rejected the *caeli enarrent* of the Vulgate, supporting his criticism with a long discussion on the original text.[83]

Among his posthumous works three volumes were published entitled *Bible annotie.* Another posthumous work in two volumes, *Ce'sarisme et christianisme,* has a large part which deals with the New Testament and Christian origins. Ail his life through he closely followed the work of the German exegetists, so far at least as the critical researches and the translations would enable him to do so. He was hard upon them. " The Germans," he said, " have adored the Bible too much not to say all the abominations possible about it."[84] Neither Strauss nor Feuerbach found favour with him. " By dint of mythologizing the Gospel" Strauss had failed to recognize "facts which were palpable and of a much more instructive realism "; this system " which

[30] To Bergmann, May 12th, 1844 (vol. ii, p. 127).
31 To Mathey, January 13th, 1853 (vol. v, p. 170).
32 December 22nd, 1853 (vol. v, p. 300).
33 *Just.,* vol. iv, pp. 354-62: " Glory, in Hebrew, is not declared; it is unfolded like a cloak, it is unrolled like a parchment (a book), as the author of the Apocalypse perfectly understood when, to depict the disappearance of the sky, he said it was rolled up like a book. It is the psalmist's very word, *me-saphrim,* the root of which is *sepher,* volume (sphere ?), which gave the Christian writer his comparison " (pp. 357-68).
[34] To Tilloy, September 22nd, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 136).

tends to interpret everything by myths spontaneously emerging from the consciousness of the masses is as false as the system of those who are called Rationalists ",[85] As for Feuerbach, his system of exegesis appeared to Proudhon not less "false and exaggerated". In his opinion, neither of them " had told the real truth about Mosaism and Christianity ".[8e]

Neither had Dupuis, who still has some followers, told the real truth. Once a certain Camille Magre sent to Proudhon a small book on the Life of Christ, of which he was the author. Proudhon recognized in it a popularization of Dupuis' theory on the origin of all forms of worship *(L'origine de tons les cultes)*, which origin he placed in the solar mythology. Wishing to be polite, he began his letter of thanks with a laudatory statement (his sincerity never ruled out courtesy), but the criticism soon followed, and it went deeply into the matter:

> Your idea, which is that of Dupuis, has always seemed to me profound and true. . . . But that idea is not the whole truth; and if it cannot be denied that astronomical speculation has served as a coating for the religious idea, it must also be recognized that it does not completely account for the idea in question.
>
> There lies Dupuis' error and the weak aspect of his theory. In the same way speech, although intimately connected with ideas, does not suffice, by itself alone, to account for all the operations of the understanding. . . . M. Renan fell into a similar error, when he thought he could explain Christianity by the superstition of a period and an individuals trickery, the individual being none other than Christ.[87]

We have already seen how severe Proudhon was in his judgement on Renan's *Vie de Je'sus*. As early as 1858 he had blamed " the mixture of Germanic erudition and ' *littirateurisme*'" in Renan. " That was not the way," he informed Tilloy,[88] " our real philologists behaved, an Abel R6musat, an Eugene Burnouf and a Letronne. They were entirely absorbed in learning and truth." Over against Renan's interpretation of the Gospel he set his own, and the two portraits of Christ which are the outcome are as different as they possibly can be. " M. Renan has imagined his hero as a pure mystic, an idealist and even a Quietist, a revolutionary through irritation and by accident and

" To Bergmann, April 23rd, 1861 (vol. xi, pp. 27, 28). Yet, it was to Strauss that he owed his idea that a large number of the Gospel facts were taken from the Old Testament; *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 603.

•• To Tilloy, September 22nd, 1856 (vol. vii, pp. 135-6).

• November 17th, 1863 (vol. xiii, pp. 171-2).

•• February 25th, 1858 (vol. vii, p. 332).

against his will; whereas for my part, I believe him to be above all else . . . a moralist, a social reformer, in fine a lover of justice."[89] He had, moreover, enough common sense to admit that his own " Christ" was not purely historical any more than the one depicted by others. His was a Proudhonian Christ just as Renan's was a Renanian Christ. " You will have no trouble in guessing," he wrote to J. Buzon, " that if M. Renan has created Christ to his own image, I could not fail either to create him to mine "; and, he added modestly, " until I have seen M. Renan's arguments, I believe my thesis is as well founded in history as his own ".[90] For our part, we should say, " not worse founded ". Renan's initiative would have at least one advantage: " Whatever may be thought of his work later . . . at least it will have struck a blow. The idea of a Christ pure man, of a real, human, historic person will have entered their heads. That is so much gained."[91] Here Proudhon was not thinking so much of the faithful as of the mythologists, the dreamers: " They scarcely believed in the Word, but they argued and spoke of Christ as though he were the Word; they stuck to Catholic conventions. M. Renan has made us part company with these conventions."[92] He did not then blame his opponent for the principles of his work. Neither did he blame him, in the long run, for an historical or even a psychological error; on such a subject no one could plume himself on being able to say absolutely, this is true or that is false, for " we only know about Christ what we are able to infer from the Gospels; and they are a word-puzzle which will never be completely deciphered".[93] Renan's error was more especially of a philosophical and spiritual order. It consisted in a sort of " mystical idealism ", the consequences of which were dangerous, for " the ideal . . . is the source even of sin, whenever it is given prepotency over practical reason, in other words, over morals."[94]

To set in relief the conception he himself formed of Christ, Proudhorf made use of two expressions in which we shall recognize once more his habit of exaggeration. Both of them, moreover, were dictated by the instinctive urge to take the opposite view to Renan. " With him [Christ]," he first of all said, " religion is a secondary thing."[96] We

•• To Defontaine, July 29th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 125).
•• July 9th, 1863 (vol. xiii, pp. 112,113).
[91] To Buzon, July 9th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 113).
[M] To Defontaine, July 29th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 126).
•» To Maurice, July 29th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 122).
•« To Buzon, July 9th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 113).
•• In still more paradoxical fashion he had said, in *C. O. H.*, p. 53: "As for Christ, his role as destroyer of religion cannot be questioned.**

must understand him to mean by " religion " that sentiment which, when dominant, leads so quickly to the " mystical idealism " of which Proudhon disapproved (and under which heading he mistakenly placed the spirituality of a St. Teresa or a St. Francis de Sales and all the various kinds of Quietism). What was predominant in Christ, on the contrary, was " the lofty sentiment of morality, and especially of justice ".[96] That was why he was the author " of the first and greatest of all revolutions ".[97] Incidentally, we might call attention to the close relationship between these views of Proudhon and the recent arguments of certain historians of religion, who readily contrast the two types, the mystic and the prophet. The former, according to them, withdraws within himself, shunning the illusion of the world, while the latter acts throughout history, preaching social justice and deploring the invasion by mysticism, particularly since the time of the pseudo-Denis, of a religion which in its evangelical beginnings, was pure prophetism.[98] Here Proudhon, who had no love for Protestantism, was producing an argument not unlike that used by many Protestants today against Catholics. He carried the argument to extremes. He insisted so forcibly on certain social consequences of the Gospel that he seemed to make them the sole thought of Christ.[99]

His second expression, several times repeated, was that Christ never said he was the Messias, on the contrary, he was " an anti-Messias ", " an anti-Christ ".[100] " According to M. Renan, Christ himself claimed to be the Messias; in my opinion, he was passed off as such by others."[101] The Gospels, " writings very carefully thought out, owing nothing to popular inspiration", came from men "filled with speculations about the Messias which dated from before the coming of Christ". They are the fruit of a " pious fraud " which may be explained by " the customs of the time " and their success should not unduly surprise us: "The Galilean remained so little known in himself, his mission was so short (from three to six months), the scene of his preaching so narrow, his disappearance so smartly effected, that at the end of twenty-five or thirty years nothing could have been known

•• To Buzon, *he. cit.*, pp. 112-13.
[97] *Toast a la Revolution (Le Peuple,* October 17th, 1848).
•• Friedrich Heiler, e.g. *La Priere, passim.*
•• Cf. *Toast a la Revolution*; " The Revolution eighteen centuries ago was called *The Gospel,* the good news. Its fundamental dogma was the Unity of God; its motto, the equality of all men in the sight of God. . . . Christianity created the law of nations, the brotherhood of races, it was in virtue of its dogma and its motto that idolatry and slavery were simultaneously abolished ", etc.
[100] *Jesus,* pp. 51, 111, 159, etc.; cf. pp. 132, 136, 242, 273-4.
[101] To Maurice, July 29th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 122).

about him."[102] Without closing our eyes to the grave implications of such an explanation, which puts a gulf between Christ and his disciples and thereby seems to make it impossible for us to recognize him through their testimony,[103] we may be somewhat reassured when we hear Proudhon saying, " Messianism is something quite different from what people believe it to be ''[104] and when we find this comment in *Cesarisme et christianisme*: " Christ . . . is anti-Messias, in the Jewish sense."[105]

Whatever may be said about these exaggerations and the toning-down that is necessary, whatever may be thought about our exegetist's thoroughly obvious lack of understanding with regard to the essential, it is certain that the figure of Christ commanded Proudhon's admiration in a manner beyond comparison. That is a fact which must not be overlooked. It stands out on more than one of the pages of his work, even on the very ones which are the best examples of the narrowness and inadequacy of his own points of view:

> The teaching of Christ was entirely social, it was neither political nor theological. He does not involve himself in the ambitious futilities of the powers, neither does he go astray amid the subtleties of theology and metaphysics. *Neque ambulavi in magnis, neque in mirabilibus super me!* He never theologizes.
>
> In Christ, the moral and social revolution by itself grows to consciousness; that is what makes it so precise, so strong, so fresh, so superior. . . . After eighteen centuries it remains as fresh and as superior, both in the event and in its purpose, as it was in the time of Pilate and Tiberius.
>
> In the balance of history, what weight today have all those doctrines, Judiac, Zoroastrian, Hermetic, Platonic, Gnostic, Cabalistic, etc., which, unmindful of the Galilean idea, for centuries fought for the possession of the human mind and sought to control reforms. What is Catholic theology itself, the heir and supreme expression of all these reveries ? Nothing, nothing, nothing. A new evolution of mankind has in our own days likewise brought all the sorrows of the people to

[108] To Bergmann, April 22nd, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 28). These considerations were still aimed at the mythologists. In the same letter, Proudhon wrote: " To my way of thinking, the Christian mythology or theology was produced by the Gospel writings, not the Gospel writings by Christian mythology."

[108] Cf. *Bibleannote'e, Nouveau Testament, Les Actes(1861)* p. 298: " Ecclesiastical history conceals and travesties the real character of that period, the myriads of evangelizers, all of whom boasted that they possessed the truth, and excommunicated one another and whose testimonies cancelled one another. No doubt it behoves Catholicism to keep the Christian current within narrow banks. But history, which has not the same motives to deceive, says that Christianity was a real overthrowing of the minds, complete anarchy, an extraordinary state of excitement, with each one bringing forward his idle fancies and trying to have them accepted as revelations." Cf. p. 324.

[104] *"Jesus,* p. 114, etc.

[105] *C. C*, vol. i, p. 121.

bursting-point, and, as in the first century of our era, it has ended in the same way. Justice, morality, liberty, fraternity: there you have the nineteenth century's last word, just as it was that of the first. The words and the ideas of Christ survive then, more powerful and more imposing than ever they appeared: the one single man in all antiquity whom progress has not lessened, and who is still our contemporary.[108]

In the notes which he had gathered together for his *Life of Christ,* Proudhon in the same way proclaimed that " Christianity was the greatest fact in the whole of history ",[107] and he sketched a portrait of its founder which was not very far from recognizing in him a veritable transcendency; save for one or two things, these are the very expressions which we have since found in the author of the *Deux Sources*:

The ancient philosophers were to Christ what the rhetors and humanists were to Homer, Pindar, Herodotus, Demosthenes. They laid down *precepts,* they did not produce any *works.* They did not even learn how to produce any . . .

What increases our admiration is the fact that it was not by his words alone that Christ rose to the standard of his own ideas, it was by his life. . . .

Socrates: his ideas are very far from reaching the lofty heights of Christ's. . . . Christ is higher than Socrates; and as his ideas have never had, and never will have, any to equal them, I have no hesitation in saying that his individuality is *without its equal ;* his genius, his speech are without their equal.

That could not happen twice in the history of mankind.[108]

Though we may rightly prize this testimony, we must not attribute to Proudhon's exegesis an importance which it does not deserve. He must not be transformed into a specialist in Biblical history or in the beginnings of Christianity. His article on the *Miserere* drew down upon him, it seems, severe criticisms from his friend Bergmann, who was a real scholar.[109] When, writing to this same Bergmann, he claimed to have " material all ready for a Life of Christ", he was labouring under several delusions. This was also the case when he added: " I likewise possess a very original treatise on Mosaism, which I might describe better by the words: Physiology of the human conscience according to the religious history of the Hebrews. This work is also well advanced

[106] C. C.,vol.i,pp. 119,121, 128.
[107] *Jésus*, p.261.
[108] *Jesus,* pp. 130-1, 142-3. Proudhon's thought, nevertheless, always remains far below the level of Bergson's.
[109] To Bergmann, July 15th, 1854: " I had a good idea that my *universe* might make you laugh, but that my learning would impress you very little; I make all my apologies for talking linguistics, seeing that I understand less than ever about them, etc." (vol. vi, p. 54).

so far as the material goes, the writing of it, as I have it in mind, being in my eyes a mere trifle."[110] We know that, when each of his works was on the stocks, he went through a phase of enthusiasm and infatuation. Moreover, he was not here in his proper sphere—he himself must subconsciously have felt this, for he never made the final effort to finish the work—and too many prejudices, into the bargain, warped his judgement as an historian. He called the evangelists " ridiculous compilers ".[m] His *Bible annote'e* is full of cursory remarks which show a lamentable lack of understanding, both of Christianity in general, and of St. John, whom he calls in one place "the smooth-tongued apostle ",[112] and especially of St. Paul. The Apostle of the Gentiles inspired him with sentiments similar to those voiced by Renan. " This man," he says, " is a type of the sectarian, jealous, obstinate and unsociable "; with him " speculation takes the place of conscience ";[113] whole passages in his letters are a veritable " bundle of subtleties ", " his mania for quoting and counterfeiting the Old Testament " leads him into " digressions ", his reasonings have us rolling about " in an abyss of absurdities ",[114] etc. He is " a maniac ", a man with a " false mind ".[115] Proudhon could sometimes admire the force of his writing,[116] but he does not appear ever to have been struck by the force of his doctrine.[117]. In *Justice* he gives an absurd interpretation of the " fraternal agape " in the early days of the Church, and goes on to defend his interpretation all through two long notes, by an exegesis of the fifteenth chapter of the Acts and of the First Epistle to the Corinthians; here, quite frankly, he is talking nonsense.[118]

There is no point in tarrying any longer on a part of Proudhon's work which cannot be reckoned among the strong parts. Once again, and despite his claims, Proudhon's exegesis counts for little. What really counts is his Biblical culture. This is great and it is profound. It stamps all his thoughts, and clothes all his literary work with a mantle

[110] To Bergmann, February 15th, 1864 (vol. xiii, p. 238).
[111] *Just., vol. Hi, p.* 599.
[lia] *B. A.*, vol. ii, p. 422; and on 2 Cor., vi. 14. He speaks of the " amphigouri " of the Fourth Gospel and says: " I have always regretted that this Gospel was placed among the canonical books " (p. 375).
"»/^«5,p. 156.
[u]* *B. A.*, vol. ii, for various passages of the Epistle to the Romans, and again: •• mystical solution of a purely psychic problem, inacceptable ".
[m] *Just., vol* iv,p. 84.
[116] *Op. cit.y* p, 242, on Gal. iii, 27: " *Christum induistis.* What a strong expression! Christianity has had two great writers in its origin, Christ and Paul. After them you have to come down to Bossuet."
[117] *Op. cit,* on the great text in 1 Cor. i: "A running fire of antitheses on the folly and scandal of the cross. A lot of twaddle more or less ingenious and subtle, but which denotes a false mind.**
''just .,vol.iv.

of splendour. The Bible was the great master for this self-taught man, " he spelt it out and passed it, like a rosary, through his fingers letter by letter during his youth as a printer, and the spirit of the sacred Book impregnated him all the more deeply because he himself was made of a stuff already saturated with the oral tradition of that Biblical imagery with its hundreds of various characters, whose colouring, life, movement and symbolic gestures brought a vivid touch to the grey tones of the ordinary background ".[119] Spontaneously, Biblical allusions and Biblical quotations came to his mind, just as secular ones from the classics did to others. Does he need a text with which to head his *Confessions*? He takes a verse from Deuteronomy: " *Levabo ad caelum manum meant, et dicam: Vivo ego in aeternum*—I will lift up my hand to heaven; and I will say: My *idea* is immortal."[120] At the end of the same book, he made use of Ecclesiastes to accentuate his famous invocation to Irony: " Thou didst formerly reveal thyself to the Wise man on his throne, when, looking upon this world in which he figured as semi-god, he exclaimed: Vanity of vanities ! "[m] When, in *Justice*, he wanted to sum up his thoughts on Auguste Nicolas' Apologia for Christianity, which was then so popular, he said: " M. Nicolas has read in Job these words of the Eternal One: *Quis est iste, involvens sententias sermonibus imperitis ?* That is the only sentiment I retained from the reading of his four volumes."[122] Speaking to those who upheld copyrights, he said:" The Governor of Judea's remark to St. Paul might be applied to you: *Multae te litterae perdiderunt."*[128] " In *La Guerre et la Paix*, Biblical reminiscences, images and metaphors abound, a hundred times more numerous than the quotations properly so-called. His inexhaustible memory supplied them to his changing i4eas, to sustain, revive and prolong his warring breath. This verse from Exodus served as an exergue to the first book: ' The Lord is as a man of war', and Job's cry * The life of man upon earth is a warfare' dominates the whole work. . . . It was not only detached sentences that Proudhon took from the sacred text. From the Bible he also borrowed that rhythm of life viewed as a conflict, which most ardently expressed in inspired words the idea of man's greatness and the idea of a nation's

"• Henri Moysset, Introduction to *G. P.*, p. 67.

[120] Deut. xxxii, 40.

[1,1] *Con.*, p. 341. Cf. *P.* Af,, vol. ii, p. 366, extolling human labour: " Whatever machine industry may start up, the driving power is always man. If the driver or the fireman leaves the locomotive for a moment, the marvellous vehicle, the wheels of which, as the prophet says, seem to be animated by a spirit, *spiritus erat in rotis*, stops immediately."

"*Just.*, vol. iii, p. 199. For other examples, see *Just.*, vol. ii, p. 380; vol. iii, p. 19; *P.* Af., vol. i, p. 351; to Micaud, March 19th, 1851 (vol. vi, p. 391),etc.

[1M] Af. L., *(Works*, vol. xvi, p. 15).

' mission '. That is why, even if he does not quote Ezechiel, he is continually echoing his wrath against all those who falsely prophesied all kinds of impossible peace. . . ,"[124]

A theologian from without the pale, a fanciful exegetist, Proudhon is one of the greatest representatives of the Biblical tradition in French literature.

[124] Henri Moysset, *be. cit.*, pp. 69-70. In *La jeunesse de Proudhon*, p. 115, M. Daniel Hatevy shows particularly what Proudhon first of all took from the Bible: " The narratives of Genesis, the Mosaic prescriptions and the psalms, these were the sources in which he wished to find again the lost secret of order. The Bible pleased his traditionalist taste and his revolutionary taste: for the old book was written at the dictation of the poor and for them; all its prescriptions, so linked together, as solid as a natural whole, conspire together to maintain a race of workers **and** equals, guaranteed by their worship, by their morals (it is all the same thing) against oppression by the great."

PART THREE

PROUDHON'S DIALECTIC

CHAPTER VI

PROUDHON, MARX AND HEGEL

THE FIRST meeting between Proudhon and Karl Marx must have taken place in Paris, in September, 1844. Marx was then twenty-five. He had been in France since October, 1843. Proudhon was thirty-five.

No document has come down to us directly about this meeting, nor about the months which followed. Neither in his Note-book for 1844 nor in his letters of that period does Proudhon make any allusion to it. What we know is retrospective. The two men could have seen each other often for the whole of one year: Marx was expelled from France in December, 1845, and retired to Brussels. It is probable that during the course of that year in Paris they held long conversations together, similar to those which Proudhon had two years later with the Russian, Bakunin.[1] " I know more than twenty Germans, all of them doctors in philosophy ", he wrote to Micaud, on November 7th, 1845.[2] Among them were Karl Griin, Ewerbeck, Arnold Rtige, the younger Fichte and Marx. Marx afterwards wrote: " In the course of long discussions which sometimes went on all through the night, I infected him, to his great detriment, with a Hegelianism which he could not go deeply into because he did not know German."[3]

According to Marx then, Proudhon, having made the acquaintance of Hegel through him, wanted to apply the Hegelian method to his social studies, but, having badly understood it, the application which he tried to carry out was not worth anything. " Up to a point, I am responsible for his ' sophistication', a word used by the English to denote the adulteration of goods ".[4] The assertion was made as early

[1] **Of these Herzen has preserved the memory for us: *Byloe i Dumy*, quoted in *Herzen et Proudhon* by Raoul Labry, p. 42. Cf. C. Bougte, *Chez les prophdtes socialistes*, p. 157: " Herzen relates how one evening, in 1847, Karl Vogt, tired of listening to Bakunin and Proudhon holding forth on Hegel's system in the musician Reichel's house, rue de Bourgogne, went straight home. He came back the following morning to take Reichel to the Botanical Gardens. What did he see? Proudhon and Bakunin, seated where he had left them, bent, on carrying on the discussions begun the previous evening." " It is probable," adds M. Bougte, " that Proudhon had already spent nights with Marx in this fashion. In those two brilliant heads French civilization and German civilization faced each other and, in accordance with Heine's wishes, exchanged weapons."**

[f] **Vol. vi, p. 353.**

[8] **Letter to the *Sozial-Demokrat*, January 16th, 1865. Marx also said: " What I had begun, M. Karl Grun continued after my expulsion from France."**

[4] ***Mistre de la Philosophie*, French trans., 1896, p. 249.**

as 1847, in a work which Marx wrote in Brussels and which he published in French under the title, *La Misere de la Philosophie* (The Distress of Philosophy). " M. Proudhon," he said, " possesses of dialectic naught but the language. " He reasserted this after Proudhon's death, in the letter to the *Sozial-Demokrat* already quoted:

I have shown how little Proudhon had penetrated the mystery of scientific dialectic; and how much, on the other hand, he shared the illusions of " speculative " philosophy. . . . Never having understood scientific dialectic, he got no further than sophism.

[Believing himself to be a revolutionary and a dialectician], he is at bottom nothing but a little middle-class man continually tossed about between Capital and Labour, between political economy and Communism. . . . The little middle-class man is always saying " on the one hand " and " on the other " . . . He is a living contradiction. If, like Proudhon, he also has a sense of humour, he will be able to juggle with his own contradictions and, as the occasion requires, turn them into striking, loud, and sometimes brilliant, paradoxes.[6]

Marx's assertion, together with his valuable opinion, have been used by several historians of Proudhon and of his thought. Renouvier, for instance, who, however, gives no details of the relations betw.een the two thinkers. " Fascinated," he wrote, " by the Hegelian method, though he did not even know how to use it . . ."[6] More especially, M. Armand Cuvillier, in the second volume of his work *A la lumiire du marxisme*[1] (In the Light of Marxism):

Proudhon, who . . . claimed to be a philosopher and who had already, in his own expression, " heard Hegel spoken of ", must eagerly have questioned Marx. . . . Notice that it was precisely at that moment, as his letter of October 24th, 1844, shows, that Proudhon conceived the idea of the *Contradictions dconomiques,* in other words, the idea of applying the dialectical method—more or less understood—to economic facts.

But judgements such as these are very unreliable. Renouvier's article, from beginning to end, is nothing but a pamphlet, full of unjust reflections and accusations.[8] M. Cuvillier's chapter one cannot help finding

[5] Reprinted in the new edition of *M. P.* (1896), pp. 250, 257.

[6] L'*annde philosophique,* 1867, p. 64; p. 65: " He had recourse to Hegel's sophistry."*

[1] *Karl Marx et la pensee moderne,* first part, p. 162.

[3] As is also F. Pillon's article on L'*antithiisme de Proudhon,* which appeared in *ha critique philosophique,* 1874-5, vol. ii. See also Renouvier, *loc. cit.,* p. 74: " a sophist's manners "; " entirely devoid of intellectual honesty "; he must ** have spent his life insolently playing with ideas . . . and have died before his mind matured ".

extremely biased. Everything in it, in accordance with the spirit of propaganda of the work in which it appears, is fashioned to the greater glory, or rather to the sole glory, of Marx and Marxism. The slightest assertions of the semi-god are blindly followed in it.* There remains the testimony of Marx himself, who must needs be criticized. In his utterances a violent hostility can indeed be felt towards Proudhon, with whom he had been at variance in a very short time.

This estrangement is explained above ail by " Proudhon's frankness and strong individuality ",[10] whereas Marx " needed to reign alone '[11] In May, 1846, Marx had written from Brussels to Proudhon to try to interest him in a scheme which he wanted to create for a regular exchange of letters between the Socialists of different countries: the first rough outline of an " Internationale ". Proudhon had accepted in principle, but had refused, quite politely, to be roped into a body. Distrusting Marx's dogmatism and his tyrannical instinct, he had warned him against the temptation to which his fellow-countryman, Martin Luther, instigator of a new intolerance, had succumbed: " We must never look upon a question," he had said in concluding, " as exhausted, and when we have used up even our last argument, we must begin all over again, if necessary, with eloquence and irony; on that condition, I shall be pleased to join your association, otherwise, no ! "[12] A more serious thing was that Proudhon had refused at the same time to take sides with Marx in a quarrel which the latter was trying to force upon Karl Grun.[13] He had defended Grun in terms of great tactfulness and even tried to bring them together in a common work.[14] Finally, he had published a book, *La Philosophic de la misire.*

[9] Cf. Georges Duveau, *Proudhon, Bakounine et les reactions ouvrieres des amies* 60, in *Esprit*', 1937, p. 13, note: " Proudhon treated *in the light of Marxism* takes on the curious aspect of a talkative little boy all entangled in Platonic metaphysics and anti-working class sentiments."

[10] Edouard Dolleans, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier en France,* vol. i, p. 219.

[11] Otto Ruhle, *Karl Marx,* French trans., p. 108.

[12] "To Karl Marx, Lyons, May 17th, 1846 *(Con.,* appendix, pp. 434-5). That sentence alone makes the contrast between the two men and their two thoughts stand out. One cannot help recalling Peguy's stand against the unified Socialists.

[13] As a postscript, Marx had added: " There denounce M. Grun to you, in Paris. That man is nothing but a literary adventurer, a sort of mountebank who would like to deal in modern ideas. . . . Moreover, that man is *dangerous.* He *takes advantage* of the acquaintance he has made with well-known authors. Beware of that parasite. . . . " *(Con.,* p. 433.) Among the Parisian cabinet-makers Grun was spreading not so much Marx's ideas as those of Proudhon himself (mixed with Feuerbach's); hence, no doubt, Marx's jealousy; warned by Engels, he was trying to set the two men at variance. Such at least is the explanation, a trifle malicious where Marx is concerned, put forward by M. Daniel Halevy, *Proudhon d'apris ses Cornets inidits,* in *Hier et Demain,* 9. **1944, pp. 40-2.**

[14] *Con.,* **pp. 436-7.**

in which Marx could discern traces of his own influence and the influence of his master Hegel, but already liberally assimilated.[16] That was enough. Marx was " vain and jealous ",[16] he had " the disastrous knack of not being able to settle a quarrel without leaving in his opponent's blood the poison of personal raillery ",[17] From that time onwards, and until the end, the flow of criticisms directed by Marx against Proudhon[18] never ceased, and Proudhon, in turn, showed himself equally severe where Marx was concerned.[19]

In the *Sainte Famille,* which appeared in January, 1845, Marx, together with Engels, was still loudly praising Proudhon, whom he was defending against E. Bauer. He professed to admire the two books on property, this " scientific manifesto of the French proletariat", and did not at all look upon their author as his disciple. In June, 1847, the position was completely reversed. In the *Misere de la philosophie* (Distress of Philosophy) composed during the winter of 1846-7 as a reply to *La Philosophie de la misire* (Philosophy of Distress), Proudhon was attacked and ridiculed, so much so that this work earned for itself the title of *The Anti-Proudhon.*[20] In it Marx scoffed at " the flood of his twaddle " and tried to show " how little he had penetrated into the mystery of dialectic ". Later he spoke of his " hotchpotch ".[21] At the time of Proudhon's controversy with Bastiat, Marx wrote: " This surpasses in charlatanism, in poltroonery, in bluster and in weakness, all the other productions by the same author "; " our little man," he

[15] **M. Hatevy gives yet another reason: " Proudhon had been the first among the Socialists to study in the school of the Economists and had endeavoured to put into scientific shape what had been until then merely dreams and Utopian ideas. Now that was what the young Marx had intended to do. Forestalled, he must have been annoyed " *(JLoc. cit.,* p. 49).**

[16] **Bakunin, quoted by Otto Ruhle, *op. cit.,* p. 307.**

[17] **Otto Ruhle, *op. cit.,* p. 129.**

[18] **We find him constantly writing the expression of sovereign contempt " lower middle class " *{petit bourgeois)* (in the edition of *M. P.* already mentioned, pp. 201, 248, 256, 257). '' Bombastic style ", " a showman's and braggart's tone ", " the clumsy and disagreeable pedantry of a self-taught man posing as a savant" (p. 253), etc.**

[19] **His famous saying is well known: '' Marx is the tapeworm of Socialism " (fifth *Cahier,* p. 169). He also wrote, for instance, to Edmond, August 28th, 1851: " I had a visit from Fichte's son. He informed me that A. Ruge, Marx and Grun form the soc.-democ. triumvirate for Germany. Is it true ? At all events, I have no reason to be pleased with the influence the said triumvirate would have upon the ideas of the French refugees in London. Their manifestos to Europe will always be just as empty, just as cracked, as the famous circulars " (vol. iv, pp. 92-3).**

[20] **Proudhon wrote in the margin of his own copy (p. 113): " Actually, Marx is jealous." It was Marx himself who gave this name to his book (Otto Ruhle, *op. cit.* pp. 117-18).**

[21] **To Engels, August 14th, 1851 (Marx et Engels, *Correspondance,* Molitor's trans., vol. li, p: 179). Engels likewise called Proudhon a " charlatan "; he saw in him " a mixture of Girardin's publicity and Stirner's braggadocio " *(ibid.,* p. 201; August 27th, 1851). " Hotchpotch *(fatras)*": this was also the reproach thrown at Peguy, who proudly accepted it, seeing in it " liberty's Christian name ".**

added, " makes a great show of Hegelian dialectic ".[22] Again in 1866, to Kugelmann:

These Parisian gentlemen . . . are really extolling common middle-class economics, being satisfied with an idealism after the style of Proudhon ! Proudhon has done enormous harm. His semblance of criticism and his semblance of opposition to the Utopists (he himself is only a little middle-class Utopist, whereas in the Utopias of Fourier, Owen, etc., you find a presentiment and a whimsical expression of the new world) seduced and corrupted first of all the " radiant youths ", the students, then the workmen, especially the Parisians, who, as makers of luxuries, remain strongly but unconsciously attached to all the old rubbish.[23]

Briefly, for Marx, Proudhon, who was incapable of understanding the Hegelian philosophy which Marx had revealed to him, was a " living contradiction ". But we also know that Marx, " who could be personal even to the point of madness ",[24] was biased in his judgement of Proudhon.

If we now question Proudhon himself, his retrospective statements appear to be contradictory. He seems to agree, on the one hand, that he did not know Hegel at all until he met Marx and the little group of German Hegelians who revolved round him, and that, once he had come to know him through them, he wanted to apply his method. But, on the other hand, we never see him figuring as a disciple under them.

Efforts have been made to corroborate on this point Marx's assertion by Karl Grun's. This could only be done, however, by a misinterpretation. According to Marx, Grun boasted that he had taught Proudhon German philosophy. Proudhon himself answered that immediately: " Griin revealed nothing to me at all, if he says he did, it is a piece of impertinence on his part, for which I am sure he is sorry."[26] Saint-Ren6 Taillandier gave the mistake confirmation in an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in which he mistranslated one of Grun's sentences.[26] Langlois, the editor of Proudhon's letters, was mistaken in turn: " It

" To Engels, November 24th, 1851 *(ibid.*, pp. 250,251).

"November 9th, 1866. *Lettres a Kugelmann*, Marxist Collection, 1930, pp. 60-1. Cf. Karl Schunz: "' Middle class' was the term applied by Marx to everybody who dared to contradict him " (in Otto Ruhle, p. 165).

[24] Bakunin. " He only loathed Proudhon because that great man's name and his legitimate reputation seemed to be prejudicial to him. There is not a single ugly thing that he did not write against Proudhon " (in Otto Ruhle, p. 307).

" To Karl Marx, May 17th, 1846 *(Con.*, p. 436). Proudhon, moreover, had no intention of harbouring resentment against Grun for what was, if it *is* true, only "a little fit of vanity".

" *Uatheisme allemand et le socialisme francais, Revue des Deux Mondes,* for October 15th, 1848.

was Karl Grun", he wrote, " who gave him the substance of the Hegelian ideas."[27] The same assertion was made by Henri Baudrillart,[28] M. Henri Michel,[29] M. Paul Thureau-Dangin[30] and M. Georges Gurwitch.[31] Sainte-Beuve, however, had not failed to notice the mistranslation made by Saint-Ren6 Taillandier. For that matter, to clear up the question, it suffices to read, even in Taillandier, the whole of the page written by Griin. The latter does not say that he taught Proudhon about Hegel: on the contrary, he says that Proudhon knew him already, and that he had " perfectly understood " the principle of dialectic," that immense truth, where so many Frenchmen have found their Waterloo ". " But," added Grun," he did not yet know how German philosophy had been disintegrated by criticism, or how all philosophical systematization had been annihilated. I had the infinite pleasure of being, *on this point,* the, so to speak, *privat-docent* of the man who, since Lessing and Kant, has not been surpassed perhaps by anybody for the vigour of his penetration."[32] This account is dated January 4th, 1*845, a fortnight after the event. Grun had made notes of his conversation on the day itself, and his two statements agree perfectly: " December 20th, 1844. Today I spent a delightful hour with Proudhon. We exchanged a hundred million ideas. I spoke to him of German philosophy and of its disintegration carried out by Feuerbach. . . . I tried to show him the series of ideas by which Feuerbach succeeded in annihilating religion . . . how through him knowledge of the absolute had become an anthropology."[33] In short, what Griin revealed to Proudhon, according to Grun's own testimony, was not Hegel, but Feuerbach (Feuerbach, in whom he saw the culmination of all the efforts of German thought, and whose posthumous papers he afterwards edited).

[27] **Proudhon's *Correspondance,* vol. i, p. xxvi.**

[28] ***Revue des Deux Mondes,* February 1st, 1873, p. 607: " The influence of Hegel and his method came to him through the young German. . . ." The writer, it is true, afterwards corrects himself: " Grun appears to have introduced him more to Hegel's disciples, such as Feuerbach, than to Hegel himself."**

***L'Idie de VEtat,* p. 412: "The famous interviews with Karl Grun, thanks to which Hegelianism was able, generally speaking, to find its way into Proudhon's mind."**

***° *Histoire de la monarchic de Juillet,* vol. vi, p. 139: " The Hegelian dialectic, the mysteries of which had just been revealed to him (he had been initiated into them by M. Grun, a kind of Hegelian missionary who came to Paris in 1844)."**

****L'Idee du droit social,* p. 331. In the same way, also M. Jacques Bourgeat, *Proudhon, pire du soctalisme francals,* p. 74.**

•• Quoted by Sainte-Beuve, p. 210. As Sainte-Beuve points out, the words " on this point" in the last sentence were omitted by Saint-Rene Taillandier in his translation of the same passage, *be. cit.,* p. 297.

•• Sainte-Beuve, p. 211. " Proudhon," Grun goes on, " listened to me so attentively that I should have been embarrassed had I not been somewhat covered by the twilight shades which were then falling. . . . A weight was lifted from Proudhon's heart when I explained to him how criticism had let daylight into Hegel's grandiose bombast" (p. 212).

Proudhon at once understood the full implication: " I saw," Grun goes on to say, " that he knew how to profit from the translations and the analyses by the striking remark he made to me about Feuerbach, ' But that is the fulfilment of Strauss's work !' "[34] Griin was right in admiring the appropriateness of the rejoinder. Where he laboured under an illusion was when he concluded: " I hope that thus I have prepared the way for an immense result: in future there will be but one social science on both sides of the Rhine."[35] Proudhon assimilated the lesson right away: but that did not mean that he approved of it. On the contrary, we find him busy refuting Feuerbach the next day. He did not deny his importance, but he scarcely followed his philosophy any more than he did the exegesis of Strauss. The Note-books of 1845 and 1846 bear witness to his first reactions, which were very sharp, and from the first page of *La Philosophie de la Misire* he took up a clearly defined stand against the Humanism of Feuerbach.[36]

When he began his relations with Marx and Grun, Proudhon already knew something about Hegel for at least five or six years. Witness a letter he sent to Tissot on December 13th, 1839: " Hegel's logic, such as I understand it to be, satisfies my reason infinitely more than all the old apophthegms which have been stuffed into us from our childhood, to account for irregularities in our reason and in the community."[37] Witness is also borne to this fact by some of the passages in his first[38] and second[39] works on property, where there is question of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Grun also, decidedly more objective than Marx would have us believe, had observed it: " He was sufficiently interested in German learning to put his ear to the ground every time there was a movement of the mind on the other side of the Rhine. . . . He was able to make his own the very substance of our learning, and it was with our ideas that he loaded his cannons against property."[40]

[34] **Sainte-Beuve, p. 213.**

[35] **Saint-Rene Taillandier, *be. cit.*, p. 297.**

[36] **See below, chapter ix. In 1850, Proudhon refused to preface his new edition *of Philosophie de la Mistre* with a study by Griin on the relation between Proudhon's thought and Hegel's: to BoutteviUe, July 20th (vol. iii, p. 315). M. Lucien Maury recently wrote, in his Introduction to Selected Pages from Proudhon: " He thought he was drawing closer to Hegel during his long conversations with Griin and with Marx." The restricted sense in which such an assertion must be taken is easily seen (vol. i, p. 17).**

[37] **Vol. ii, p. 231.**

[38] **In 1840. '' The community . . . is the first term in the social development, the thesis; property, an expression which contradicts the community, makes the second term, the antithesis. There remains to be found the third term, the synthesis, etc." (pp. 324-4). Cf. Rist. *Histoire des doctrines e'eonomiques*, fourth edition, p. 349, note 4.**

[39] **The two schools . . . are thesis and antithesis to each other; there remains to be found then the synthesis, etc." (p. 78).**

[40] **January 4th, 1845 (Sainte-Beuve, p. 210).**

Yet Proudhon could not have read Hegel himself, either in the original, for he did not know German, or in a translation, for, with the exception of the treatise on Aesthetics, Hegel was not translated into French before 1875 (by Vera). On January 19th, 1845, he declared: " I have never read Hegel."[41] He could have had only an elementary knowledge of him, possibly not very accurate, through a few reports and commentaries which appeared in French.[42] It was these he used for his account and criticism of the Hegelian system in two paragraphs of the *Creation de l'ordre*[43] and he made use of Willm when he spoke of it again in *Justice*[44].The modest phrase he employed in the letter quoted a few moments ago will have been noted: " Hegel's logic, such as I understand it to be . . . "

Whatever his knowledge of Hegel may have been at the time he met Marx, it must be borne in mind that by then he was no longer a young man. He had come under various influences, in particular that of Fourier, his fellow-countryman, who was himself fond of dialectic; and their discussions are related at length in the *Creation de l'ordre.*[45] Proudhon had his ideas. He had his dialectic. He had taken pains to work out in detail a " seriel" method (i.e. connected with his "series") and to determine some categories.[48] It was rather Marx, younger by ten years, who might well have learnt from him, and perhaps Marx does owe him more than he admits and more than is usually asserted.[47] It is certain that in the early years after their meeting Proudhon's thought had rapidly made its way into Germany and Austria[48] as well as into Russia, and his name was soon famous in those countries. Yet,

[41] To Bergmann (vol. ii, p. 176).

[42] The works of Cousin, Willm, Barchou de Penhoen, Lebre, Ahrens. Cf. Bougie and Cuvillier, *C.O.H.,* pp. 19-20; G. Gurwitch, L'*idie du droit social* (1932), p. 331, note 5.

[43] Paragraphs 210 and 211 (pp. 162-3).

[44] *Just.,* vol. iii, pp. 499-503.

[45] Paragraph 214. " An exclusive genius, undisciplined and solitary but endowed with a profound moral sense, an exquisite organic sensitiveness and a prodigious divinatory instinct, Fourier leaps at one go, without analysis and by pure intuition, to the supreme law of the universe. He did not know the ' seriel' *theory*; the irregular classifications and the whimsical formulas of which his books are full are proof of that; he discovered nothing either in science, in art, in metaphysics or in industrial organization. . . . But he was the first to have the universal idea of the series; he conceived its transcendency; he sought an explanation for it; he had an inkling of what was absolute in it. . . . That suffices in our eyes to win for him the title . . . of discoverer of the ' seriel' law " (pp. 166-7). In the 1849 edition, Proudhon added a note in which he said that that was " paying too much honour " to Fourier.

"*Cf. Con., p.* 177, note.

[47] M. Droz contends even that at that time Proudhon taught Marx certain principles of historic materialism; *P. J. Proudhon,* pp. 88-9. But the texts he quotes are too belated to be convincing; none of them dates from before **1848.**

[48] It was made known there by the intellectual refugees, but also soon afterwards by the workers. Cf. to Javel, October 12th, 1848 (vol. xi, p. 377).

open to all influences, Proudhon had at that time a bout of more pronounced Hegelianism, at least on the surface; hence a phrase such as this, which we find in a letter to Ackermann, on October 4th, 1844: " I make use of the most profound dialectic: Hegel's."[49] Hence also these remarks to Langlois a little later: " My real masters, I mean those who give rise to the most fruitful ideas in me, are three in number: the Bible first of all, then Adam Smith, and lastly Hegel."[50]

There came a time when he owned up to this passing fever of Hegelianism, and even exaggerated it. He reproached himself for it, criticizing Hegel from the standpoint of his own method, better established and better-informed. He spoke of the " serious mistake " he had made " on the strength of Hegel" and which he was " busy correcting everywhere ",[61] In one of his notes in *Justice,* he said that, following Hegel's " example ", in his *Contradictions economiques* he had adopted the idea of synthesis, but that he repudiated it henceforth.[62] Also in the *Thiorie de la propridte:* " Hegel's dialectic, which in my *Systeme des contradictions economiques* I had followed, so to speak, with confidence . . . " These admissions go too far. As M. Roger Picard has rightly said, when he was writing the *Philosophie de la misire,* Proudhon " saw that there was a kinship between the Hegelian method and his own, and he was both charmed and surprised by this flattering encounter ".[M] In actual fact it was rather a language than a doctrine that he borrowed. We shall see that the " synthesis " in *Misere* was, despite its Hegelian name, already nearly the "equilibrium" of *Justice* and of *La Guerre et la Paix.* Moreover, a letter to Bergmann of January 19th, 1845, announcing the idea of the new work, seems to make the matter quite clear:

. . . It is this need of discipline for the reason, which I thought I was the first to inaugurate under the name of " Seriel" theory or dialectic, and of which Hegel has already given a particular construction.

According to some new acquaintances I made this winter, I have been well understood by a large number of Germans, who have admired the work I did in reaching, all by myself, something which they claim already exists in that country. I cannot yet judge what relationship there is between my metaphysics and Hegel's logic; but I am satisfied

[49] Vol. ii.p. 158.
[50] *Correspondence,* vol. i, p. xxii.
" To Cretin, July 13th, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 102).
[M] Vol. ii, p. 155. " A logical error as much as an experimental one, from which I have now recovered/*
[58] *P. M.,* vol. i, p. 27. E. Droz is therefore a trifle too regretful, *P. J. Proudhon,* p. 84: " It is to be regretted . . . that he allowed his ideology to be Germanized and mechanized by the Hegelian dialectic, brilliant but faddist."

that it is his logic I shall use in my next work; now that logic is but a particular case or, .if you like, the simplest case of my own.[54]

It will be granted that that is not the language of a simple disciple, of a man who has just received a revelation.

In those explanations there are grounds for admitting that Karl Marx's allegations were both right and wrong. The *Contradictions iconomiques* indeed reflect a Hegelian influence, due at least partly to the very recent influence of Marx. Yet, although Proudhon himself later regretted this Hegelianism, he was even then a Hegelian only on the surface; he was less a Hegelian than he thought and than he afterwards said. The real reason was not that he was an incompetent disciple, but rather that he was a philosopher, good or otherwise, already invested with personality. Marx was maliciously clear-sighted. He immediately discerned, in the work of this man whom he had wished to appropriate, the presence of a dialectic other than Hegel's, a dialectic which would not emerge clearly, even in Proudhon's own eyes, until the *Justice* period. He passed severe strictures upon it, seeing in it only an " adulterated Hegelianism ",[55] but he guessed it was there.

Proudhon possessed his own dialectic, but it came to light only gradually, through the ideas of the successive authors under whose influence he came. The editors of the small volume *Lettres choisies* (Selected Letters) make an accurate observation on this point. It is in connexion with the following sentence, taken from a letter to Ackermann of November 25th, 1843: " Religion and Philosophy are, in my opinion, two preparatory stages for the community, the thesis and antithesis of the human mind." That, say M M. Hal6vy and Guilloux, "is Hegel's teaching superimposed on Comte's. Proudhon has not yet shaken off the high fever his reading produced ",[56] We could say something similar about the influence of Fourier, Bakunin, Feuerbach and the others. The important thing to establish here is that his conversations with Marx and the writing of the *Contradictions iconomiques* marked the last stages of that " high fever", of discoveries, of rapid assimilations and of uncontrolled influences.

•* Vol. ii, pp. 175-6. And a few days previously, on December 22nd, 1844, to Micaud: " The Germans, following up a great philosophic movement started in 1780 by Kant, have come exactly to the same point as myself in denying the scientific value of theology and philosophy, for which they substitute what they call *dialectic*, and what I call ' *seriel' metaphysics* or *theory* " (vol. vi, p. 347). " I have the honour," he adds, " of marching in line with the most advanced men in German philosophy."

[55] F. Pillon passes the same judgement upon it *(La critique philosophique*, 1872-3, p. 379): "There was nothing in common between the Hegelian synthesis and Proudhon's theses and antitheses, etc."

[56] *Lettres choisies*, pp. 63-4.

You may say then, if you like, that Proudhon followed Hegel in his *Contradictions iconomiques,* as he followed Fourier and Comte in the *Creation de VOrdre*—which is not a very great concession. You might even add that he did not understand Hegel any more than he had understood Fourier. The truth is that he was himself, and that he made use of the others only to discover himself. He was happy to meet—or to think he was meeting—in the Hegel of whom Marx spoke to him a more profound philosopher than the one he had criticized in the course of the previous years after reading " M. Cousin's plagiarisms ".[57] In Hegel he found an idea which was already his own, and thanks to which it seemed to him that he became more conscious of his own. At all events it helped him to make his own more precise, even if only imperfectly. For he was still at a stage when his own thought, albeit original, was not sufficiently matured to be expressed independently of his readings and of his successive discoveries. From that time onwards, however, his genius asserted itself more and more, he gained control of the chief trends of his mind and created his own method and his own dialectic. He continued to criticize, with increasing lucidity, the German philosophy, as he had already done for several years,[68] and after a kind of digression—which was never unconditional acquiescence, far from it—he took up a definite and perfectly well-reasoned stand against Hegel.[59]

[87] **To Ackermann, May 23rd, 1842 (vol. ii, p. 48).**

[88] **Besides the texts in *C. O. H.*, see the letters to Ackermann of May 23rd, 1842, and September 20th, 1843 (vol. ii, pp. 47-8,102-3): " I do not allow myself to be deceived by Hegel's metaphysics and formulas; I call a cat a cat, and I do not consider myself more advanced if I say that that animal is a differentiation of the great Ail, and that God comes to self-consciousness in my brain, etc." And this consideration in the Note-books for 1845: " I am much afraid that the whole of German philosophy is nothing but a collection of brilliant analogies and of parallels more curious and amusing than real. You can say almost the same thing about their philosophy of history as you can about their dialectic; it makes one think; it brings out the truth; it has nothing absolute in it, and, too frequently, nothing certain either" (Halevy, p. 21).**

[89] **And very often he criticizes the German philosophy; for instance, to M M. Gamier, July 20th, 1848 (vol. iii, p. 27); to Herzen, 1849; to X., September 27th, 1853: " All that will not stand discussion for one moment and is but tittle-tattle, which all the Germanic solemnity of Hegel and others had not made any deeper or more true" (vol. v, p. 261); to Charles Morard, December 31st, 1863 (vol. xiv, p. 213). Cf. Alexandre Marc, *Marx et Hegel,* in *Archives de philosophic,* vol. xv, second book, p. 171 (1939): " Proudhon, after.being indirectly under the prestige of Hegel, finished by rebelling against the dialectic of the synthesis." All things considered, Proudhon could have said, as Kierkegaard did, that he had never " served under Hegel". M. Georges Gurwitch, *op. cit.,* p. 339, does not hesitate to conclude, slightly overdoing it, that" among the philosophic sources of Proudhon's system, Hegelianism is to be found in the rear ranks ".**

CHAPTER VII

PROUDHON AND KANT, PROUDHON'S ANTINOMY

PROUDHON knew Kant very early on, and much better than he did Hegel. He was in close correspondence[1] with Tissot, who was then the specialist on Kant and likewise his translator. Around 1839-40, if we are to believe his letters to Bergmann and Perennes, he was reading him " every day ".[2] He spoke respectfully of " the dialectic founded by Kant", and to the end of his days Kant was always " the venerable Kant "[3] to him. In an article in *La Voix du Peuple*, on November 5th, 1849, he declared that Kant was " as remarkable for his profound piety as he was for his incomparable power of reflection ",[4] and again in *Justice* he spoke of " the one whom no philosopher has ever equalled, the immortal Kant ".[5]

Such regard, more sustained than the regard he had for Hegel, did not stop him from criticizing Kant. On March 3rd, 1842, he wrote to Tissot: " It makes me mad to see you so obstinate, and I must tear you away from Kant."[6] He was then beginning to make arrangements for his first big work, with the feeling that his thought was coming to maturity and that at last he was going to do something serious and positive. He wrote it in an anti-Kant frame of mind. " My metaphysical part is finished," he said to Fleury on April 3rd, 1842; "it is something curious and extraordinary, which will bring all the Kantians down upon me."[7] Shortly afterwards, on May 23rd, he informed Ackermann: "I purely and simply deny all Kant's psychology and all his metaphysics."[8] The *Creation de VOrdre* appeared in September, 1843. In it Proudhon spoke of " the impasse into which

[1] Without any real warmth of friendship: to Ackermann, September 9th, 1839, and to Perennes, December 16th (vol. i, pp. 150, 164).

[2] To Perennes, December 16th, 1839: " My days are spent between Reid and Kant" (vol. i, p. 163).

* *Just., vol* iii.p. 231.

* Reprinted as preface to the third edition of *Les Confessions d'un Rivolutionnaire.*

[5] *Just.*

* Vol. ii, p. 22. Already, on December 16th, 1839, he shared with Perennes a plan of " incredible audacity ": " to cashier him for ever ", and he sums up Kantian morality thus: " I have to because I have to, which has nothing conclusive about it " (vol. i, p. 163).

[7] Vol. ii, p. 26.

[8] Vol. ii, p. 46.

Kant's *Critique* had thrown all minds ", and he remarked, disparagingly, that Kant's categories " systematized, I might say almost crystallized, in an immovable frame, are independent of one another, with no common bond and no genesis ".[9]

Fundamentally, however,.his greatest reproach against Kant was that he had not remained sufficiently faithful to himself. He blamed him for having tried to reconstruct after destroying, for having attempted to re-introduce metaphysics which his *Critique* had made impossible, and for continuing to direct his thoughts towards an Absolute which that *Critique* should have for ever eliminated. " Professing free-thought," Kant had all the same fallen back " from the data of experience upon reveries on the Absolute ". In his *Pure Reason,* Kant " revolutionized metaphysics ": " What right had he to come along in his *Practical Reason* and solemnly speak of a whole world of absolutes, the counterpart of the phenomenal world and postulated by conscience and freedom ? "[10]

We shall have to see later if this was not precisely the very thing, or something very much like it, which constituted Proudhon's own intellectual venture. For the time being we need only note that these reproaches confirm in their own way the influence Kantianism had over him. It was above all a negative influence and of a very general order. He had an instinctive aversion for every kind of system and for all ontology. In an article in his paper *Le Peuple,* drawn up in the form of a *Lettre aux citoyens redacteurs du Populaire* (Letter to the citizen-editors of the *Populaire),* he wrote, on March 21st, 1849: " As for system, I have none; I formally deny the assumption. Mankind's system will be known only when mankind ends. . , . What does interest me is to find out which road mankind will take and, if I can, to open it up for them."[11] On August 20th, 1852, he told Boutteville of a scheme for a magazine of which he was to be the editor:

> Whereas the sectarians, excessively jealous of their dogmas and their formulas, will only admit, like the theologians, truths which they themselves make, and in terms of their own choosing, we shall look for our ideas to the spontaneous utterances of the institutions, the schools and the thinkers. There, it seems to me, lies an immense chance of success for a revolutionary magazine.[12]

His reading of Kant had provided Proudhon with a rational justification for this spontaneous turn of mind. In the *Revolution Sociale,* he

[9] C. *O. H.,* pp. 262, 269.
[10] just ,vol.iii, p. 231.
[11] *Melanges {Works,* vol. xvii).
[12] Vol. iv, p. 340.

expressed it more theoretically, taking up a position in which will be noticed the resemblance to, as well as the difference from, that of the famous *Theses sur Feuerbach* which are, so to speak, the charter of Marxism:

After the *Novum Organum* and the *Critique of Pure Reason* there is not, there cannot be any system of philosophy. If there is any truth which must be considered as established, after the recent efforts of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, the Eclectics, the neo-Christians, etc., that is it. True philosophy is to know how and why we philosophize, in how many ways and on what subjects we can philosophize, and what is the issue of all philosophic speculation. As for systems, there are none, and it is a proof of philosophic mediocrity to look for a philosophy today.[13]

The Kantian *Critique* then left its mark, and left it profoundly, upon Proudhon—as it did upon the immense majority of the thinkers of his century, " thanks " above all " to that secret transmission which is effected through a thousand different channels " ;[14] but he did not become a Kantian himself.[15] His theoretical agnosticism was less radical than the *Critique of Pure Reason* would have liked it to be. Moreover, he was essentially a philosopher who belonged to no school. That is one reason why it is not difficult to pick out many technical inferiorities in his works. Yet it would be very wrong to make that a pretext for disdaining his thought. His fundamental process was thoroughly concrete and thoroughly inductive. It was a reflection on the data of common experience and daily life, constantly nourished by social facts. He was of opinion that every philosophy, even that which thought it was deductive, never did anything, one way or the other, but " synthesize experience "[1fl] and that, in order to have a chance of doing it well, it was better to recognize the fact. He did not go from theory to practice, but from practice to theory, and even his theory remained practical. He explained this to one of his correspondents, Huet, on December 25th, 1860:

Bordas, like Descartes, Leibniz and Kant himself, seems to me to have gone from speculative philosophy to practical philosophy: he

" *Revolution Sociale,* **pp. 141-2.**

[14] **Rcnouvier,** *Les dcoles contemporaines de morale en France,* **in** *La critique philosophique,* **vol. i (1873-4), p. 41.**

[18] **In a note in** *Just.,* **he sums up, incorrectly it must be added, the significance of Kant's work by saying: Kant has "given to moden generations" an "anti-absolutist and anti-religious initiation *' (vol. vi, p. 52).**

[16] ***Philosophie Populaire,* 4: " Metaphysics of the ideal taught Fichte, Schelling and Hegel nothing: when these men, whose philosophy has rightly gained distinction, fancied they were deducing an *a priori,* they were only, unknown to themselves, synthesizing experience " *(Just.,* vol. i, p. 198).**

makes his way through metaphysics in order to come to Ethics, and there is no doubt that that course has been generally followed for centuries. In Christianity, dogmatic theology precedes moral theology; religion is indeed founded entirely on that fact. I do just the opposite, I grasp first of all the moral idea, justice, the fact of conscience (I do not take the word here in its purely psychological meaning)[17] and once I am in possession of the right thing, of the moral idea, I use it as a criterion for metaphysics themselves. My practical philosophy precedes my speculative philosophy, or at least acts as a basis and a guarantee for it.

And Proudhon likened his method to "that of Christ and of Socrates ", which he contrasted with " Plato's idealism " and " St. Paul's theology ".[18] Whatever may be said about these comparisons, it can be seen that this method, however hostile to metaphysical abstraction, was the very reverse of any Empiricism. It was equally remote from Auguste Comte's Positivism and Marx's historic Materialism. Although Proudhon detested the word, it was an " Idealism ", too, in its own way. Neither would it be impossible to link it up with Kant's Moralism:[19]

As far as I am concerned (he said) morality exists of itself; it is not derived from any dogma or from any theory. With man conscience is the dominant faculty, the sovereign power, and the others are useful to it as instruments or servants. . . . It is not at all from any metaphysics, from any poetry or from any theodicy that I deduce the rules of my life or of my sociability; on the contrary, it is from the dictates of my conscience that I should rather deduce the laws of my understanding.[20]

Nevertheless, it is upon another point that the historians of Proudhon insist when they speak of his dependence with regard to Kantianism. Noting that Proudhon's dialectic is founded upon the notion of *antinomy*, they think they can add that it was Kant who provided him with that notion. Thus Karl Marx, speaking of the Proudhon " of the first stage ":

In the chapters which he himself considered to be the best, he imitates the antinomic method of Kant, the only German philosopher whom

[17] **In French, *conscience* can mean either consciousness or conscience.—*Translator.***

[18] **" Vol. x, p. 257.**

[19] **Or, up to a point, with the traditional morality in Christianity. Cf. Yves de Montcheuil, *Dieu et la vie morale*, in *Construire*, vi, notably pp. 42-6.**

[20] ***Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 492, 493: " . . . The notion of what is just, being, in my eyes, both idea and feeling, and feeling being the first manifestation and the chief strength in my soul, the centre of my liberty, outside of which I find nothing but shame and misery, it seemed logical to me to reverse the teaching that I had received in my childhood, and, instead of making my duty and my right depend upon the more or less precarious state of my reason, to subordinate, on the contrary, my reason and my opinions to the feeling I have of my duty and my right."**

he then knew through translations, and he leaves a strong impression that for him, as for Kant, the antinomies can be resolved only " beyond" the human understanding, in other words, that his own understanding is incapable of resolving them.[21]

We can ignore the irony in the last words. There remains the initial affirmation, often repeated since and expressed by Saint-Ren6 Taillandier as early as 1848: " Proudhon makes use of Kant's instrument, antinomy."[22] Proudhon himself seems to have been the first to say it. For he wrote to Tissot, on December 13th, 1839: " In reading Kant's antinomies, I saw in them, not a proof of the weakness of our reason, nor an example of dialectical subtlety, but a veritable law of nature and of thought."[23]

However, if we look at them very closely, those words contain something quite different from the admission which people believe they can read in them. They prove that already in 1839—a year in which he lived in the shade of Kant—Proudhon understood him, or was interpreting him, freely, in his own way, which was not at all the Kantian. On July 2nd, 1846, he could write to Ackermann: " I am working out a system of antinomies of the community, very much the same as Kant did the *Critique* of the antinomies of reason ";[24] he could also say, when answering Renouvier in *Justice,* that that philosopher should have taken the trouble " to analyse the phenomenon of the understanding which since Kant's day has been called antinomy, and about which, I admit, the last word does not yet seem to have been said ",[25] It is none the less true—and these last two quotations themselves give evidence of it—that his antinomy was not at all that of Kant, and that he was perfectly aware of it. In Proudhon, after all, there is nothing but the use of a Kantian word to indicate a phenomenon bigger than the one to which Kant applied it, and already more or less known before his time. Moreover, his reference to him is not so much a petition for patronage as an indication of a deficiency which he intends to make good. It was by no means slip-shod writing which made him say, in his letter to Ackermann, *critique* in one place and *system* in the other, and it will be admitted that the " antinomies of the community ", of which Proudhon wanted to work out the system, are not the same thing as the " antinomies of reason ", of which Kant had written the Critique.

[21] III *Sozial-Demokrat,* January 1865 (M. P., new edition, p. 247).
[22] *Loc. cit .,* p. 302.
[23] vol. ii, p. 232.
[24] Vol. ii. p. 207.
[25] *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 452.

The letter to Tissot had already emphasized the essential differences between the two sets of antinomies. They are two in number. The Kantian antinomies are not in Being, but in the reason; Proudhon's are both in the reason and in Being. The Kantian antinomies appear at the completion of an effort of thought, they denote a negative result, a check, they are a kind of wall which reason finally comes up against; for Proudhon, the antinomies are,the laws of thought in action, they go with it the whole way, moulding it and providing it with a method.

We know that Kant speaks of antinomies in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* in the part called " Transcendental Dialectic ", which deals with rational cosmology. In its effort to build up this cosmology the understanding finally comes to four antinomies, in other words, four pairs of contradictory theses: to the understanding it seems to be equally necessary, according to its successive points of view, that the world must be finite and infinite; that everything in the universe must be composed of simple parts and that nowhere in it is there any simple element; that the world must depend upon a free cause and that nowhere in it is there any such free cause; and finally, the understanding invincibly posits a necessary being who, not less invincibly, is repugnant to it. These antinomies are a sign that the understanding is functioning outside its own sphere and, not having a grip any longer on what is real, it performs only " dialectical" operations, in other words, illusory ones. That is one of the ways in which metaphysics happen to be condemned as a science, and agnosticism established, in relation to the transcendent world.

According to Proudhon, the antinomy is quite another thing. It is everywhere in the mind, because it is first of all everywhere in Being, everywhere in Nature, everywhere in the physical world and in the social world. For the laws of reason are the same as the laws of the world, and " human morality is an integral part of the universal order " :[26] a maxim such as that has more of a Stoical or a Thomist, than a Kantian, ring about it. " Man and things ", Proudhon again says, "civilization and the universe, the moral kingdom and the kingdom of Nature" form, at least probably, " a homogeneous, isonomic, joint whole ", and " sooner or- later " consequently must appear " the identity of the two reasons, mine and the world's ".[27]

[89] ***Just.*, vol. ii, p. 389. " So that, despite a few discords, more apparent than real, which science must learn to reconcile, the laws of one are the laws of the other.****

[87] ***Just.*, vol, iv, pp. 431-2: " Then, the idea of a *universal harmony* enters into my soul; I say to myself that between the world of Nature and the world of Justice, law, force, substance, all is identical; that thus, just as the order is perfect among the spheres which traverse space, and the proportion between the elements of which every creature is composed immutable, so must it also be among men. And the**

So it will be understood that this word, antinomy, which with Kant concerns only a portion of the theory of knowledge, summarizes for Proudhon a whole vision of the universe, a vision to which he is constantly alluding in his works, and which he many times expressed and defended with warmth as much as with clearness:

> Nothing subsists, the ancients said, everything changes, everything flows, everything is becoming. Consequently everything holds together, everything is linked up; consequently also, everything is opposition, balance, equilibrium in the universe. There is nothing within or without this eternal dance; and the *rhythm* which orders it, one of the pure forms of existence, a supreme idea to which no reality can possibly correspond, is the highest conception the reason can attain.[28]

> To this conception of the reality of things corresponds a logic which is in harmony with it. According to this logic, very different from that which is taught in the schools," the dilemma, reputed to be the strongest argument", no longer has the value attributed to it. It must be regarded only " as a weapon of dishonesty, the dagger *of* the brigand who attacks you in the shadow ", as long as *it has not been* " *rectified by the* theory of the *antinomy, the most* elementary form and the simplest composition of movement ",[29] As a matter of fact, truth *is not* on one *side and error* on the other, at least that is a *very* inadequate manner of speaking:

> What *is* error ? A mutilation of truth. Evil ? An inversion of good. Injustice ? The negation of equivalency between persons, services and products. What particular proposition in the philosophy of Nature and of mankind can be called *truth* ? None; opposition, antagonism and antinomy burst out everywhere. The real truth is: (1) in equilibrium, a thing which our reason excellently conceives, and which constitutes the highest and the most fundamental of its categories, but which is only a relation; (2) in the whole, which we can never possibly embrace.[30]

We begin to have an idea now of the full meaning of the title which Proudhon gave to one of his works, *Systeme des contradictions econo-*

fact immediately confirms the hypothesis. Economics, politics, the organization of a workshop, public Reason itself, all are resolved into a system of ponderations or balances: in this analogy of legislation between the *Cosmos* and the *Anthropos* appears the identity of the spirit which animates them, latent in the former, free in the latter."

***• *P. P.*, foreword *(Works*, vol. xx, 1868, p. 14). This idea of a universal rhythm may be compared with the Bergsonian idea of pure movement; *the perception of change* in *La pense'e et le mouvement* (Thought and Movement), p. 185: " There are changes, but there are not, underlying the changes, things which change, etc."**

•• *P. P.*, first letter *(ibid.*, pp. 31-2).

•• *T. I. (Works*, vol. xv, 1868, pp. 226-7).

miques. These are in his eyes but a particular case, the case peculiar to the realm of economics, of a phenomenon which recurs in all parts of Being and in all spheres of Knowledge. They verify a universal law. We should associate with them, he himself wrote to Charpentier, " the contradictions of philosophy, of politics, of religion and of law ",[81] Moreover, he added, " that word, contradiction, must not be taken in the ordinary meaning of a man who goes back on what he has said. It is a question, on the contrary, of an opposition inherent in all the elements, in all the forces which constitute the community, and which makes all these elements and all these forces fight one another and destroy one another if man, by his reason, does not find the means to understand them, to control them and to keep them in equilibrium. . . . "

It would be useless therefore to reproach Proudhon, as Arthur Desjardins has done, with his perpetual contradictions.[32] As happens to all men who have reflected over a fairly long period, he changed his opinion on some subjects, or at least his point of view, and accentuated things differently. In a way he apologized for this, or justified himself, towards the end of his days, when he replied to Clerc, a retired officer and one of his followers, who had been affected by his work *La Guerre et la Paix*. He endeavoured to call his correspondent's attention to " the perpetually changing nature of truth, which some half-philosophers take to be a deception, either on the part of Nature or of Providence, or of our own understanding, and which is nothing but the incessant and polymorphous revelation of truth itself ". Is it surprising then that for us such truth should be the reward of long labours and that it should make us feel our way in various directions ? " It certainly has divers facets, often it seems to contradict itself; that is why we are more apt to distort it by trying always to make ourselves conform to it rather than say just what we think and just what we see, every day and about every thing." Therefore Proudhon admits that he has no objection whatsoever to " an author who is liable to contradict himself, provided he does it in good faith and not just stupidly ", and that so far as he is personally concerned, he does not worry about the contradictions, real or apparent, which may be found in his various works.[83] This defence is good psychology. It should suffice to show that Proudhon does not take us back to the Sophists' school, " who, generally speaking, maintained the pros and cons with equal

[81] August 24th, 1856 (vol. vii, pp. 116-17).

[82] *Op. cit.* vol. i, p. 53: " Until his last breath he will not grow tired of contradicting himself." In the same way, M. Ren6 Gonnard, *Histoire des doctrines tconomiques*, p. 491: " Proudhon has not reached a point where a contradiction matters."

[83] To M. Clerc, March **4th,** 1863 (vol. xii, pp. 338-9, 342).

complacency ".[84] Here, however, it is just as much a question of metaphysics as of psychology: indeed more so. Like another Heraclitus, Proudhon professed a palaestral conception of the universe and of the community, and he feared that thoughts too concerned with coherence would give a false idea of it. " The community might very well be governed by rules quite different from those dictated by what is usually called common sense."[35] Everything is, so to speak, " two-faced ", and we must always beware of reasoning in too simple a manner, for thus there is always a danger of throwing light on one face and leaving the other clouded. If care be not taken, " the more accurate a man is in his thoughts and the more honest he is at heart, the more he is liable to be duped and made to look ridiculous ". In that intellectuals are more or less like ordinary folk; and " ordinary people love simple ideas, and they are right; unfortunately the simplicity they seek is to be found only in elementary things, and the world, the community and man are made up of irreducible elements, of antithetical principles and antagonistic forces ".[36] As a matter of fact, do not " all our political, religious, economic and other misunderstandings " arise from " the contradiction which is inherent in things " ?[37]

A real contradiction, that is, or a " natural antinomy ",[38] which must not be confused with the logical contradiction pure and simple. The latter is as barren as nothingness, the former is as fruitful as life itself. The logical contradiction is, when all is said and done, very similar to that bleak identity from which nothing emerges; the other stands for all true pluralities. " The moral world like the physical world is based upon a plurality of irreducible and antagonistic elements, and it is from the contradiction of these elements that life and movement result in the universe."[39] That sentence from the *Theorie de lapropriitd*

[84] Desjardins, vol. i, p. 82.

"7%. P. (1866), p. 207. To Villiaume\ January 24th, 1856: "Everything in society is primarily a paradox " (vol. vii, p. 13).

" r./., p. 234.

[87] *P. M.*, vol. ii, p. 397. Cf. p. 258: " It is strange, because I spend my life showing the contradiction in our nature it is I who am accused of contradiction ! "

[88] Cf. *France et Rhin* (new edition, 1868), p. 124: " It is a pure contradiction. If it was a natural antinomy, it would lend itself to a balance: but no, there is nothing."

[89] *Th. P.*, p. 213; cf. p. 229. *T. /.*, p. 234: " Any one who says organism, says complication; any one who says plurality, says contrariety, opposition, independence. The centralizing system is very beautiful in its greatness, its simplicity and its development; there is only one thing wanting, and that is that in it man no longer belongs to himself, no longer feels for himself, no longer lives, is no longer anything." *Confessions,* p. 316: "Whatever transformations they may have to undergo, these elements (government, property, etc.) will always subsist, at least in their virtuality, in order incessantly to impart movement to the world, by their essential contradiction." Cf. *P. A/.*, vol. ii, p. 323: " How can you conceive something good which pain no longer irritates or stimulates ? "

is one of those which give the best definition of Proudhon's thought. A page from *Justice* may serve as a commentary upon it:

It is a question of knowing whether all these spontaneities, of which creation is composed, agree or fight among themselves; whether, by the law of their constitution, or by higher order, they form a ring of perfect love or join in immense battle among themselves; whether, finally, the order which is discovered here and there in the fray, comes from the agreement of instruments in tune like the pipes of an organ, or whether it is not rather an effect of equilibrium among antagonistic forces. For myself, there can be no doubt about my opinion: what makes creation possible is, in my eyes, the same thing that makes freedom possible, the opposition among powers. To make an opera of the order in the world and in universal life is to hold a false idea. Everywhere I see forces struggling; I do not find anywhere, neither can I understand, that melody of the great All, which Pythagoras thought he heard.[40]

Such was the idea then of which a first and already vast application was put forward in *Contradictions dconomiques.* Such was also the idea of the last great work of his mature years, *La Guerre et la Paix.* It was summed up in those words of Holy Writ quoted as an exergue: " The Lord is as a man of war." We shall pass no judgement upon it now, being content to note how persistently and how strongly it runs through Proudhon's whole work. It is developed *ex professo* in *La Guerre et la Paix,* where the subject-matter lent itself to development:

The action of the forces does not resemble a dance of the Muses. . . . They must clash and devour one another, that is the only condition on which they are productive. . . . War is deeply rooted, in a manner still but dimly glimpsed, in the religious, juridical, aesthetic and moral sentiments of nations. We might even say that it has its abstract formula in dialectic. War is our history, our life, our whole soul. Once more, it is everything. People speak of abolishing war, as though it were a question of city dues and customs duty. They do not see that if they leave out of account war and the ideas associated with it, nothing remains, absolutely nothing, of mankind's past, nor is there left one atom For the construction of its future. . . . With war abolished, what conception do you form of the community ? . . . What will mankind become, in its eternal siesta ?[41]

The mere quotation of these two passages one after the other will suffice no doubt to show how artificial is the opposition established by some interpreters between *Justice* and *La Guerre et la Paix,* In both alike war appears as one of the categories of Being, and by that very

[40] .,just vol. hi, p. 212.
[41] *G. P.*, pp. 71-2, etc.; cf. p. 55.

fact as " one of the categories of reason "[42] This already gives us an inkling that Proudhon's dialectic no more resembles Hegel's or Marx's than it does the Transcendental Dialectic of Kant. It has been very well said that " to read Proudhon is to live with him in an agony of contradiction ".[43] If there is any resemblance here, it is, in a context as different as it can possibly be, a resemblance to Kierkegaard. In comparison with the ambitions of Hegelian thought, the thoughts of the Danish mystic and of the French Socialist have a parallel meaning.

For all that, the agony of contradiction is by no means despair or a final resignation. The last word here has not been spoken by Proudhon any more than it has by Kierkegaard.

[48] ***Op,* cit., p. 33; and p. 38: " War, like time and space, like the beautiful, the just and the useful, is a form of our reason, a law of our soul, a condition of our existence."**

[48] **Auge-Larib6, in *Qu'est-ce que la propria* ? p. 118. Cf. Torsten Bohlin, *Kierkegaard,* p. 87: " Kierkegaard stresses a good deal and incessantly the fighting character of life and of personality. Heraclitus' thesis about discord engendering everything passes into Kierkegaard's conception of Becoming and of the vital conditions of personality."**

CHAPTER Viii

HEGEL'S SYNTHESIS AND PROUDHON'S EQUILIBRIUM

LIKE HEGEL, Proudhon thought that there was in the mind, as in everything real, a dynamic principle, a kind of driving-soul, thanks to which everything lives and is in progress, everything is in perpetual evolution:

> What is true in all things, the real, the positive, the practicable, is what changes, or at least what is susceptible of progression, conciliation, transformation, whereas what is false, the fictitious, the impossible, the abstract, is everything that presents itself as fixed, whole, complete, unalterable, indefectible, not susceptible of modification, conversion, increase or decrease, refractory consequently to any higher combination, to any synthesis.[1]

The resemblance between the two thinkers practically ends there. The dialectic by which Proudhon sought to account for this internal movement and to recover, or, so to speak, to mime, the universal rhythm, is not at all the dialectic described and used by Hegel. The Hegelian philosophy is known to be a " vast alchemy ",[2] working with a triadic rhythm. Being, seeking itself, first passes over into its opposite (the thesis sets up its own antithesis), to find itself again in a higher, richer and more concrete form (synthesis), which is itself the beginning of a new and similar movement. Each thing in its turn is then at one and the same time fully realized, absorbed and overpassed, and Being progresses in this way without a pause, until the definite synthesis, which is total Reality and absolute Knowledge. That was the way in which Marx had understood his master, whose dialectic he retained while repudiating his ontology. For him also> " what constitutes the dialectical movement" is the struggle between two contradictory elements, until " they fuse together in a new category ".[3] Now Proudhon's dialectic very deliberately followed quite different lines. It diverged from the Hegelian dialectic on three essential points. In the first place, whereas with Hegel at each beat of the rhythm we count three terms, each successively engendering the other, there are only two in

[1] **P. P., p. 21.**
• **Emile Br6hier,** ***Histoire de la philosophies*** **vol. ii, p. 746.**
[2] ***Misere de la Phil.,*** **French Trans. (1896), p. 155.**

Proudhon's system, but these two, on the other hand, face each other from beginning to end; in other words, whereas Hegel states the contradiction to " rise above" it afterwards, Proudhon notes the antinomy, and does not claim to resolve it. From which it follows, secondly, that with Hegel the final point of the rhythm is the " synthesis ", whereas with Proudhon everything ends—in so far as we speak of an end—in " equilibrium ". Finally, and this is a cardinal observation, whereas with Hegel the Idea is purely immanent in the dialectical process, through which it seeks itself and realizes itself, Proudhon, for his part, admits a principle, in some way transcendent, which eludes dialectic and dominates all Becoming, and which-is indispensable to them. A persistent antinomy—transforming itself into equilibrium—thanks to the action of a higher principle: those are the three points which we must now see a little more in detail.

Persistent antinomy: that is the first fault which the Marxists, thereby showing themselves to be faithful Hegelians, find with Proudhon.[4] M. Cuvillier, for instance: "Proudhon gives up the idea of resolving the contradictions. He does not try to overcome them. . . . Renouncing the synthesis, (he) thereby (admits) his inability to get beyond the antagonisms of existing society."[6] M. Gurwitch, on the contrary, praises him for it, but his findings are the same. " Proudhon's dialectic," he writes, " is from the beginning against the dissolution of qualities and against the emanatist dialectic of Hegel ",[6] It is certain that that is not, on Proudhon's part, just because he badly copied the German philosopher whom he did not understand (we have seen what is to be thought of such an explanation). Neither is it, as Marx has charged him, because of his inability to work out a synthesis which he first of all sought. It was with full consciousness, after groping his way a little, that he hammered out his own method, forming his own dialectic on the reality of Being and of thought, as that reality appeared to him. On this point he was not afraid to criticize Hegel explicitly. In the *Creation de VOrdre,* for example, he wrote: "Nature, when embraced as whole, lends itself just as well to a quaternary classification as it does to a ternary classification ", and that" it would probably lend

[4] Cf. Marx, *he. cit.*: Proudhon is " stricken with sterility when it is a question of giving birth to a new category through the labour of dialectical confinement". And p. 150: ** Despite the great pains he has taken to climb to the heights of the *system of contradictions,* M. Proudhon has never been able to rise higher than the first two rungs of the simple thesis and antithesis, and even so he has straddled them only on two occasions, and out of those two occasions once he fell head over heels backwards. . . . "

[6] *A la lumiere du marxisme,* vol. i, pp. 181, 182.

6 *Vide'e du droit social,* p. 333.

itself to many others, if our intuition were more comprehensive ", so that " Hegel's evolutive creation is reduced to the description of one point of view chosen from among a thousand ".[7] Later, the criticism became more precise, at the same time as the opposite doctrine began to assert itself; for instance, in the Syllabus or *Programme for a Popular Philosophy* which Proudhon placed at the beginning of his second edition of *Justice:*

> The ternary facts, borrowed from Nature, are pure empiricism. . . . The Hegelian formula is a triad only by the sweet will or an error of the master, who counts three terms where only two really exist, and who has not seen that an antinomy cannot be resolved, but that it indicates an oscillation or an antagonism susceptible only of equilibrium. From this point of view Hegel's system would need to be wholly recast.[8]

That is clear. The decisive formula has been found. It was dear to Proudhon, for he repeated it several times in the *The'orie de lapropriitP* and in *Pornocratie.* It recurs again in the same book *Justice,* justifying the same condemnation of Hegel: " *The antinomy cannot be resolved.* There lies all the imperfection of the Hegelian philosophy. The two terms of which it is made up are balanced, either among themselves or with other antinomies; which leads to the result which was sought." The " antinomic terms ", or opposite categories are not then called upon to blend; " they do not resorb each other any more than the opposite poles of an electric battery destroy each other ".[10] " Whatever transformation they may have to undergo," they form so many elements which " will always subsist, at least in their virtuality, in order incessantly to impart movement to the world by their essential contradiction ".[11] Consequently they are not in the first place engendered by one another. They may be compared to so many simple and irreducible

[7] *C. O. H.,* p. 162.

[8] *Just.,* vol. i, p. 211. Compare Renouvier's satire on " this disastrous method of grouping, putting together, linking up ternary terms, by means of which for what is commonly called definition and proof, we have substituted an artificial and often artful combination of words, determined apparently one by another, and yet vague enough to be adapted to every need. How many extempore seekers of the true doctrine have believed themselves to be the Orpheus of the religion and philosophy of the future because, without ever having learnt, they knew how to play upon this easy and agreeable instrument, and because they were not at all perturbed by the very different sounds they heard it give in the hands of their rivals. The inventor, Hegel, drew the most skilful melodies from it ", etc. *Introduction a la philosophie analytique de Vhistoire* (1864), pp. 154-5.

[9] *Th. P.,* (1866), p. 206.

[10] *Th. P.,* p. 52.

[11] *Con.,* p. 316. *Capacity politique* p. 200. Cf. R. Aron and A. Dandieu, *La revolution nicessaire* (1933), p. 163: " The synthesis is the end of a movement, it is, if well thought over, the social form of death."

bodies: the metaphysician is confronted with them as the chemist is with these bodies, and if logic teaches us how to " reduce " them, it is a question only of a " fanciful operation ". The Hegelians, with their "excessive facility in creating family relationships between heterogeneous things", are " alchemists " moved by a chimera, like those who dreamt of the philosopher's stone.[12] It is all right for a Pierre Leroux or an Enfantin to follow them. Their dialectic is a caricature of Hegel's, retaining its faults and increasing the ridiculous side of it. Proudhon did not like those " one-eyed intelligences ", " devotees of unity '\[13] He stoutly maintained until the end that " the opposite terms never did anything but sway each other, and that the equilibrium did not arise from the intervention of a third term, but from their mutual action"; briefly, once again, "that the antinomy cannot be resolved ",[14]

Does that mean that there is never anything but a futile movement, a barren impact, and that the only part a philosopher plays is to record it? Certainly not. The fact that an antinomy continues always to exist should not make us sceptical nor make us despair of all progress. In Proudhon we are not dealing with a " dialectic opposed to progress", as Fourntere maintained,[15] nor, as Saisset asserted, with a " negative and barren dialectic, which divides everything for the sake of dissolving everything and denies everything for the sake of denying ",[16] any more than we are dealing, as Marx made out, with a kind of hesitation or a perpetual swaying between two theses. It would be interpreting him falsely, or at least very superficially, to think that all he advocated in the long run was an ideal " common or garden " happy medium. Actually, he saw everywhere two kinds of movements which combined together to ensure that the world, or that thought, should go on, and to give to that onward march a progressive character. One was produced within each antinomy, the other came from the grouping of various antinomies in a continuous series. " Take away the antinomy and the progress of Beings is inexplicable; for where is the force which would produce progress ? Take away the series, and the world is nothing more than a medley of barren oppositions, a universal turmoil, aimless and with no ideas."[17] But the

" To Morard, December 31st, 1863 (vol. xiii, pp. 213-14).
" *Th.* P., p. 212.
[14] Porn., pp. 122-3.
[15] *Les theories socialistes en France au XIX^e Steele,* p. 375.
[16] *Les icoles philosophiques en France, Revue des Deux Mondes,* **August, 1850, p.** 675.
" P. m., vol. ii, p. 396.

scene the universe presents to any one who knows how to examine its riddle closely is precisely that of a fruitful struggle, of a reciprocal stimulation, of a spiral climb. In an unceasing ebb and flow, everything goes forward, or rather everything goes upwards. Nothing of import is lost, no force is eliminated from the fight; each remains itself and in its turn takes its revenge on the other; each grows, while being transformed, through its struggle with the opposite force. Both of them, instead of being obliterated or dissolved, exalt each other.

In one sense then, " everything has always to begin all over again ". " People would like to see an end to it all," Proudhon wrote, " but, I tell you again, *there is no end at all* ".[18] But in another sense, there is real progress. He could have said with William Blake: " Without Contraries is no progression; Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hatred, are necessary to Human existence."[19] War is not only a social, outward act which is observed on the battlefield as well as in " the industrial arena "; it is also an inward act which must be studied " in the conscience of mankind ".[20] If, as an outward act, it must be suppressed, as an inward act it is " one of the chief categories of our reason ", and of our speculative reason as much as of our practical reason. It is a permanent category. We must not then dream of an absolute state of peace, which would be the end of the world and the death of thought.[21] If, however, war, in that sense, cannot be " abolished ", it can, nevertheless, and it must be " transformed ",[22] Peace must be established in the permanence of antagonism. The latter, which must be accepted " as a law of mankind and of Nature " is not necessarily reciprocal destruction, but " its purpose is to produce an ever higher order, an unending improvement \[23] It must be changed into " reciprocity ".[24] " In a soul which has itself well in hand, in a well-ordered society, the forces contend for an instant only that they may get to know one another, to control, corroborate and classify one another,"[25] and " in the conflict of human thoughts " as in that of the elements of the world, " there is an organizing force ".[26]

[18] **To Langlois, December, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 157).**
[19] **Marriage of Heavens and Hell ,WilliamBlake>Works,Oxfordedition,1913,p. 248.**
[20] **To M. X., June 5th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 112).**
[12] **G.P .,pp. 33, 341,486.**
[22] ***Op. cit.*, pp. 49, 56.**
[23] ***Op. cit.*, pp. 482-3.**
[24] **Cf. *S. Q. S. Programme*, March 31st, 1848: " Just as life supposes contradiction, contradiction in turn summons justice: thence the second law of creation ana humanity, the mutual penetration of the antagonistic elements, Reciprocity" (p. 9j).**
[25] ***G.* P., p. 134.**
[26] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 256.**

Such should the social dialectic also be, if man used his freedom reasonably. Proudhon styled his method a " method of revolutionary invention ",[27] According as it happens to be at one or other of the two moments of its rhythm—of those two moments in which " every real thought "[28] is set—it appears to destroy or to build up, to be subversive or conservative. It seems constantly to contradict itself. In the controversy which he had with him in 1849, Bastiat poked fun at this. " Believe me, sir," Proudhon replied, " there is never very much renown to be won by a man of intelligence in laughing at things he does not understand."[29] It is quite true that the extremes to which he went in his language, in one way or another, were a good excuse for such laughter. Actually, however, he was a peace-maker. " My whole philosophy," he said, quite rightly, ".is an endless round of reconciliation."[30] And in the Assize Court, on March 28th, 1849, he declared: " Socialism is the doctrine of universal reconciliation."[31] With him, antithetical terms, which had been rejected one after the other as being absolutes, were afterwards reinstated and recognized as being equally necessary, provided they limited and compensated each other. Their very opposition became their justification. To take some examples from the economic sphere, such were " monopoly " and "competition", "labour" and "consumption", "property" and "community"; such again were "individual activity" and " social authority ". " What competition was continually doing, monopoly was continually undoing; what labour produced, consumption devoured; what property claimed, the community took possession of; thence resulted the continual movement, the indefectible life of mankind." " There is not one principle, one force in the community, which does not produce as much distress as it does wealth, unless it is balanced by another force which on its useful side neutralizes the destructive effect of the first."[32] If one of the two opposing forces

[27] con .,p. 177.

28 P. M., vol. ii, p. 396.

29 *Lettre a M. Bastiat,* December 3rd, 1849 (in Bastiat, *Works,* vol. v, p. 147).

[30] *P. M.,* vol. i, p. 368. Cf. p. 72: " Truth is found, not in the exclusion of one of the contraries, but indeed in the reconciliation of the two." Proudhon adds, in Hegelian language, that they must both be " absorbed in a more complex formula ". This is where we may recall M. Gurwitch's remark, L'*idee du droit social,* p. 331: " As regards the substance of his thought, here as elsewhere, he follows exclusively his own road and looks upon the antinomies as irreducible."

[31] Cf. Berthod, in *Idee de la revolution,* p. 29. In the first chapter of *P. M.,* referring to the opposition between political economy and Socialism, the idea of reconciliation and the word occur several times. But what " has to be discovered " is "a higher law ", " a formula of reconciliation above all Socialist Utopias and truncated theories of political economy "; we cannot then " stop at an arbitrary, elusive, impossible happy medium " (vol. i, pp. 78, 79, 81).

[32] *Just.,* vol. ii, p. 131.

is obstructed, if, for instance, individual activity succumbs to social authority, the organization degenerates into Communism and comes to nothing. " If, on the other hand, individual initiative happens to lack its counter-balance, the collective structure becomes corrupted and civilization drags itself along under a regime of classes, iniquity and misery."[33] Order and freedom, Socialism and economic science, State and property, these are other examples of those pairs of which the " reciprocal action ", Proudhon tells us,—and, he adds, " I might almost say the mutual menace "—ensures the living equilibrium of the community.[34] The State and property are in turn most radically condemned; but if they become correlative, then they can no longer be defined by " the sum total of their abuses ",[35] but rather by the reciprocal moderating part they play, and even what is wrong in them may, in a way, become right if it is necessary to the part they play. Property, in particular, then shows itself as being " highly civilizing " in its " purpose "; if the State is " the regulating force of the community ", property is its " main spring "; considered in its origin, it is a " vicious and anti-social" principle, but it can none the less become, with the co-operation of other institutions, " the pivot and the main spring of the whole social system " and the beneficial" counter-balance" which prevents the State from becoming tyrannical.[36]

The words which express this conciliation—which is the real ideal of Proudhon—according to different points of view, are "justice, equality, equation, equilibrium, accord, harmony ",[37] In each of these synonyms " are united conscience and understanding, practical reason and speculative reason, the real and the ideal, the law of the universe

[88] ***P. M.*, vol, ii, p. 396.**

[84] ***G.* P., p. 498. Cf. *Phil, de la Misire,* vol. ii, p. 391: " Socialism is right to protest against political economy and to say to it * You are only a routine and you do not understand yourself.' And political economy is right in saying to Socialism, * You are only a Utopia with no reality or possible application.' But both of them denying in turn, Socialism, humanity's experience, and political economy, humanity's reason, both fall short of the essential conditions of human truth."**

[8tt] **Cf. *Prop.*, p. 128: " M. Blanqui admits that in property there is a host of abuses, and of odious abuses; for my part I call *property* solely the sum total of those abuses " (preface to the second edition, 1841). In speaking thus of property we know that Proudhon explicitly excluded possession.**

[88] ***Th. P.*, pp. 173, 208: " If the essentially abusive power of property is studied in its political, economic and moral consequences, from this bundle of abuses one can disentangle an energetic power or ability to function which immediately evokes in the mind the idea of a highly civilizing purpose, as favourable to law as it is to liberty." Cf. *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 264: " I have in mind to suppress none of those things which I have so resolutely criticized ", (but I want) " to put each thing in its place, after having purged it of the absolute and balanced it with other things." And C. *P.*, p. 200, speaking of liberty and unity or order, etc.: ** They cannot be separated, nor absorbed by each other; we have to be resigned therefore to live with both of them, balancing them."**

[87] **To Bergmann, November 15th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 286). *Th.* P., p. 217.**

and the law of mankind."[38] In the *Creation de l'ordre,* Proudhon, who already had a glimpse of what his method would become, spoke of" the balance ",[89] and he repeated the expression in his later works.[40] He owed the word " harmony" to Fourier, whom he called " an artist, a mystic, and a prophet ".[41] He himself spoke of the " melody of Beings ".[42] But the word most commonly used is equilibrium. In his early work on the *Celebration du dimanche,* Proudhon, in concluding, called for " the general equilibrium " which would finally succeed " the most furious antagonism ".[43] Later, he wrote that his *Contradictions iconomiques* were nothing but " a working out of equilibrium ",[44] and again it was an " equilibrium of States " that he proposed as " mankind's political system ",[45] But, it must be noted that such an equilibrium is not realized once for all, it is not a dead " order (of things) " that order which your " good middle class folk love to distraction ".[46] It is an " equilibrium in diversity "[47] and an "equilibrium endlessly unstable";[48] not so much because there is an endless threat that it will be broken up, but because it is always busy trying to set itself up better. Strictly speaking, it is rather an " equilibration ",[49] in other words, an active and dynamic equilibrium, in which the contradiction moves in a constant tension. Like our material bodies, the spiritual organism and the social organism need certain elements, which, in their pure state, would be poisons, but which, by correcting, and combining with, one another, maintain life's movement.[50]

[88] To Bergmann, November 15th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 286).

[89] *C.O.H.,p.* 213.

[40] *Just.,* vol. ii, pp. 60, 95, 131; vol. iv, p. 432. *Th.* P., p. 206. *Porn.* p. 232, etc.

[41] *C.* P., p. 193. Cf. *La Guerre et la Paix,* p. 134: " The opposition among the forces has then as its end their harmony."

[42] P. M., vol. ii, p. 396.

[43] *C. D.,* p. 96. In this page Proudhon is again dreaming of the day when " the social problem will be resolved ", when " from the medley of all the doctrines will be born the one and indivisible science ", when man will be able to cry out: ** the days of trial are over, the golden age lies before us ". But perhaps we should see in that a little oratorical flourish more or less called for by the literary style. In this essay, which is after all academic, in a way it is on a par with the preachers' ** eternal life".

[44] *Th.* P., p. 217.

[45] G . P., pp. 497-8.

[46] *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 256.

[47] *C. D., C. O. H.* also speaks of" synthetic intuition in diversity " and " totalization in division " (edition Lacroix, pp. 210-15).

[48] *Th.* P., p. 52.

[49] *Op. cit.,* p. 206.

[50] Proudhon explained this to Cardinal Mathieu, *Just.,* vol. ii, pp. 94-5: " Tell me, my Lord, what you smoke in tobacco or take in in snuff, what you taste in kirsch, what you consume in vinegar, are not all these things poisons, and of all poisons the most violent ? Well, the same thing applies to certain principles which nature has planted in our souls, and which are essential for the constitution of

Where the social world is concerned, the name pre-eminently suited to the equilibrium therein realized (or better, in process of being realized) by dialectics is *justice*. By itself alone, this word introduces us into a new sphere. For justice can be envisaged under two aspects. It is the revelation itself to which we must finally come, and in this sense it is synonymous with " equilibrium " and " balance "; but it is also, or rather it is already, the principle which ensures that that relation is realized. We can say, to use an expression which does not come from Proudhon but which seems to convey his thought very well, that there is "a justice which justifies" and a "justice which is justified ", or, to use in a slightly different sense M. Lalande's words, " a justice which constitutes " and " a justice which is constituted ".[61]

But the latter is possible only through the intervention of the former. Beyond, or beneath these antinomic struggles, there is conscience itself, which is the seat of these struggles and which cannot be better defined than as an exigence of justice. In the object everything is antinomic: so Proudhon can honestly say that he rejects every absolute, every element outside a series, not subject to the dialectical mesh, every transcendent reality. It is equally true that upon this complex object seething with contradictions, as upon matter, a form must be imposed, if harmony is to be drawn from it. That form is justice. But justice cannot be a mere result. Dialectic is a process which must be put into action and directed. That is done by what we called the " justice which justifies " and thus before justice can be seen as an equilibrium achieved, it is first of all revealed as the very principle of that equilibrium.

Proudhon never put this point of doctrine forward in his works, except in a confused way. That this is, however, the idea which more or less dimly guided him cannot be doubted on reading over again all that he has written. Moreover, he did once give some details of it, in a letter to his friend Langlois. The latter, in an article which he dedicated to Proudhon, thought he could use the expression " antinomy

society: we could not exist without them; but if we increase or concentratethe dose, be it never so slightly, or alter the mixture, infallibly we die from them. Just as, in this up and down regime, this regime of false standards under which we live, the division of labour is fatal to the worker, competition disastrous, speculation shameless, centralization crushing, so, I say, is property immoral and fatal. Just as bitter almonds, reduced by chemical analysis to their pure constituents, become prussic acid, so property, reduced to its pure notion, is the same thing as theft. The whole question, in order to make use of this formidable constituent, is, I repeat, to find a formula for it, or, in the language of economists, a balance. . . ."

[51]Compare this with the Platonic doctrine of the soul as " harmonizing " or as " bringing harmony ". Cf. P. Lachieze-Rey, *Les idees morales, societies et politiques de Platon,* p. 62.

of justice", adapting it from Proudhon. Proudhon replied, on December 30th, 1861, that on this point he found his wording, and possibly his thought, incorrect:

It is quite certain that the science of law, like the science of political economy, like metaphysics, depends upon perpetual antinomies; in that sense, your expression is justified, and your article gives very clearly to understand in what the antinomy consists, in the law of war and of nations. But, fundamentally, that antinomy does not come from justice itself; *conscience is not antinomic in its nature*\ as the understanding is. There would be no positive morality at all if it were, and we should have to fall in with the *laisser-faire* of the Malthusians. Justice, in itself, is the balance of the antinomies, in other words, it is the reduction to equilibrium of the struggling forces, the equation, briefly, of their respective claims. That is why I did not take as a motto freedom, which is an indefinite and absorbing force and which may be crushed but not conquered; above it I placed *Justice, which judges, regulates and distributes.* Freedom is the force of the sovereign collectivity; Justice is its law.[52]

In this recognition of a moral absolute, of a non-dialectical standard which is imposed upon freedom, we have the final feature which marks the radical difference between Proudhon's method, and thereby Proudhon's doctrine also, and Hegel's or Marx's. Proudhon could not admit the Hegelian theory of war and of the right of might, which dishonoured philosophy, he said, because it confused good and evil, the true and the false.[53] He himself also spoke of a certain " right of might", but it was not in the same sense. He reproached Hegel with not being able to give " a strong and true theory of freedom and Justice, without which there was nothing but shame and degradation for man ".[54] He refused to see, in a progress which was only an inevitable process and not " the effect of our free will", any real progress.[55] His moral law would be neither relativist nor opportunist. He rejected a system in the terms of which " the distinction between good and evil had nothing absolute " and he did not allow himself to be deceived, by considerations of universal evolution and the history of the world, into giving up the dignity of the individual man. That is another aspect of that

[52] Vol. xi, p. 308.
[53] *G. P.*, p. 107.
[54] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 504.
[55] *Ibid.*: " Tell'me then . . . what idea can I have of progress, when from all you say it follows that I am nothing but a marionette ? " (p. 502). No doubt Hegel claimed that universal history is the history of freedom; but his freedom is not very different at bottom from necessity; it is nothing but the blind force which drives the organism, it is the organic movement of the mind. Hegel does not admit freedom any more than Spinoza does (pp. 499-501).

" personalism" which makes him akin to the Kierkegaard of the *Post-scriptum.*[56]

A second letter to Langlois takes us another step forward. Replying to Proudhon, Langlois had agreed entirely with his friend's ideas and wanted even " to go further " than Proudhon. It seemed to him, he said, " that the understanding was not, after all, any more antinomic than the conscience ". That is my own thought, Proudhon replied, " the principle of justice is for the conscience what the principle of equality or equation is for the understanding ", and this is the principle on which all intellectual operations are founded. Thus, antinomy and equation are certainly two forms of the understanding, but equation is the goal of the antinomy and has not therefore any longer anything antinomic in itself; " otherwise there would be no certitude at all, no truth, and thought would be merely an eternal seesaw ". All things considered then, it must be admitted " that the understanding, like the conscience, although it understands and embraces all the antinomies, cannot and must not be antinomic ".[57]

This improvised outline of a theory of the intelligence is not perfectly clear, but its purpose at least is evident. Conscience first emerges from the dialectic, and then, for the same reason, the intelligence itself. Thus we have, at one go, all the essential categories, all the great ideas, " pure forces, the primary and creative faculties ", which, so to speak, constitute the foundation. " By their nature, they are without system and outside series ",[58] They are the mind itself, in its unity.

Proudhon then perceived that the *Unum,* principle of ail union as it is of all equilibrium, the principle of universal harmony, is without genus. It is necessarily, the old philosophy used to say, a " transcendental ". It cannot find place in any synthesis, nor be obtained by synthesis. It does not constitute a stage in the course of any dialectic. It is neither object nor result; it is the beginning and the form. " In that," Proudhon concluded, " the human person consists ".

[56] **Cf. Kierkegaard, *Post-scriptum* (Paul Petit's trans.).**

" January 17th, 1862 (vol. xi, pp. 349-50). That was, he said, the " fundamental thought" in the new preface which he had just written for *Just (new Brussels edition).**

[58] ***R. S.*, p. 55. Already in the conclusion to the *P. M.*, vol. ii, p. 388, Proudhon wrote: " The depth of the heavens is not equal to the depth of our intelligence, in the heart of which marvellous systems are in movement. . . . There, eternal forces throng and clash and sway one another this way and that. . . ."; and p. 395: " Ideas, equal among themselves, contemporary and co-ordinated in the mind, seem to be jumbled up, scattered, localized and consecutive in humanity and nature, forming pictures and stories bearing no resemblance to the primitive design; and the whole of human science consists in finding again in this conception the abstract system of the eternal thought." It was texts of this kind which annoyed Karl Marx. " So," he wrote to Paul Armenkov on December 28th, 1848, " by sheer subtlety the clever lad discovers God's thought. . . ."**

If we now make a general survey of Proudhon's dialectic and the vision of the world which it presupposes, we are led to realize that it is a phenomenology rather than a dialectic. In it the antinomies indeed " all rank alike, although they are superior and inferior to one another in turns '\[69] Its aim is less to reduce the apparent or momentary oppositions than to bring out boldly the irreducible and contrasting originals, even while transforming and organizing them among themselves. In it there is a foreshadowing of Husserl's idea of a series of heterogeneous values, which cannot be formed into a hierarchy and the co-existence of which is a source of indefinite conflicts. At all events, this philosophy is more dramatic than Hegel's, and much more so than that of numerous Hegelians, with whom the master's intuitions have become formulas, and his dialectic a device. Whereas these last " whisk the conflicts away to the ternary rhythm of a dialectical waltz ",[80] Proudhon boldly faces a world which cannot be reduced to any definitive formula by any kind of operation and translates what he sees by the Biblical words: " The Lord is as a man of war."[61] Contrary to all the systems which make progress mechanical and drown human initiative in a sea of immense rational development, Proudhon retains " the ineradicable conviction of a creative process in the stream of present reality ".[62] He has been compared to Leibniz, whose monadic doctrine indeed aroused his sympathies.[63] His dialectic has been compared to Fichte's, taking them both as a " rising path towards the intuition of a totality of irreducible elements ".•* Stress has been laid upon the parallelism between the part he played and that of Kierkegaard with regard to Hegel, and that of Bakunin with regard to Marx.[65] Following in Sainte-Beuve's tracks,[66] the relationship between his mind and Pascal's has been recalled.[67] Other comparisons might be outlined. There is truth in all of them. All of them show that we should be wrong, even on a philosophic basis, in neglecting Proudhon's thought.

His thought is not freer than any other man's from obscurities and internal difficulties. It might be asked, for instance, in what precisely the

[59] **To M. Clerc, November 4th, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 343).**
[60] **Aron and Dandieu, *La revolution neessaire,* p. 160.**
[61] **Exod., xv. 3. Used as an exergue to *G. P.***
[62] **Aron and Dandieu, *La revolution nicessaire,* p. 161.**
[63] **G. Gurwitch, L'*idee du droit social,* p. 334.**
[64] **Gurwitch, *op.* cit ., p. 333. On the way in which Proudhon might have come under Fichte's influence through Krause and Ahrens, *ibid.,* pp. 336-7.**
[65] **Aron and Dandieu, *op. cit.,* pp. 155-6, 161. Cf. Torsten Bohlin, *Kierkegaard:* See above Chap, vii, note 43.**
[66] ***P. J. Proudhon,* p. 223.**
[67] **Roger Picard, in P. Af., vol. i, pp. 28-9. Jean Lacroix, *Itiniraire spirituel,* p. 81. Miguel de Unamuno, *Vagonie du christianlsme,* French trans., p. 117.**

relationship consists between the " equilibrium " and the " series ", or again between conscience and the antinomies. We might try to find out how the necessary rhythm of the physical world and the rhythm of the moral and social world, in which freedom intervenes,[68] are linked together in the same explanation; how " the system of the laws of Justice is the same thing as the system of the laws of the world ";[69] from what " higher point of view " " man and Nature, the world of freedom and the world of inevitability ", " despite a few discords, more apparent than real", " form a harmonious whole ".[70] It may also be felt that Proudhon abuses his recourse to the dialectical idea to achieve his many successive and contrary extravagances;[71] that in his explanations there is many a verbal paradox, just as there is frequently much that is artificial in the Hegelian trinomials. Finally, it cannot be denied that, in its vigour, this very concrete thought far too regularly defies all patient and well-defined analysis, so that the majority of the notions it uses, especially that of justice, covers such a wide and shifting field that it is at times not easy to find one's bearings in the welter of analogous meanings. If we wished to get to the root of the matter, we might possibly also consider whether the idea of " conciliation ", as set forth and used by Proudhon, was not somewhat ambiguous, tending at times to be a synthesis, at others a compromise; in other words, whether his dialectic fully succeeded in " resolving the conflict without suppressing the tension '\'[72] We could also consider whether his philosophy, which we have called dramatic, quite escapes being pure tragedy[78] so long as it rejects an easy-going optimism and likewise refuses to contemplate a final solution in which all opposition would be overcome; and whether it could not be usefully used as a dialectical justification for a " permanent revolution " conceived as an endless series of those " shocks " of which Proudhon himself never approved.[74]

•[8] *Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 431-2. See above, chapter vii, note 27, pp. 145-6.

•• *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 433: "The universe is established on the laws of Justice; Justice is organized according to the laws of the universe, etc." To Chaudey, January 15th, 1859: " man's law and nature's law " (vol. viii, p. 350). *Just.*, notes and explanations; "Justice is the fundamental law of the universe" (vol. ii, p. 298).

[70] /MS/., vol. ii, p. 389.

[71] His dialectic here appears to be the abstract transposition of his temperament. We can recall here what he once wrote to Rolland, April 15th, 1861: " So far as I am concerned you must be always rectifying,- interpreting one eccentricity by another, if you would have the true thought and the true character of a man."

[72] This is M. Jean Lacroix's expression, *Personne et amour,* p. 44.

[78] For this idea of tragedy, see ueorges Didier, *Valeurs tragiques et valeurs chritien* nes,* in *CU4 nouvelle,* October 10th, 1942.

[74] That Proudhon's spirit was remote from any " Trotskyism " is clear **also from** the contempt with which Trotsky treats it. (Cf. Trotsky, *In Defence of Terrorism,* French trans., pp. 53-4.)

In particular, we should have to consider how the rejection, so often repeated, of all transcendency, at the beginning as well as at the end of the dialectical movement, can be reconciled with his claim to impose a standard upon that movement and to lay down an end for it.

These difficulties and even these contradictions must not, however, make us conclude that Proudhon's method is a " complete failure ", still less that there is " absolutely nothing in it ", as F. Pillon has quite wrongly done.[75] Neither do they give us the right to dismiss his dialectic as " sophistical methods ",[76] nor to treat it as mere " mystification ".[77] We should prefer to say that they are the price he paid for not allowing his thought to be buried in Becoming and in Immanence, despite his illusions. Marx may scoff at Proudhon for having established economic categories, which are essentially transitory, " theoretical expressions on the conditions of material production at a certain period ", all so many " ideas which have pre-existed from all eternity "; and, broadening his criticism, he may see in his opponent " a victim of speculative illusion ", a man incapable of understanding " the historical movement which convulses the world of today ", and pity him for not being able to probe more deeply into " the mystery of dialectic ",[78] but, however scornful he may be, we value his judgement. But with the same facts before us, we can form the opinion that—even if he has not the same weight and power as Marx—Proudhon, unlike Marx, was at least not a victim of the dialectical illusion, that he could grasp the

"*La critique philosophique,* vol. ii (1872-3), p. 379. Speaking of the "great synthesis " of which Proudhon dreamt and which he announced, the writer again mentions ** a tinge of the ridiculous " and a " tinge of mountebankery ". We can agree with him where this or that text is concerned, but all the same these must not conceal from us the serious side of Proudhon's effort.

"Renouvier, *Philosophic du XIX^e sitcle,* in *Vannte philosophique*> 1867, p. 74.

[77] Edmond Scherer, *Melanges de critique religieuse,* p. 510. Possibly we might with better reason reproach Proudhon with not being faithful to himself, to the core of his method. Why, for instance, should he follow in the wake of Machiavelli and Rousseau, as we have seen him doing in the previous chapter, in rejecting the Gospel distinction between the spiritual and the temporal in society ? How was it that he did not see that there is " in this very tension " between the two powers " a precious safeguard for the human person and his higher interests ", and a much better safeguard than in the tension which he wanted to set up for the same purpose between government and property ? It should not be a question of seeing which power will subjugate the other, or absorb it, but rather how the " warfare " between them can be changed into " harmony " so that a fruitful collaboration will result. Cf. Joseph Lecler, *VEglise et la souveraineUde VEtat,* in *Construire,* 1942.

[78] Marx's comment on his own work against Proudhon (quoted by Otto Ruhle, *Karl Marx,* pp. 117-18). Cf. letter to Paul Armenkov, already cited: " The economic categories . . . are for M. Proudhon eternal formulas without origin or progress, etc."; the antagonism which he thinks he finds is only his own " inability to understand the origin and the secular history of the categories which he deifies ". It will, moreover, be readily admitted that the Marxist method, with all its rank prejudices, remains a better instrument for an analysis of the social evolution than Proudhon's method. But this analysis is not everything.

quasi-eternal character of all the essentials in man's understanding and conscience, and therefore, though he could not fathom it, he had all the same an inkling of the *ontological mystery*. His solutions, in so far as they exist, do not satisfy us, but, as we shall see in more detail in the last chapter, at least, the essential problems are stated and remain stated. His negations are never definitive. His most peremptory judgements do not forbid a reopening of the question. When he most offends us, his own dialectic puts him on our side against himself, or at least against that aspect of himself which is most conspicuous, though it be not perhaps his real self. With Proudhon the debate is never closed.

PART FOUR

SOCIAL ANTI-THEISM

CHAPTER IX

AGAINST THE " MYTH OF PROVIDENCE "

" To ANY ONE who closely observes the march of civilization, progress appears to be like an immense dialectical chain."[1] The stages of this progress, or the links in this chain, are what Proudhon calls revolutions. There is never any progress, however, save through a new access of Justice. " Revolutions " then can be said to be " the successive manifestations of Justice in humanity ".[2] Until that time the word revolution had scarcely meant anything but a kind of rebellion on a much larger scale.[3] Proudhon was one of the first to go beyond this wholly empirical meaning in his use of the word. In this he followed Lamennais[4] and Michelet.[6] Revolutions, for him, were not any kind of crisis, but crises of growth. By means of these history advances, that history which, " so to speak, is but the alcoholic fermentation of right against the conceptions of concupiscence ".[6] He even spoke of Revolution, in the singular, as though it were a permanent force, a more or less existing reality, both inwardly and outwardly, the correlative of Justice, to which it had to act, as it were, as midwife down through all the ages. " Just as the notion of right is eternal and innate in mankind, so, too, is the Revolution innate and eternal. It did not begin in the year of Grace 1789, in a spot situated between the Pyrenees, the Atlantic, the Rhine and the Alps. It belongs to all ages and all countries."

Still its existence is not confined to an alternation of strong beats and weak beats. It was for a long while somnolent before it first burst forth, so that we may place its beginnings in that first great crisis which shook the world, the crisis provoked by the preaching of Christ. The Gospel inaugurated the Revolution when it proclaimed a first equality,

[1] *Demonstration du socialisme thioriaue et pratique.* **No. 6 (/. *G. R.*, p. 6; cf. p. 10).**
*** *Toast a la Revolution,* October 15th, 1848 (/. *G. R.*, p. 17).**
[8] **Letter to Marx: " What was formerly called a revolution, and what is quite simply a shock."**
*** Lamennais, *De Vabsolutisme et de la liberti* (1835). *Complete Works,* vol. xi (1836-7), p. 166. An inverted inheritance from Traditionalism.**
•Michelet, *Histoire de la Revolution* (1845-53), Introduction: "I define the Revolution as the advent of Law, the resurrection of Right and the reaction of Justice. . . . "
[9] ***Just.*, vol. iv, p. 464. Cf. p. 332: " Neither you nor I felt the slightest shock. Thus, in a way diametrically opposed to that of dynastic catastrophes, Humanity's revolutions are worked out."**

the equality of men before God. A second crisis followed, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the Reformation and Descartes, from which came the equality of men at the bar of reason. After the moral crisis and the intellectual crisis came the political crisis, which began in the middle of the eighteenth century, and achieved the equality of men in the eyes of the law. A fourth crisis, finally, had just begun, and it was for the generations of that day to see that it succeeded. It was an economic and social crisis, which would mark " the end of the religious, aristocratic, monarchical and middle-class age ". From it had to come the real equality among men, the " equation of men with humanity",[7] otherwise the progress already made would remain illusory.

When would Revolution's task be ended? Strictly speaking, never. Still it could be said that the task was ended when two things had been brought to perfection, two things which were interdependent, Anarchy and Justice. In other words, when the two enemies had been beaten, Authority and Property, Government and Capital. But both found their support in the Church. Consequently the Revolution would of necessity be anti-clerical. Reduced to plain terms, the question of the day was: " Which will win, the Revolution or the Church ? "[8] Moreover, that question had a meaning deeper than was at first apparent, for those interdependencies which existed indicated an essential relationship. In the religious sphere, Catholicism held a position similar to that of Capital in the economic sphere and of Government in the political sphere.[9] The three of them together formed a system, the system of the ancient regime, which was called Absolutism.[10] " A fatal trinity," whose basis was further broadened when Proudhon admitted that the part Catholicism played could be played equally well by any other religion.[11] A point which was brought out very well by M. Jean Lacroix: " Fairer and more far-seeing than many others," he wrote, " Proudhon does not take Catholicism to task for being bound up with this or that regime; but he discovers a deeper and more subtle bond between religion and the powers. . . . Between the spiritual power and the temporal power there is an essential intimacy and, as it were, a fundamental complicity. Consequently the efforts of those who tried

[7] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 618.
[8] *Con.*, p. 310.
[9] *Con.*, p. 282.
[10] *Op. cit.*, p. 71; p. 282: " What capital does to labour and the State to liberty, that in turn the Church does to the intelligence. This trinity of absolutism is a fatal one, in practice asan philosophy." To Darimon, September 24th, 1850: " Religion is authority; authority is the Church; the Church is Catholicism " (vol. iii, p. 360).
[11] *Op. cit.*, p. 343. *Cf. G. R.*, pp. 303-4, etc.

to overthrow authority, but did not touch religion, were futile."[12] Proudhon then would be not merely anti-clerical, but anti-religious; not an atheist, as many have said,[13] but—the word is his own—an " anti-theist ".[14] For if religion " legitimatizes " governments and, in the same way, makes Capital sacrosanct, it is above all because it is in God that it places the Absolute, the primary cause of all absolutes. Nothing then has been done until one has got at the root of the evil and opened the fight with God himself.[16]

There then is the problem of God set from a very unusual angle. The solution given by Proudhon is not a simple one, and we shall not now examine it in all thoroughness. He broaches it at the outset of his work, *Contradictions tconomiques*, as though it were an inevitable subject, and in the course of the work devotes lengthy developments to it. The proof that God exists based upon the order in the universe, and what is known as the metaphysical proof, do not appear sound to him. But there is the universal assent, which at least should make us take the idea of God into serious consideration. Moreover, " the fact that the theist idea persists through all the jargon of the Schools is the greatest of miracles, it forms the strongest assumption which can be adduced in favour of the Divinity ".[10] All the same, what is to be included under that word, God? That is no doubt an unanswerable question. Still, to give our investigations something to go upon, we will consider God, " according to the common opinion ", as a personal, infinite, creative Being, and " above all provident and just, who punishes vice and rewards virtue "; in a word, as the Divine Providence, the God-Providence.[17] If the order in Nature does not prove that this God is a reality, neither does it gainsay it. But " it is a totally different story where the government of mankind is concerned ":

" If God did not exist," it is Voltaire, the enemy of religions, who is speaking, " he would have to be invented ". . . . And I say: The first duty of an intelligent and free man is unceasingly to drive the idea of God out of his mind and his conscience. For God, if he exists, is

[11] *Proudhon ou la somerainеti du droit** in *Itlniraire spirituel*, p. 64.

[11] Eugene Poitou, for instance, in *Les philosophes francais contemporains et leurs systimes religieux* (1864), pp. 53-67; Coquille, *Du cisarisrm* (1872), vol. i, p. 405, etc.

[14] " Anti-theism is not atheism," he says again in *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 64: "the day will come, I hope, when knowledge of the laws of the human soul, of the principles of justice and reason, will justify that distinction, as profound as it may seem puerile." Vol. iv, p. 445: " Christian, Deist, Anti-theist. . . . "

[16] P. Af., vol. ii, p. 412: " True virtue, the virtue which makes us worthy of eternal life, is to fight against religion and against God."

" Op. *cit.*, vol. i, p. 377.

[17] *Op. clt.*, vol. i, pp. 377-8.

essentially hostile to our nature, and we in no wise depend upon his authority. We attain knowledge without him, our well-being without him, and a community without him; each one of our progressive steps is a victory in which we crush the Divinity.

Let none any longer say: the ways of God are inscrutable ! We have fathomed them, those ways, and we have read in them, in letters of blood, proofs of God's impotence, if not of his ill-will. . . . God is stupidity and cowardice; God is hypocrisy and lies; God is tyranny and misery; God is Evil . . .

I assert then that God, if there is a God, does not resemble the effigies the philosophers and priests have made of him; that he neither thinks nor acts according to the laws of analysis, foresight and progress, which are man's distinctive feature . . .; that God's intelligence, freedom and personality and ours are differently constituted; and that this originality of his nature makes God a being who is essentially against all civilizing influences, anti-liberal and anti-human.[18]

Proudhon adhered to his idea. He adhered to his definition. " God and man," he also said, " are two natures which run away from each other as soon as they know each other." He returns to the idea again to rule out the Humanism of Feuerbach and his disciples. What is good against the dogma of Providence is good also against " the system of man's deification ". " It was through providence that God was really made to man's image; take away that providence and God ceases to be a man, and man in turn must give up all his pretensions to divinity." It is not for man to make himself a god, but " to disown God ", yet without denying him.[19] So long as he has not made up his mind to do that, Revolution cannot be achieved, and all progress is precarious. That is the reason why Christ's work remained unfinished and has been endlessly jeopardized. In *Idie gindrale de la Revolution,* Proudhon gives the explanation in a page which we scarcely venture to copy, so blasphemous is its tone. Before passing final judgement upon it, however, we should wait till other explanations are given later, which will clarify and possibly tone down considerably its full significance:

More than eighteen centuries ago, a man attempted, as we are attempting today, to regenerate mankind. In the holiness of his life, in his prodigious intelligence, in the brilliancy of his imagination, the Spirit of Revolutions, the Eternal One's adversary, thought he recognized a son. He presented himself before him and said, showing him the kingdoms of the earth: All these will I give you, if you will recognize me as your author and will adore me.—No, said the Nazarene, I adore God and him only will I serve. The inconsequential reformer was

[18] P. M., vol. i, pp. 382-3, 384-5.
[19] *Op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 390, 392, 393.

crucified. After him, pharisees, publicans, priests and kings re-appeared, more tyrannical, more rapacious, more infamous than ever, and the Revolution twenty times undertaken, and twenty times abandoned, has remained a problem. Come to me, Lucifer, Satan, whoever you may be! Devil whom the faith of my fathers contrasted with God and the Church. I will act as spokesman for you and will demand nothing of you.[20]

We must not take literally what is evidently meant to be an apologue, for which Proudhon made use of Biblical facts with his usual licence. The thought behind a creed such as that is what matters to us. " God is Evil." " What do we owe him ?—War."[21] " Come to me, Satan !" What is the correct meaning of such exclamations ? Have we there real Satanism, an echo of the *non serviam* ? Must we say, with Donoso Cortes, " never did mortal man sin so seriously against mankind and against the Holy Ghost" ? Must we, with the same author, speak seriously of a " Proudhonian Manichseism ", and believe that we are dealing with, in the phrase's full meaning, a possessed person ?[22] Or should we, on the contrary, with Sainte-Beuve and others, see in these provocative phrases merely " bravado ", merely an excess of language which is " beside the question " ?[23] Or will it suffice, to limit the scandal, if we add, with M. Lucien Maury: " You must read, the God of the theologians " ?[24]

One thing is certain, with a man such as this we must beware how we take his trenchant phrases, and the mild meaning, when all is said

[20] ***1. G. R.*** **Proudhon again used this apostrophe to Satan, in *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 433-4, with a rather different symbolical meaning.**

[21] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 63.**

[22] **Donoso Cortes, *Essai sur le catholicisme, le Ubiralisme et le socialisme {Works*, French trans., vol. iii, 1859), pp. 191, 409-10. Pp. 406-7: " And yet this man, the awful object of divine wrath, retains somewhere, in the depths of his gloomy being, something which is light and love, something which still distinguishes him from the infernal spirits; albeit already enveloped in thickening shadows, he is not entirely hatred and darkness. Avowed enemy of all literary beauty as well as of all moral beauty, he is, without knowing or wishing it, beautiful from a literary and a moral point of view in the few pages which he devotes to the unassuming grace of the modesty, the simple and chaste loves and the harmonies and magnificences of Catholicism. His style is then heightened, full of splendour and majesty, or else takes on the gentle and peaceful tones of the sweetest of idylls."**

[23] **Sainte-Beuve, *P. /. Proudhon, sa vie et sa correspondence*: ** One wonders at these challenges thrown out to mankind, without any necessity and having nothing to do with the question. That is his mannerism, his outrageousness, his bravado, I know not what to call to it, a kind of flourish to'his signature which flaunts itself and strikes one at once. De Maistre, in his day, had also certain words deliberately selected to offer insult . . . aristocratic insolence, plebeian audacity . . . one slapped public opinion on the cheek with a glove; the other, by way of beginning, struck a blow full in the chest." *Cf.* Lucien Maury, *La pensde vivante de Proudhon*, vol. i, p. 26: " advertising matter "," publicity stunts ". Some of his sayings about women should also be remembered.**

[24] **Lucien Maury, *loc. cit.***

and done, of his famous dictum, " Property is theft", warns us to be careful. Incidentally, notice how very different was the reception given to these two aphorisms. Whereas " Property is theft" caused an outcry and aroused fears which took a long time to die down, " God is Evil" " disturbed nobody ", or hardly anybody—unless they were moved by an emotion more interested than religious. In general, people merely thought that Proudhon was a great nuisance when he dabbled in ill-timed metaphysical speculations. " The middle classes of 1846 were more touchy on the question of property than they were on that of God ", unless God was attacked as being the protector of property—and " an economic blasphemy was much more serious in their eyes than a theological one ".[25] This illustration proves the statement which Marx made somewhat later in the preface to his book, *Capital:* " In our days, atheism itself is a venial sin, compared with criticism of the traditional conditions of property."[28] In both cases, after all, the thought was not as radical as the expression was outrageous. Once again Proudhon had allowed himself to be carried away. Just as in the form his dialectic took he seemed to draw his inspiration from Hegel more than he actually did, so his association with Bakunin in Paris at the time he was writing *Philosophie de la Misere* might well have something to do with the virulence of the anti-theist expressions which we have just quoted; a literary mimesis, to which he was then prone.[27] His thought is nevertheless very different from that of the Russian anarchist, with whom too close a parallel has often been made.[28] It is also very different from that " reasoned impiety " which Fourier likewise set up against a barren atheism.[29] *A fortiori* we must rule out any common interpretation. " It is sufficiently evident," he wrote,

[25] **Daniel Hatevy, *Proudhon d'apres ses cornets inedits, loc. cit.*, pp. 35, 36. It is a fact that similar blasphemies of Vigny, for example, not being connected with social criticism, have scarcely moved the heirs of the middle class scandalized by Proudhon. Cf. Vigny, *Journal d'un poete,* pp. 92-3, 166.**

***Capital,* Molitor's trans., vol. i, p. lxxx.**

[27] **According to Granier de Cassagnac (1857), Proudhon owed the sentence, " God is Evil", to Sylvain Marechal *(Just.,* vol. ii, p. 91, note). As for the other saying, " Property is theft", we know that the original author was Brissot de Warville, in his *Recherches sur le droit de propriiti et le vol* (1782): " Exclusive property is a theft in nature. The thief, in the natural state, is the rich man."**

" As well as being an anti-theist, Bakunin is an atheist. *Vempire knouto-germanique {Works,* vol. iii), p. 48: " If God really existed, we should have to make him disappear." It is not then against God himself, but against " the fiction of God ", that he directly wages war, against" the fatal fiction of a heavenly master ": *Dieu et l'Etat {Works,* vol. i), p. 283. He combines Feuerbach's Humanism with a pretty simplistic libertarian theory. Cf. Emmanuel Mounier, *Anarchie et personnalisme,* in *Esprit,* April, 19t37. With Proudhon the contrast between man and God is much more complex; the comparison with Lucretius, outlined by F. Pillon, *La critique philosophique,* 1874-5, vol. ii, p. 292, likewise leaves room for profound differences.

" Cf. F. Pillon, *La critique philosophique,* 1875-6, vol. i, pp. 12-16.

" that these contradictions, these antipathies, must be understood in a higher and more philosophical sense than the hatred of a republican for Louis-Philippe, and that it is a question here of something quite different."[30] We should have to give up all hope of understanding Proudhon were we to leave the " speculative heights " on which he worked out his metaphysics as well as his social conceptions.[81]

Still he himself always maintained that his boldest expressions correctly reflected a clear and considered thought, albeit under the form of paradox, so that we should be condemning ourselves just as much as misunderstanding him were we to try to excuse his absurdities and his blasphemies as being idle talk. " As a man of the world, I am irresponsible and headstrong," he once wrote to his friend Antoine Gauthier, " but when it is a question of appearing in print, you can credit me with enough common sense not to put anything forward unless I am certain of it, even in my greatest paradoxes."[82] Again very much later, on August 20th, 1864, when he asked the editor of the Larousse Dictionary to inform him as soon as he reached the articles *God* and *Property,* he said, " A few words of explanation will show you that there is something other than paradoxes in the propositions : ' God is Evil' and ' Property is theft ,' propositions the literal meaning of which I still maintain, without thereby dreaming of making belief in God a crime, any more than of abolishing property."[38] A serious examination is therefore imperative.

It is well known that in declaring war upon property Proudhon was really attacking the right of escheat, or what he himself called " the sum total of its abuses "; that, though he demanded " the abolition of the sphere of property ", he was careful to repudiate all " idea of dispossession";[34] that his call for "property free from usury and abuse" was intended for the benefit of families;[35] that his "long criticism of the right to property " was meant to bring forth a " system of jurisprudence ".[36] It is also known that, as he understood it,

•• To Guillaumin, November 21st, 1846 (vol. ii, p. 227). " I am more and more astonished," he informed his publisher," at the foolishness of the readers from whom you receive all this tittle-tattle."

[31] Cf. To Micaud, May 6th, 1848 (vol. vi, p. 380).

[32] May 2nd, 1841 (vol. i, p. 342).

[33] Vol. xiv, p. 32.

[34] Preface to the First Memoir (1841), p. 128. *Explications sur le droit de propriete,* February 3rd, 1842 (Second Memoir, p. 256). *Le droit au travail et d lapropriete'* (1848), p. 50.

[35] *Le Peuple,* September 2nd, 1848 (Second Memoir, p. 299). Cf. *P. M.,* vol. ii, p. 196: " The family and property march abreast, supporting each other, neither of them having any meaning or worth except in the relation which unites them."

[36] To Ackermann, May 23rd, 1842 (vol. ii, p. 48). To Michelet, April 11th, 1851 (vol. xiv, p. 165).

" anarchy " had nothing in common with absence of principle or rule, which would make it " synonymous with disorder", and that in presence of those who understood the word in that sense he did not hesitate to call himself a " non-anarchist", to make it quite clear that he was a " friend of order '\[37] Neither did he hesitate to criticize the " economic anarchy " which then suited the Liberals.[38] The anarchy which he advocated was a " positive anarchy ". It was a form of government in which a " contract " would take the place of " authority " as a basis, in other words, in which right would prevail over passions, and " reason " would oust " the sweet will "[39] which ruled. It was an order of things in which the " raison d'fitat" subordinated to Justice became " the true expression of Right ".[40] Moreover, he knew that it was only, so to speak, a limit drawn for ideas, a manner of " imagining " the future, " more or less a mythical symbol ",[41] Reduced thus to a much more moderate meaning than they appeared at first to bear, these two ideas of Proudhon are possibly not less false; they may still be called Utopian, but at least they are not so scandalous. Even in that form, they still do not express the whole of Proudhon's thought, but only one of its aspects. We must indeed remember that that thought is dialectical. In its first movement it " destroys ", but only to build up subsequently, and it makes its way through antinomies before seeking conciliations. " Property is theft," quite so, but " property is also freedom ". " These two propositions have been equally proved and they stand side by side in the system of contradictions."[42] And Proudhon then endeavoured to " balance" Government by Property, so as to save as much freedom as possible, and Property by Government, so as to limit its abuses; so that, detestable though

[37] ***Prop.*, p. 339. *Explications sur le droit de propriety*, p. 263. *Con.*, p. 180. *Melanges*, vol. iii, p. 59: " The highest degree of order in society is expressed . . . by anarchy."**

[38] **I.G.R.(1851), p. 65.**

[39] ***U. /., p. 29. /. G. R.*, pp. 139-40. *Explications* . . . p. 263. To M. X., August 20th, 1864 (vol. xiv, p. 32). Cf. G. Gurwitch, L'*idee du droit social*, p. 357: " Proudhon's anarchy means no more than what is today called, according to the Dutch legal writer Krabbe and according to Duguit, the ' sovereignty of right': a denial of the * juridical sovereignty * of the State, the subordination of the power of the State to a law independent of the State."**

[40] ***T. I. (Complete Works*, vol. xv, 1868), p. 65. Renouvier allowed his antipathy towards Proudhon to get the better of him when he wrote: " he was an upholder of the *raison d'Etat*" ; *Les icoles contemporaines de morale en France*, in *La critique phihsophique*, 1873-4, vol. i, p. 42.**

[41] **To Langlois, December, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 157).**

[42] ***Con.*, p. 179. *P. M.*, vol. ii, p. 266: " Humanity, like a drunken man, wavers and staggers between two abysses, property on the one side, and the community on the other: the problem is to know how it will get through this pass, in which its head is seized with giddiness and its feet give way under it."**

they may be if one considers them in their origin and if they are accepted as being entirely free to produce all their effects, Property and Government become nevertheless beneficial forces, even indispensable forces, if they are envisaged in their functions and care is taken to balance one by the other. " It is from the opposition between these two absolutes that the political movement, the social life, springs, just as . . . lightning springs from the opposition between two contrary electricities."[43] Both then combine in that " state of social equality " which his *Calibration du dimanche* had already laid down as an ideal and which is " neither community, nor despotism, nor a parcelling-out, nor anarchy, but freedom in order and independence in unity ".[44]

We already gather that similar remarks might tone down also in some measure the scandalous nature of his exclamation, " God is Evil". A few years after he had uttered it, Proudhon wrote in this strain to a priest-correspondent: " My criticism of the idea of God is similar to all the criticisms I have made of authority, property, etc.; it is a systematic negation, which is meant to come to a higher affirmation, equally systematic."[45] Without letting this promise of a " higher affirmation " take away our misgivings too quickly, we must not then look for complete and definitive thought in what is still only the expression of a moment, and a most pronounced moment, in what our author enthusiastically calls his " new dialectic "[46] " Humanity and divinity," he says elsewhere, " are *first of all* antagonistic."[47] That is something which permits us to foresee a possible reconciliation, a state, consequently, in which God would no longer appear as " evil *'. Besides, Proudhon himself opens up the perspective for us. Having, in 1846, published what he calls the " antinomic part" of his system, he was anxious immediately to set out the opposite side. The whirlpool into which he was thrown by the revolution of February prevented him from doing so. We can also take it that in any event such an effort would have been too much for him. Towards the end of 1846, he explained to Guillaumin that " If God and man are opposed to

[41] *Th. P.*, p. 193.

[44] C. Th ., p. 61. *Th. P.*, pp. 137, 138: " Where shall we find a power capable of counter-balancing the formidable power of the State ? There is none other than property.. . ." " The absolute right of the State is in conflict then with the absolute right of the property-owner." " Property is the greatest revolutionary force which exists and which may be opposed to the powers." Already in the first Memoir, p. 342: " What the community and property desire is good; what both of them produce is bad. And why ? Because they are both exclusive, etc."* They must be united in a synthesis to obtain that excellent thing, liberty.

[45] To abbe X., January 22nd, 1849 (vol. vi, p. 114. See below, chapter xiii, p. 272).

[46] P.M., vol. i, p. 378.

[47] *Con.*, p. 182. And p. 181: " The Tartufes shouted ' Atheism' and ' sacrilege '."

each other, they are by that very fact necessary to each other",[48] and in 1849 *(Les Confessions d'un Revolutionnaire)* he gave a bold outline of the phases of a development in the course of which man, after having rejected God and then having adored himself, came to a point where man " adored himself less in proportion as " he knew himself more, and where " he finally reconciled himself with God, through his knowledge of Nature and of himself".[49]

Furthermore, we must remember that, in handling his dialectic, Proudhon had in mind the opponents with whom he was faced and whom he wished to refute. His point of view was resolutely polemical. Now it was even more against the new German Humanism than against the traditional theodicy that he drew up his ideas. As Saint-Rene Taillandier almost immediately observed, the chapter devoted to the problem of God in his *Contradictions dconomiques* would be almost unintelligible to anybody who did not know the circumstances of the "junior Hegelian school", the school of Feuerbach, Stirner and Grun.[60] " It is impossible for me ", Proudhon declared, " to welcome this new religion in which they are trying in vain to make me interested by telling me that I am its God."[51] The close criticism of it which he initiated is parallel to the effort of another anti-Hegelian of the same period, Kierkegaard. When, for instance, Proudhon writes that God and man have " shared between themselves the antagonistic faculties of Being", one having taken " spontaneity, immediateness, infallibility and eternity ", while the other received for his share " foresight, deduction, mobility and time ",[62] one cannot help feeling that there is a kinship between those remarks and what the Danish thinker wrote exactly one year later, in 1847: " All the confusion of modern times has its foundation in the fact that attempts have been made to suppress the abyss of quality which separates God and man."[63] The latter goes so far as to say, in his *Journal,* that " Christianity exists because there is hatred between God and men ", and even to call God

[48] November 21st, 1846 (vol. ii, p. 228). In that same year, 1846, he wrote in his Note-book: " God and man, neither is more than the other; they are two incomplete realities, which have not the fulness of existence. . . . "

***• *Con.,* p. 183. The last line has been suppressed in the second edition.**

[50] Saint-Rene Taillandier, *Revue des Deux Mondes,* October 15th, 1848, p. 316. " Finally," the author adds, " when he draws up his conclusions, it is not against his millions of opponents that he is trying to maintain them, but against the little circle of Humanists."

[51] *P. A/.* Amiel, who professed the highest admiration for the *P. M.,* was mistaken then when he wrote: '' His fault was that he stopped short at Feuerbach's metaphysics, at his Humanism." *Essais critiques,* published by B. Bouvier (1932); Cf. *Journal intime,* May 13th, 1848, and November 22nd, 1849.

[52] Op. cit ., vol. i, pp. 393-4.

[53] Quoted by Jean Wahl, *Etudes kierkegaardiennes,* p. 130.

" the mortal enemy ",[54] Are there not then two comparable means for making man shake off his mental torpor or his inordinate ambition and become aware of this truth, that God is of necessity the " Quite Different One " ? And does it not follow from that established fact—at least Proudhon thought it did—that if man wishes to be faithful to his nature and play here below the progressive part assigned to him, he must shape a course the exact opposite of the Infinite Being's, " in whom liberty and intelligence, the ego and the non-ego, exist in an inconceivable form " ? How could the paths of relative beings such as we are, in a state of perpetual Becoming, not diverge from those of the absolute ? Whereas in the bosom of the Infinite One an undivided peace must reign, we men " only live and feel and think by a series of contrasts and clashes, by a civil war ".[65] Thus, " God and man hold each other perpetually at bay and unceasingly run away from each other "[56] and the latter's destiny is to fight against the former, " like Israel against Jehovah, until death ".[57] All human progress is on those terms: "Knowledge demands the insurrection of thought",[68] and justice the insurrection of the conscience. But it may be said that in its guise of absolute rebellion, this twofold insurrection, being man's submission to his destiny, is deep down merely obedience to the Creator's law, to the " divine Artist who has entrusted us with the continuation of his work ". Taking up again in his own way a thought often expressed in Christian tradition, Proudhon explained that if man appeared to be God's adversary and rival, it was because he was created to be in his turn a creator. Like God, but in a different manner, he, too, works. So, " mankind . . . slowly accomplishes, with no difficulty or anxiety, the decree of the eternal reason, and this, as it were, reluctant working-out of divine justice by mankind is what we call progress in ourselves ".[69]

" I n Karl Koch, *Soren Kierkegaard*, French trans., pp. 201, 203. Karl Barth likewise insists on this " infinite difference " and refuses to allow the divine to be conceived in any way " as a superlative of ideal humanity ".

[65] P. M., vol. i, p. 391.

•• *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 394.

[67] *Op. cit.*; cf. vol. ii, p. 253.

[68] P. P., p. 16: " The predominating thing in all my studies, that which constitutes their beginning and their end, their summit and their base, their motive in fine; that which gives the key to all my controversies, to all my disquisitions, to all my deviations; that which constitutes, in fact,* my originality as a thinker, if I may attribute any originality to myself, is the fact that I affirm resolutely, irrevocably, in everything and for everything, *Progress*, and that I deny, not less resolutely, in everything and for everything, the Absolute." See also *G.* P., p. 439. P. *M.*, foreword, vol. i, p. 63. He once wrote: " I look upon myself as being in a state of perpetual insurrection against the order of things ".

•• P. *M.*, vol. ii, p. 362, etc. Vol. i, p. 66: " Man's labour continues the work of God."

" God is Evil." In *Justice* and in *Justice poursuivie* Proudhon gives another explanation of his formula, a more simple one, which does not deny the previous one but is less hampered by metaphysics. The " revolutionary reason ", he says, puts the idea of God aside, " Not that God is evil in himself—is there anything evil in itself?—but because his intervention in mankind's affairs produces nothing but evil";[60] his intervention, or rather the claim put forward in his name to prevent man from intervening for himself. " I admit," he also says, " the absolute in metaphysics; consequently I admit God, but also in metaphysics, on condition that he does not leave the absolute, *ilia se jactet in aula Eolus;* I deny him everywhere else, in experimental science, in rational science, in physics, in psychology, in ethics—above all in ethics ".[61] To put it in another way, it is not between God himself and human progress that there is any contradiction. The divine essence is not concerned in this. But the contradiction " arises from the consideration we give to this essence in things where reason even forbids us to consider our very selves ". Thus we arrive at the same conclusion as just now, to wit, that " it is not an offence against the Divinity to refuse to acknowledge his jurisdiction; it is showing his greatness in the perfection of his works ".[62]

These last reflections, which were addressed to. judges, smack of apologetics. They unsay the reproaches aimed by *La Philosophic de la Misere* at Providence itself. Nevertheless, the essential idea to be gathered from them does not reveal the idea which lies in Proudon's innermost thought, in his *Misere* as well as in his *Justice.* He attacks especially an idea of Providence which does not seem to him to differ, in the opposition it creates to man's free efforts, from the ancient idea of Fate or Destiny. " Applied to mankind ", those two words, provi-

[60] .JUST, vol. i, p. 412.

[61] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 183; and p. 184: " In the *Contradictions economiques* I have overthrown the idea of Providence as being subversive of historical, political and moral science."**

[62] **.J. *P. (Works*, vol. xx), p. 170. The same applies to the "strange figure" of Satan, who in *P. M.* stands for the struggle against Destiny and, in *Just.*, more generally for liberty. /. *P.*, p. 212: " I admit that I was far from expecting all this to-do, and nothing humiliates me more than the mental poverty of my readers. Nothing is more terrible than freedom, since by it evil is made possible. But nothing also is more precious than freedom, since without it the universe remains inexplicable; Justice, a pure instinct, loses its merit; reason is a machine; man a beast; I should have added, and that no doubt would have helped me to be understood, God—having become destiny—a petrifaction. Let us then fervently embrace freedom, since it is the co-efficient of Justice, since without it we do not exist, and since the most heroic moment of our life is the one when, like the French nation in '93, we feel we are most free. But let us not forget that this liberty is a Satan, without whom we should never do anything evil."**

dential and fated, have, for him, " exactly the same meaning ",[63] So he honours in the same cult " the two great revolts of mankind ", the second of which was strictly a continuation of the first: " Christianity, a revolt against Destiny, and the Revolution, a revolt against Providence ".•* In a word, he means man to take into his own hands the direction of his affairs, for the indispensable task of " abolishing fatalism ", and, without denying God or execrating him in himself, he is content to relegate him to a place " outside human activity, in which he thinks he is made to play a fraudulent rdle ",[65]

Does he indiscriminately condemn at the same time everything that has been included under the words Providence and destiny ? Does he believe that these words have never meant anything that was right and good in mankind's onward journey ? Certainly not. His dialectic is not meant to be purely intellectual; it claims (we shall see this better later) to translate an historic dialectic, a Becoming. He is the interpreter of a revolution of which, he thinks, the time has come, as it has also for Christianity, and it is to his contemporaries, and not to just any generation of men, that he addresses the following words: " You must grasp the reins of progress, those reins which until now have been held by an incomprehensible Providence alone. . . . Providence which has brought us to this hour, is incapable itself of taking us any further. Man must take God's place in the chariot of destiny."[86]

The language is coloured, as nearly everything Proudhon has said up till now has been. If we understand exactly what it means, we may at the same time possibly see the scandalous aspect of his blasphemous expressions vanish—but with it also the chief tokens of a belief which, despite a few reservations,[67] seemed pretty firm. Moreover, Proudhon himself had warned us of this: his *Philosophic de la Misere* drew upon the language then current and took its stand upon the universally accepted theodicy. But in the prologue to that work he gave us a key which will enable us to penetrate to the very heart of his doctrine. Postulating the idea of God as " a dialectical instrument necessary " for his purpose, he had asserted that " this idea is above all

[88] *Con.*, p. 333. Just., vol. ii, p. 170, and vol. iii, p. 5: " Contrary conclusions of the fatalist or providentialist school and the revolutionary school."

"Just., vol. iii, p. 422.

•• Andre Rousseaux, *Proudhon et nous,* in *Le, Figaro littiraire,* August 22nd, 1942.

•• *Le droit au travail et a la propria* (Second Memoir, p. **449).** Quoting these words in an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* December 1st, 1848, *La guerre du socialisme,* Eugene Forcade added: "Conscience completely revolts against this hideous cry of rage of a covetous pride, the very excesses of which proclaim its impoteney " (p. 849).

[67] Proudhon speaks of " the hypothesis of a God " (P. *M.*, vol. i, pp. 33,337, etc.); here and there he also makes use of agnostic expressions, **but** everywhere his real thought **lies beyond** these **two** positions.

a social one ", in other words, " it is much more an act of faith of collective thought than an individual conception ", and he had tried to show " how and on what occasion this act of faith is produced ":

> The community, or the collective Being, is distinguished especially from the individual by its spontaneity of action, in other words, its instinct. . . . The establishment of monarchies and of republics, the distinction of classes, the judicial institutions, etc., are all so many manifestations of this social spontaneity, of which it is easier to note the effects than to indicate the principle. . . . All the efforts even of those who, after Bossuet, Vico, Herder, Hegel, worked on the philosophy of history, have hitherto been confined to recording the presence of the providential destiny which presides over all man's movements. . . . This mysterious faculty, quite intuitive, and, so to speak, supra-social, which is scarcely or not at all perceptible in individuals, but which hovers over mankind like an inspiring spirit, is the primordial fact of all psychology.
>
> Now, unlike other animal species, man has the privilege of perceiving and pointing out to his own thought the instinct or fatum which leads him. . . . And man's first movement, enraptured and filled with enthusiasm (with the divine breath), is to adore the invisible Providence upon which he feels he depends, and to call it God. . . .[68]

The fight between God and man, which Proudhon described for us in such vivid terms and in which he seemed so fiercely to take up the cudgels, is reduced then, in the final reckoning, to an opposition between " social spontaneity " and premeditated initiative. The former ensures the foundation and preservation of human societies, to it we owe " religions, empires, poetries and ancient monuments". The latter becomes necessary, at a given moment, to promote progress, and the fact that it progressively overtakes the other is one of the traits which characterize our species. Now " the days are no more in which communities were moved by a kind of intuition and spontaneity, in which the reason of the masses could consequently be called sovereign, when failure was certain for any one who wandered away from the body. The spontaneity of the masses is exhausted; the movement of the times has brought, in politics as in everything else, the reign of principles, which is the reign of reflection, outside of which henceforth there is nothing but retrogression and decadence."[69]

Both the forces thus singled out reveal then, in a twofold movement, so to speak, the spiritual creation. But they have opposite attributes. On one side there is instinct and Nature; on the other

[62] P. M., vol. i, pp. 34-5. Henri Baudrillart, *be. cit.*, p. 609: " He calls divine the passive, instinctive part of our nature. . . . The active and thoughtful element constitutes man by contrast."

[69] To Clavel, October 26th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 255).

reason and liberty. Now, " what characterizes instinct is promptitude, intuition, spontaneity, and infallibility; what distinguishes reason is memory, reflection, imagination, reasoning, the *error* or wandering of thought, and progress. The former is, strictly speaking, the form of intelligence in Nature; the latter is the form of intelligence in man ". By that very fact these two faculties are bound to be " antagonistic "; but just as the former is not the totality of goodness, neither does the latter stand for the totality of evil. No doubt, the more man emerges from Nature, the more does the individual's reflection put the spontaneity of common nature in the background. But his task is not to destroy it. It is rather to revise it and to rejuvenate it indefinitely.[70]

That is the commentary given by the *Confessions d'un Revolutionnaire* to the burning text, a text, it must be admitted, sometimes difficult to understand—of the *Contradictions iconomiques.* Proudhon clearly sets out to answer those who were scandalized to see appearing in his system " God and man in opposition to each other". He reduced this opposition to that of the " antinomic forces of the community ", in particular to that of the community itself and of individuality; and once again he stated precisely that its end was neither the elimination nor the absorption of either of the opposing terms, but their " constant equilibrium ".[71] Shortly afterwards, in the *Idie gdne'rale de la Revolution,* he explained it all again:

It is with ideas as with machines. No one knows the inventor of the first tools. . . . But this spontaneity is no longer found in perfected instruments. The finger of God, if I may venture to say so, is no longer there.

Thus are born and developed the ideas which serve to guide mankind. The first come from a spontaneous, immediate intuition, for which no one can claim priority. But a day comes when the facts as given by common sense are no longer sufficient for the collective life. Then reasoning, which alone discerns in a genuine way this deficiency, alone can make it good. All races have produced and organized among themselves, without the aid of initiators, ideas of authority, property, government, justice and worship. Now that these ideas are growing weak—and that a methodical analysis, an official inquiry, if I may venture to put it that way, has verified this deficiency, in the eyes of society and at the bar of reason—it is a question of knowing how to make good, through science, this deficiency in ideas which, according to science itself, are stricken with reprobation and have been declared untrue.[72]

[70] *Con.,* pp. 181-8.
[71] *Op. cit.,* p. 181.
[72] *G. R.,* pp. 111-12. *Just.,* vol. iv, p. 417: " There comes a day when society, having become conscious of its age-old immorality, wishes to rise from it, to restore spirituality to itself, and thus insure itself both against the abuses of the powers and against rebellion."

The learned Cournot scarcely differed in his opinions from our fiery polemist, and expressed himself in terms pretty similar to Proudhon's when, criticizing Joseph de Maistre's social philosophy, he wrote in *Considerations sur la marche des idies*: " The more societies grow old, the more they strip themselves of the qualities which belonged to them as living organisms, and approximate to the kind of structure, and adapt the means of improvement, peculiar to machinery. . . ."[78]

Yet why all this commotion? If it was only a question of discussing social evolution and its laws, why these high-sounding words, God and Providence, why all this display of enthusiasm for metaphysics? Are not these the outcome of a temperament given to excesses, or of too close an attention given to the thinkers beyond the Rhine and of an intoxication contracted from them? There is something else besides, something which is more simple and more immediate. Consequently, no matter how much the foregoing analyses may be based on Proudhon's own text, they are far too abstract to enable us to pass judgement on a thought deeply entangled in reality itself and in the conflicts of his day. What matters to us more than the subtleties and the meanderings of the dialectician is the reactions of the man. " An anathema can be understood only if it is put back into its historic context."[74] First of all then, let us see against whom Proudhon bears a grudge.

It was not Proudhon who, if we may put it thus, thrust God into the brawl. In the years when he first began to write, the traditional religion, for long engaged in supporting the " Right to the Throne ", was called in afresh to give its aid to " Property ". This was the new Idol, and the God of the Christians was commandeered for its service. Those who were honouring the Idol were the upper-middle-class people, who, at the same time, in their enthusiasm, were singing their hymn to Liberalism. According to many of them, the workman was to earn by his labour a little less than was necessary for him to live; that was a providential necessity, and economic progress consisted in transforming a crowd of craftsmen and small property-owners into a miserable proletariat. . . . That is what was prescribed in the name of social progress: Proudhon rebelled against it. Providence was called in to justify it: Proudhon rejected Providence. To the first cry of rebellion: " Property is theft", he added as a corollary: " God is Evil". ,

[78] **Cournot, *Considerations sur la marche des idies* . . . e d i t i o n Mentie, vol. ii, pp. 183-4.**

[74] **Emmanuel Mourner, *Anarchie et personnalisme, he. cit.*, p. 167.**

In his youth, as we have already seen, he came up against that close union between religion and politics, symbolized, so to speak, at that time by certain " missions ". The literature of his day confirms the impression he has left to us. Here, for instance, are the words in which Abbe* Merigot presents the missions to us, in an article in the Catholic magazine, *Le Defenseur:*

> The missioners . . . are guided by the express wish of our king. . . . Those who disapprove of them are therefore opposed to the desires of the Most Christian Monarch and of the whole of France; they are avowed enemies of the country. . . . They want division among the subjects, and their irreconcilable alienation from the throne; they want formal war against heaven. . . . So many voices unite in bearing witness that altar and throne have already derived, and must still expect, the greatest advantages from the missions. . . ,[75]

In an alliance such as that, one can well imagine that it was not always the altar which caused the greatest anxiety. There were many apologists who, as in the previous century, saw in " holy religion " before everything else " the throne's one and only support ",[76] Did not Montalembert complain of " the shameful exploitation of religion by the Legitimists ? "[77] • Does not the whole of Balzac's work show the Church as, to use Leon Bloy's phrase," a Government machine "?[78] *' Scene of Conservative principles ", " the only power sanctioning the social laws ", " political necessity ": those were the words in which the author of *Medecin de campagne* and of *La duchesse de Langeais* presented and recommended Catholicism many times over. And in the idea itself which Proudhon frequently seems to form of religion,[79] can we not recognize the idea of the majority of the traditionalists and of the counter-revolutionaries of the century before his own, for whom religion appeared to be principally a cohesive force and a force of social preservation?

When, however, the middle classes were firmly set up in power with the July monarchy, Property became the subject of their dithyrambs ; and it was Property in particular which called upon Providence to consolidate its interests. The revolutionaries already in possession did not want others to dispossess them. Conservatives or progressivists,

[75] *Sur les missionaires, Le Defenseur,* October, 1820.

[76] Cf. G. Fabricy, O. P., *Discours sur la revelation,* etc. (1772), p. 20. *Adresse au roi,* published by *Le Defenseur,* in September, 1820: " Religion, this firm support of thrones. . . . "

[77] *Chronique catholique de man temps*; September 13th, 1838 (Traunoy, *Le romanticisme politique de Montalembert avant 1843,* p. 543).

[78] Leon Bloy, *Le pilerin de Vabsolu,* p. 39.

[79] For instance, in *C. D.* or the *R. S.,* pp. 129-30.

supporters of the " resistance " or of the " movement", their worship of Property was equally ardent. Property then inspired a literature in a mystical vein, which today, at a century's distance, makes us smile, but which was calculated to stir the heart of a man enamoured of justice. The old " divine right" of kings had given place to a divine right of property-owners. The alliance between throne and altar had been succeeded by " an alliance between the altar and the money-bags ".[80] Property was unreservedly declared to be of " divine origin ". They said it was " a divine institution ",[81] " a sacred mystery ",[82] whose "holy laws"[83] were revered. The inequalities to which it gave rise were themselves sacred, they were all full of " providential advantages ". It mattered little that those who benefited had no inkling of it: " Men of property and of leisure, no, you have not intercepted God's gifts; possibly you thought only of yourselves, but your personal interest itself has been the instrument of an infinitely foreseeing and wise providence."[84] This language, which justified all selfishness and sanctioned, even sanctified, all abuses, was spoken by philosophers, economists and politicians. Thiers' work, *De la Propriety* (On Property), a cheap edition of which at one franc was circulated in 1848, marked the zenith of this style of writing. Undertaking to establish a basis for the right to property, Thiers bemoaned the fact that he was obliged " to prove something which formerly no one would have undertaken to demonstrate, out of respect for the human conscience";[85] that is more than a theologian would say before setting out the proofs for God's existence. In Thiers' eyes the rich man was naturally more sensitive than the poor one, who could have but elementary feelings: " Observation of human nature proves that he (the rich man) suffers more deeply, for his soul, drawn less to the surface by physical sufferings, lies more within. . . . The less one suffers in the body, the more one suffers in the heart."[86] O profound psychology ! O sublime commentary on *Blessed are the poor I* Is that a consolation for the poor man, or an insult to his misery ? At all events, if that argument was no good, Thiers held another in reserve, the argument of Christian hope:

[80] **F. Pillon, *Uantithdisme proudhonien,* in *La critique philosophique,* 1874-5, vol. ii, p. 294: " The *Constitutionnel* was seen to flare up for Providence, as L'*Univers* did; the middle classes and the church-goers joined hands and stormed against the enemy of God and of Capital."**

[81] **Demolombe, Laboulaye, etc.**

[82] **Lamartine himself, in a discourse on February 5th, 1836.**

[83] **Balzac, *Le curi de village.***

[84] **Bastiat, etc.**

[85] **Thiers, *De la Proprie'te'*, popular edition, p. 3.**

[86] ***Op. cit.*, p. 377.**

Religion tells you: suffer, suffer in humility, in patience, in hope, looking to the God who waits for you and who will reward you. Thus she turns all pain into a short cut on the long journey which is to lead us to eternal felicity. That is why the powerful religion called Christianity exercises a continuous domination. . . . The mind of man has had more than one dispute with her about her dogmas, but none about her moral code. . . . Christianity endures . . . and all wise politicians, without judging her dogmas—which have only one judge, the faith—want her to endure.

Speak to the people then as religion speaks to them . . . if you do not want to increase their suffering and change it into an ungodly rage.[87]

When religion speaks to the people it can preach resignation and hope because that is not its only message and because it is not speaking to the people alone. Thiers, however, was the spokesman here for a middle class already in possession, which, while it refused to give credence to Christianity, nevertheless charged that religion to keep the disquieting multitude of the poor in check. It was evidently more the " ungodly rage " of the people he feared than its " suffering ". A Catholic as sincere as Albert de Broglie could all the same congratulate him upon thus placing " society's cause under the wing of religion ",[88] and his admiration for Thiers' doctrine was so great that " his name ", he wrote, " is almost the only one which can still be pronounced with honour and with a little hope ". Then, acknowledging that " a great inequality in circumstances is the necessary consequence of hereditary property", Broglie extolled " the consoling arrangement of Providence " by which " the superfluity of one man helps the deficiency of another, and that quite naturally, without any effort of self-sacrifice or charity, without anything else on the rich man's part other than a care for his pleasures and a calculation of his interest". As a matter of fact, the more wealth a rich man has and the more he seeks his own comfort, the more work does he give to the poor man: thus he permits him to subsist. There were some who claimed that the rich man carried out his task imperfectly, and that in any case the fact that he held the working tools " established a bond of dependence between the poor man and himself, which was offensive to human dignity", and.consequently they demanded that the law should intervene; but that were to ignore "man's nature" and rashly to disturb the order of Providence.[89]

[87] *Op. cit.*, pp. 381-3.

[88] Albert de Broglie, *De la propriiti, par M. Thiers,* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* November 15th, 1848 (vol. xxiv, p. 583).

[89] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 556, 572-5. Moreover, Thiers was but " very poorly **pleased** " with this work by the young Broglie; *Mtmoires du due de Broglie,* vol. i, p. 207.

Into this cult of the " providential order ", of the " providential laws ", and of the " providential thought", Frederic Bastiat, with whom Proudhon was to engage in resounding controversy,[90] plunged even more deeply. Criticizing Ricardo's pessimism, he undertook to show that everywhere and always " interests were in harmony", and the whole solution of the social problem consisted for him in this very simple precept: "refrain from thwarting and shifting the interests ".[91] According to Bastiat, there is a " social mechanism" which, just as much as the heavenly mechanism, " shows forth the wisdom of God and tells his glory '\[92] Let man take care not to lay a hand on it! Let him take care not to disturb " the providential decrees " ! The work of the " great artificer " is not to be adjusted or recast, but blessed. Each day it brings into being, provided we do not interfere with it by our conceptions and our violent ways, the kingdom of God upon earth. " Ingenious Nature" has arranged everything in such a way that the most interested actions always achieve moral results. " Freedom is " then " the best of the social organizations ",[93] and " there is more harmony in the divine laws than in human arrangements ". Anyone who, in one way or another, wishes to correct those laws, is an " impious man " and a blasphemer.[94] Supposing one wanted to have recourse to the expedient of subsidies for families ? " Thus the great law of responsibility would be evaded.

•• It has been largely said that in this controversy Proudhon was beafen. " He was seen," writes F. Pillon," to abandon one after another the positions into which he had withdrawn, and finally to fly into a passion, as is ever the way with those who are wrong. We must say that the majority of his arguments are singularly weak. Bastiat did not have much trouble in overcoming them." *Fridiric Bastiat,* in *La critique philosophique,* 1878-9, vol. i, p. 250. Yet Taparelli admits that Proudhon was in agreement with the canonists in condemning usury; he also admits that Bastiat was more than once embarrassed by him: *Essai sur les principes philosophiques de Viconomie politique,* Jacquin's trans., pp. 22-3. We might add that, if some of the technical details are less familiar *to* him than to his adversary, Proudhon nevertheless gets the better of him by his clear-sightedness in judging the fundamental pretensions of economic science. The Utopist here was rather Bastiat. The latter adhered to his Liberalism with a " mystical faith " very much like that which then animated the leaders of sects and the founders of Socialist systems (cf. Pillon, *loc. cit.,* p. 355). He was convinced that he had been chosen to map out for humanity the way to happiness: '* When cholera decimated the Assembly, I said to God: ' Do not take me out of this world until I have accomplished my mission V*

•[1] Bastiat, *Lettre au Journal des iconomistes {Works,* vol. i, p. 213); *Harmonies iconomiques, preface a la jeunesse francaise* (vol. vi, p. 2); *Manifeste de Vassociation francaise pour la liberti commercial,* May 10th, 1846.

•• *Harmonies iconomiques* (vol. vi, pp. 12,144). " Let men work upon, exchange with, learn by, associate with, act and react upon one another, since in any case, by providential decrees, nothing can arise from their intelligent spontaneity but order, harmony, progress, good, the best, again the best, the best *ad infinitum***

•• *Lettre a M. Lamartine a Voccasion de son icrit intitule'; Du droit au travail. Journal des iconomistes.* February 1845 (vol. i, p. 417); *Harmonies iconomiques,* chapter 8 (vol. vi).

"Loc. cit., pp. 413-14.

Those who, possibly for personal reasons, which are perfectly in keeping with the public interest, have behaved according to the rules of prudence, honesty and reason . . . would see themselves forced to nourish the children of those who had abandoned themselves to the brutishness of their instincts." Or again, supposing one wished to appeal " to the Government's charity " on behalf of the unfortunate ones ? In that way one would be taking from " comfort the complexion of reward, and from distress the complexion of punishment, which the nature of things has stamped upon them ",[96] No doubt also, competition may have some drawbacks, but "it bears within itself the general remedy for the inevitable harm which it may do in particular cases ". Every reasonable man must then reject *' like a scourge the intervention of arbitrary forces which tend to alter the fair and natural distribution of pleasures and pains ". The axiom *laissez faire, laissez passer,* just as it expressed the last word in wisdom, so it expressed also the last word in piety, since economic laws are none other than " the general and providential laws according to which men prosper or decay ".[96]

The far too reasonable reason of those who, in their aversion to Utopias, shut their eyes to wrongs; the conservative instinct which takes alarm in advance at all disturbances; the optimistic simplicity of the armchair theorist; deep-rooted timidity, incapable of understanding or even of perceiving the profound transformations which the manufacturing industries effected in the community and which were taking place under their eyes; sordid interests camouflaged as State reasons, moral or scientific reasons; these were the reigning forces with which Proudhon found himself confronted. He knew, for his part, that these pretended " economic harmonies " were rather " contradictions ",[97] No doubt he too admitted that " there is a

[96] *Loc. cit.,* pp. 420-2.

•• *hoc. cit.,* p. 408. And p. 412: " What scientific value can possibly be recognized in your indignation against the harshness of capitalism and the selfishness of the manufacturer, considered in themselves, as though the industrial undertakings and the various capitals could escape from the law of supply and demand which governs them better than wages can, to submit themselves to the laws of sentiment and philanthropy ? " This deifying of the mechanics of economics in bulk carries with it absolute Liberalism as its ideal, an ideal which even today has not been abandoned by everybody. In the *Nouvelliste de Lyon* for October 15th, 1942, the following sentence could be read: " When then shall we be able to rely solely upon the economic law established by the Creator to regulate afresh our material life ? "

[97] There is a curious analogy and a curious contrast between the titles of the two works by Proudhon and Bastiat. Cf. Proudhon, *Lettre a M. Bastiat,* February 11th, 1850 (Bastiat, *Works,* vol. v, p. 31 k: "As for you, M. Bastiat, . . . author of a book entitled *Harmonies dconomiques,* probably as a contrast to *Contradictions iconomiques* . . ."; to Robin, October 12th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 378); to Cretin, July

harmony in the economy of the community "; far from denying it, he even wanted it to be " everywhere asserted "; but, he added, " how is a harmony possible without opposition? How can you describe the system of economic harmonies before you have ascertained, weighed and measured the disturbances and the antagonisms ?" Above all, how are you going to obtain real harmony if you mistake the contradictions for a harmony already realized ?[98] Whatever superficial publicists might say," he found the workers' conditions were getting worse every day and that a " brass-bound law ", passively accepted, only increased pauperism.[100] He therefore denounced " the coalition of the property-owning barons and the leaders of commerce and industry against the outcasts of the proletariat". He revolted against " the economist clique ",[101] who supplied that coalition with weapons by preaching " the law of chance " and " the necessity of distress ".[102] He exposed the rank prejudice which inspired those who wrongly invoked the Malthusian law to explain pauperism as though they had no wish to see " its secret cause " and so excused

19th, 1856 (vol. vii, p. 101). Bastiat's publishers point out that such a conjecture is erroneous. As a matter of fact, as early as June 5th, 1845, Bastiat was mentioning his idea of a small treatise to be called *Harmonies sociales (Correspondance, Works*, vol. i, p. 57); in August, 1847, he contemplated giving a course on the harmony of the social laws *(op. cit.*, p. 78); on August 26th, 1848, he again wrote: "I am holding on to the old fancy, my *Harmonies sociales* " (p. 85). But on June 25th, 1846, he told Richard Cobden: " I should like very much still to do a little book entitled *Harmonies tconomiques"* (p. 136). The same title is indicated on July 5th, 1847, August 18th and November 26th, 1848 (pp. 162, 179, 189). Proudhon's work was not on sale before October 15th, 1846; but it had been in the publisher Guillaumin's hands for more than two years previously. Proudhon must have spoken about it more than once in the little group of economists which he frequented in Paris, and it is quite possible that by June 25th, 1846, Bastiat had heard it mentioned.

•• To Robin, October 12th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 378).

••Eugene Forcade, for instance, article cited, December 15th, 1848, p. 988: " Without going back to the reign of Louis XIV, it is proved by the most undeniable statements and the most telling figures that since the end of the eighteenth century the workers' condition has every day improved." Or Broglie's article, already quoted, p. 575, extolling " this upward movement . . . which makes society rise from misery to luxury, from barbarism to civilization."

[100] Cf. Vicomte de Villeneuve-Bargemont, *Histoire del'tconomie politique* (1841), vol. ii, p. 354: "The problem of pauperism growing every day. . . . " *Economie politique chritienne* (1834), vol. i, p. 28: " The development of extreme want in the midst of the most crowded populations and of States most advanced in the ways of modern industry and modern civilization, and the worry which torments the working classes, are facts which can no longer be disputed. . . . Today pauperism lays bare its colossal and hideous proportions."

[101] To Bergmann, May 12th, 1844: " I have made acquaintance with the economist clique, for we must call things by their right name " (vol. ii, p. 126).

[102]* *Just.*, preliminary treatise (vol. i, pp. 260-1). To Michel Chevalier, May 14th, 1848: "Political economy, as taught by MM. Say, Rossi, Blanqui, Wolovski, Chevalier, etc., is only the economy of the property-owners, and its application to society inevitably and organically gives birth to misery " (vol. ii, p. 323).

themselves from remedying it.[103] He bitterly scoffed at those " Liberals" who thought "the revolution had completed its task", and that " there was nothing more to be done, no other organization to look for". These gentlemen had merely substituted for the old feudal system " the new mercantile feudal system " ;[104] their freedom, quite negative, was the worst of tyrannies, and the supporters of the old regime had no difficulty in showing them their inconsistency.[106] For them, " economic science ended where fatalism ended ". They mistook "their tradition of a century " for the tradition itself of mankind, and, to prevent any reform, they declared as " alone natural, and therefore immutable, superior to all innovations arising from man's action " all the things they observed at the time they were constituting their science, " as though work was not a human action, a fact itself outside Nature, against which the savage, the primitive man, protests ! As though wages themselves were not a human action, a social fact, against which the slave-owners long protested! As though the division of labour was not again a human action, the fruit of a civilization already well advanced ! As though, finally, the social hierarchy, in other words, the inequality of conditions, and the religious dogma which hallows them, were not human actions ! "[106]

" The religious dogma ": that is the great point. If they spoke only of fate ! If they invoked only science, or even the moral code ! But they became pious, they had always Providence, or eternal life on their tongue. They pretended thus to canonize what is in reality only " utilitarian materialism ". Is there anything more calculated to make one have doubts about Providence than the theory of Malthus ? Is there a more fitting indictment against Providence than the remedy proposed by Malthus ? Yet " the economists, by an inconceivable blasphemy ", have set up this doctrine, as false as it is immoral, " as one of the teachings of Providence ": those who adopt and apply it are " good citizens, religious men ", and " those who protest", those who seek other remedies for society's evils, " are anarchists, socialists, atheists ! "[107] " The self-seeking interests " call upon religion to safeguard them.[108] The " privileged ones " not only swathe " their per-

[108] *P.* AT., vol. ii, pp. 339-40. Cf. pp. 331, 342. Proudhon certainly showed in their true light some of the weaknesses of Malthusianism.
[104] To Darimon, April 10th, 1850 (vol. iii, p. 191).
[105] art., vol. hi, pp. 10,13-14. Letter to M. F., March 2nd, 1849: The Revolution of 1789 " was, after all, only the first act of the Revolution of today " (vol. ii, p. 365).
[106] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 12; cf. Notes, vol. ii, pp. 138-40.
[107] *Le Reprisentant du Peuple*, August 11th, 1848 *(Confessions*, pp. 387, 388). *Justice*, vol. ii, pp. 312, 320, 348. Already, in *VAvenir* of December 29th, 1830, C. de Conse had defined political economy as " the theology of material interests ".
[108] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 312; cf. pp. 232-3.

petually exploited subjects " "in a farrago of philosophy, economics and statistics "; they also swathe them " in Gospel words ",[109] The middle classes who, generally speaking, scarcely bother about piety for themselves, want it for their workmen. Therefore they turn towards the Church:

Undecided what to believe, each one renews his demands of the Church, this man wants a remedy against corruption, that man a preservative against the social revolution. The middle classes—what a happy symptom !—after a century of indifference suddenly get an attack of religious fervour. They perceive that religion may be useful to their interests: immediately they call for religion, lots of religion. A limited company has been formed in their bosom, for the restoration of religious ideas. Christ has been called in to help the middle-class gods, Mammon, Plutus, Porus and Foenus.

" Christ did not answer," Proudhon concluded, " but the Church, Orthodox and Reformed, hastened to rush in. "[no] He thought it was clear to him that everywhere man only cheated misfortune and escaped from the fetters which pinned him down by throwing off the Church's yoke, that everywhere man " improves himself and his existence in proportion as he rids himself of religion ".[m] Once more he is carried away by his own exuberance. His passion allows him to see facts only in one sense. He accused the Church of too readily blessing the " crusade " which was being organized " against labour and Justice, in the name of God ".[112] He attacked what he called " this mania of Spiritualism and Transcendency which, in an other-worldly interest, seems to make a point of putting everything on this earth topsy-turvy; which has made of labour, generally speaking, a curse . . . as it has made a privilege of the right to property ". " The ordinary people," he declared, " are not thereby deceived, and although it is impossible for them to follow by reasoning the chain of ideas and facts, although, furthermore, the ecclesiastical and feudal power has fallen a long way from what it was formerly seen to be, their instinct tells them that the only thing which prevents them from being happy and rich through their work is theology, and at heart they are no longer Christians."[113]

[109] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 108.
[110] *R. S.*, pp. 179-80. To Bonnon, May 5th, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 71). Cf. Bakunin, *Avertissement pour Vempire knouto-germanique (Works*, vol. iv, 1910, pp. 300-2).
[111] *France et Rhin* (new edition, 1868), p. 111. *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 158, and vol. i, p. 449: " In civilization, the religious movement is the opposite to that of freedom and science, so that what is progress for these latter means, implies a backward movement for religion, and vice versa."
[112] *Just.*, Vol. iii, p. 112.
[113] *Op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 108.

Alas ! If that was the feeling of the ordinary people, in that also Proudhon was one of them, and his judgement was dictated by his heart. Not only did he generalize, but he ended by believing those whom he had accused of hypocrisy, and if he still reproached the Church with " enervating the consciences and intimidating the minds ",[114] he thought he ought to add that, in so doing, she kept within the logic of her dogma. Here Proudhon manifested his inability—an inability much too frequent —to understand that dogma in itself, without bringing it down at once to the level of social realities. By the doctrine of original sin, he said for instance, is not Christianity " the religion of condemnation ? "[u]* " The Jesuit denies progress because, as he says in his mystical jargon, man having sinned from the beginning, there is a perpetual necessity for man to be exploited by man ":[116] so that the spiritualist philosopher, the economist and the Statesman are but repeating today, against the people, the sentence first pronounced by Christian theology. And in a still more radical way, what does the dogma of predestination mean, if it is not another name for fatalism ? One replaced the other, or rather relayed it, carrying on under a slightly different form the work of ancient polytheism.[117] The Providentialism which is rife today has therefore its letters patent of nobility. The collusion which exists is a rightful alliance, and it is one and the same world as " that world of toll-paying and bead-telling " from which we must free ourselves at one fell swoop.[118]

Whimsical dogmatic theology, undoubtedly! The psychological explanation is simple, and M. Andre Rousseaux seems to us happily to have thrown it into relief. If Proudhon, he tells us, did not confine himself—as Peguy, for example, did, or again Bernanos—to criticism of the clergy, " if he goes further, and rebels against the whole of religion, it is perhaps because this man of the people has likewise the simplicity of a good parishioner. A Peguy has all the breadth of a prophet, who dares to side with divine truth against the alterations of the scribes and pharisees. Proudhon, for his part, thinking he has been

[114] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 158.**

[u] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 2. *Resistance a la Revolution* (in *I.G.R.*, p. 374): "To reveal our whole thought, we look upon the political and judicial institutions as the exoteric and concrete form of the myth about the Fall, the mystery of the redemption and of the sacrament of penance."**

[ut] ***Demonstration du socialisme*, March 4th, 1849 *(Confessions*, p. 248). Proudhon's assertion is fantastic. If there is indeed a myth about progress which all Christianity rejects, there is certainly no opposition—quite the contrary—between the idea of original sin and the idea of social progress.**

[117] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 17. This is also, as is well known, Vigny*s thesis in *Les Destinies.***

[118] ***Philosophic Populaire (Just.*, vol. i, p. 189).**

betrayed by his parish priest, if we may so put it, attacks the dogma of which the parish priest is the custodian. In his inexorable logic he associates the Christian truths with the use to which he sees them put ".[m] Over and above the Church, over and above her dogmatic theology, the matter rebounds up to God Himself, in Proudhon's eyes. Putting God on trial was his answer to a " theodicy " weaker and more reckless than most. " I have seen the theists of my day," he says, "and blasphemy hovered on my lips "[120] Do not ask him whether his inquiry was fully adequate, and whether he was not too hasty in thinking himself betrayed. Whatever its extent and however much or little people may have been conscious of it, the hypocrisy he denounced certainly existed. And he was a victim of it. He played into its hands. Not having sufficient faith himself to protest in the name of the God whom he bore in his heart, he accepted, at least from time to time, the caricature which was presented to him. That was the actual genesis of his " anti-theism ".

We might add that had he been more of an artist he would no doubt have been less offensive, not by being clever as Renan was, but by discovering a more adequate form for the thought which strove for expression within him. In the year after the *Philosophic de la Misere* had been published, he wrote to a lady who took him to task for the ungracious style of his polemic: " When I speak to the public, I do my best to make my utterance clear, very outspoken and very biting: I have no other poetry."[121] That poetry was inadequate, especially when complex and delicate questions were at stake as well as a method of dialectic exposition. The reader may therefore be excused for making a mistake, more especially since the author himself was the first to be somewhat mistaken himself. Proudhon recognized the similarity between dialectic and drama. " I have chosen," he wrote to Guillaumin, still concerning his *Misere,* " a quite dramatic form ".[122] But the author of a drama, properly so called, can embody each aspect or each moment of his own thought in a character who serves as his mouthpiece, but relieves him of the necessity of fully committing himself; or else, one whose whole work is a drama, a Kierkegaard, for instance, can use various pseudonyms for his different writings, not in order to lead the public astray, but so that he may clearly mark the periods

[11] • *Proudhon et nous, be, cit.* Edouard Droz, whom we quoted in a previous chapter, would have endorsed this explanation.

[120] P. M., foreword (vol. i, p. 33).

[121] To Mme. X., July 25th, 1847 (vol. ii, pp. 242-3). Already on June 13th, 1838, to Ackermann: he wanted " men who try *to* see that good truths, quite plain, quite vivid, quite determined, take root" (vol. i, p. 51).

[122] November 21st, 1846 (vol. ii, p. 228).

and the distances. On " the keyboard of the dialectic " Proudhon had not the same " touch ".[123] In his heavy honesty, he took himself at his own word. He threw himself completely, each time, in the direction whither the momentum of his dialectic was drawing him. He lost his way. He plodded on obstinately. He put into it all the violence of his nature and all the oratorical fire of his Latin genius. He did not know how to retire. This dialectician had not sufficiently frequented Plato.

Hence his invectives, hence his blasphemies; this is their explanation, though it does not excuse them. In causing him to be taken tragically, they have often prevented him from being taken seriously. Yet, however intemperate his dialectic may be, however given to excesses his temperament, and however far his rhetorical style may sometimes carry him, his positive thought here again, fundamentally, is relatively moderate. The censure of his publisher, Guillaumin, fell heavily upon the passages in the *Misire* which might have hurt the economists who frequented Guillaumin's house.[124] We might perhaps regret that Guillaumin was less particular about the passages dealing with religion. Far from constricting his thought, such a censure might have given him a more restrained and a more accurate means of expressing himself. As a matter of fact, after having exclaimed " God is Evil", Proudhon merely concluded that " the Divinity was insufficient ",[126] in other words, that the active intervention of man was necessary in the onward march of his own affairs. This " practical" or " methodical atheism ", moreover, seemed to him better suited than any other attitude " to the glorification of the supreme Being \[126] If he attacked " Providentialism ", it was so that he might use the language of his adversaries, but he himself was not always gulled by it. He knew how to distinguish between God and destiny,[127] between Providence and fatalism, this man who explicitly declared that a materialist, an atheist, a really impious man, was one " who speaks to you of Providence and adores fatalism ",[128] and who likewise was astonished that" Christian economists " could subscribe to such a doctrine.[129] But even when he continued to use the word Providence in an ambiguous manner, the expression of his thought was often judicious. He considered that " economic or

"• Cf. Kierkegaard, *Point de vue explicatif de mon ceuvre,* Tisseau's trans., p. 34.
[124] To Guillaumin, April 4th and May 18th, 1846 (vol. ii, pp. 194-5, 203-4).
[125] P.M., vol. i, p. 353.
[126] .J.P., p. 171. *Just.,* vol. iv, p. 436. To Micaud, December 22nd, 1844: " Methodical atheism, if I may dare to put it thus . . . " (vol. vi, p. 347).
[127] Cf. *supra,* at the beginning of Chap. ix.
[128] *Le Peuple,* September 2nd, 1848, specimen copy, manifesto *(Con.,* p. 396).
[129] P.M., vol.ii, p. 348.

social facts are . . . in their own way, signs or tangible tokens of the ideas which lead mankind, unknown to itself, ideas which we can already partly determine and which together form, where we are concerned, the code of Providence ". He wanted the greatest importance attached to them, and care taken " not to thwart Providence, by laying a rash hand upon what it has up to the present day produced '[130] However, reflection had shown him, on the other hand, " that the economy of the community could not be improved by the power of its primitive constitution alone, and without the assistance and the deliberate will of all", but " that there was a given hour in the life of communities, when progress, at first irresponsible, demanded the intervention of man's free reason ". Consequently he did not wish the legislator " to rely upon Providence "—in other words, to perpetuate and to intensify wrongs as though they constituted providential laws.[131] For man would not be worthy of his calling as man, he would be surrendering in the face of injustice and fatalism, if he could not own that " this force of spontaneous impulsion which we call Providence is not everything in the things of the world ",[132] These sentences are less eloquent than the exclamation which they explain. They are, however, a more genuine translation of Proudhon's thought. Who could be scandalized by them ? They are indeed grievously incomplete. If we confine their use to the precise problem which created them, it seems that we may nevertheless retain them.[133]

[130] **To Bergmann, July 15th, 1854 (vol. vi, p. 47). To Delarageaz, March 4th, 1843 (vol. iii, p. 387).**

[131] ***P. M.*, vol. i, p. 397. /. G. *R.* (1851), p. 65.**

[132] ***Con.*, p. 174.**

[133] **Contrasting, in his *Note conjointe,* pp. 71 and 77, the rebellion of the Christian, the Frenchman, the European with the fatalism of the Jew, the Oriental, Peguy adds: ** Fundamentally, we may ask ourselves whether this continual rebellion, whether this smouldering rustic revolt is not more in the Christian line than a certain class of patience. . . ." Is not the same thought applicable, up to a point, to such a man as Proudhon ?**

CHAPTER X

CHARITY AND JUSTICE

WITH PROUDHON, criticism of " Providentialism " often takes the guise of criticism of charity. There again he seems to set his heart upon discouraging the most kindly-disposed among his readers by his exaggerations and his almost exclusive wilful misunderstanding. But there also his far too limited doctrine and his painful incomprehensions cannot blind us to the genuine interest there is in striving to give more precise details of the positive side of his thought.

Against the idea of charity, as well as against the closely-related ideas of fraternity and community, he constantly sets the ideas of justice and reciprocity. To give ourselves an opportunity of understanding him better it is essential that we should examine with some closeness the reasons which shape his course.

Primarily—and here we have an immediate corollary of the previous paragraphs—he attacked the current idea which made it the duty of charity to remedy the all too flagrant wrongs of social inequality, so as to ensure the stability of an order which force alone might become powerless to maintain. In short, he was protesting less against Christian charity itself than against its wrongful exploitation by various categories of " providentialists ". He was incensed against those who lowered disinterested love to the level of a utilitarian alms, whether in the name of their doctrine or of their interests, whether they were themselves economists, statesmen, or merely satisfied owners. Were not the economists, moreover, though some of them did not suspect it, in the service of the statesmen ?

Upon this point Proudhon did not change. What he revealed himself to be in the *Calibration du dimanche* he still remained in his *Capacity politique des classes ouvriires.* In an eloquent, and even a trifle grandiloquent, page of the Essay which he submitted to the votes of the respectable Academicians of Besangon, 'he criticized " the men who read scathing lectures, the friends of the people, the friends of the working class, the friends of mankind", but who, faced with the miserable conditions of the workers, were incapable " of getting back to the root of the evil", like " a doctor, treating a scrofulous patient, and continually sticking a fresh plaster on a fresh ulcer ". In the midst

of " their fruitful idleness ", these gentlemen could say only one thing to the people: work ! and at the same time through their machinery they took the work from them.[1] " Then, when the canker of pauperism troubles their sleep with its hideous sight, when the sick man, exhausted, writhes on his mattress, when the half-starved proletariat howls in the streets, they offer prizes for the suppression of begging, they organize dances for the poor, they go to the theatre, they build casinos, they draw lotteries among themselves for the necessitous, they enjoy giving alms, and they pat one another on the back ! "[2]

Too often, through diffidence or lack of imagination, the clergy join in their schemes. " This sorry frame of mind " is nothing new. It was already to be seen, for instance, in Bossuet. " Generally speaking ", he did not show himself " very well-disposed towards the people; his royalist and theological genius recognized only authority, obedience, and alms which went under the name of charity ".[3] Today, however, things are worse still. At a time when the growth of misery among us should call for careful thought with a view to reforming society, " our priests, as in the brightest days of their history, busying themselves in indulgenced stuff and nonsense, (have) as their only social consciousness *Christian charity*, as though the precept of charity was a law of political organization ".[4] Consequently they come, hand in hand with the economists, to help the fortunate ones of this world. Their intentions may be good, but, in practice, they only consolidate the wrongs. Take the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr. Sibour. He set this subject for a competition: " That the sincere and intelligent application of the Gospel maxims meets at the same time all the instincts of the human heart and all the great laws of social preservation; that the Christian precept of charity answers a providential purpose in the unequal distribution among men of the gifts of intelligence and fortune."[5] What else was the archbishop doing but reviving an argument dear to the hearts of all the profiteers of the existing order? A short while before it had also been developed by the Comte de Gerando. In the name of Providence, as usual, he had handed over the poor man's fate to the rich man's "charity", to the "protection" and "patronage" of prosperity.[6] Proudhon exploded. Never would he admit " the infer-

[1] It will be borne in mind that the date of this Essay is 1839.
[2] *C.D.*, p. 57.
[3] L., B p. 53.
[4] *Avertissement auxpropriitaires*, pp. 169-70. Cf. P. M., vol. i, p. 88: " The effects of charity and self-sacrifice are outside the province of economics, which have to secure happiness for societies by organizing work and justice."
[5] *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 35, 102.
[6] *Op. clt.*, vol. iii, p. 113.

iority of labour, the eternal character, the necessity or the providential nature of distress ".[7] Never would he ratify a system which killed man's respect for man: " What is painful to see, in this organization of providential charity, is the continual and outrageous inquiry into the * real needs' of the poor man, which puts to flight all those whom charity has not yet branded."[8] He himself belonged to the people, and he would take care not to sing their praises; but he knew what their feeling was about all this, and he shared it. Why did the Church start to ruffle it? In plain language, a text such as Mgr. Sibour's meant that: " things must remain as they have always been . . . that any attempt to change things in society or in the State would be criminal, and that those who promoted political and social improvements, whoever they might be, should be sent to Cayenne [i.e. to a convict settlement] . . . " Now the people's feeling was just the opposite. They were " convinced that on this question of labour, which was their only hope and all they possessed, there was something better to do than to be for ever harping on the economists' * supply and demand', on the *laissez faire, laissez passer* of the gentlemen of the robe [i.e. lawyers], on the priests' * charity', and then hunting down workmen who went on strike ".[9]

Those lines are taken from *Justice.* Six years later, the famous manifesto of the sixty workers of the Seine *dipartement* voiced the same protest. Drawn up (at least partially) by Tolain, a Labour candidate in the 1864 elections, it was directly inspired by Proudhon, and M. Maxime Leroy has rightly reproduced it as an appendix to the *Capacite politique des classes ouvridres,* which forms, as it were, a commentary on it. One cannot fail to recognize the close relationship between some of its expressions and those which Leo XIII was to use thirty years later. The Seine workers said:

We have no representation, we who refuse to believe that distress is of divine institution. Charity, a Christian institution, has radically proved and itself recognized its impotence as a social institution. . . . It is no longer, and can no longer be, anything but a private virtue. Alas ! the defects and the weaknesses of human nature will always leave the brotherhood a wide field for their activities; but *undeserved* distress, the distress which, in the shaf>e of illness, insufficient wages, unemployment, encloses the immense majority of hard-working men

[7] *Just.,* vol. iii, *ff.* 35.

• *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 113.

• *Op. cit.,* vol. iii, p. 102. Cf. *P. M.,* vol. ii (Guillaumin edition), p. 187: " Who shall deliver us from charity, from this hoax by which the artlessness of the proletariat is unceasingly taken advantage of, from this permanent plot against labour and liberty ? "

of good will in a fatal circle where they struggle in vain, that distress, we strenuously bear witness, can disappear and it will disappear. Why has nobody made that distinction ? We do not want to be dependents or people in receipt of public relief; we want to become equals; we reject alms; we want justice.[10]

Will it be said that these more than just demands are spoilt by their caricature of Christian charity ? We must at least admit that neither Tolain nor Proudhon drew that caricature. It was not Proudhon who invented the texts of Gerando or of Sibour. He might have quoted many others, some even more offensive. In fact, the Liberal middle classes had not only degraded Christian charity to make it fit their own purposes; from that degradation they had drawn a theory. Never perhaps was that theory flaunted more naively—or more cynically—than in the writings of one of the founders of that middle class and its reign, the banker and Minister, Necker. " A garrulous, bragging, Genevan philanthropist", is the description Proudhon gives us of him,[11] and nothing is less astonishing than the antipathy he displayed towards him. On the eve of the Revolution, Necker published simultaneously in London and in Paris a bulky treatise, *De l'importance des opinions religieuses*, (The Importance of Religious Opinions) designed to show that these are more necessary than ever in our modern world, to build " a rampart" around the peacefulness of the nations, by keeping in check the envy of the poor against the rich. It is worth while opening this book: in it we can read many another.

Necker notes first of all the inevitability of distress in a world given over to the " laws of Property ". It is, he says, of the essence of those laws " to introduce and continually to maintain immense disparities in the distribution of goods, and to reduce to the simplest necessities of life the most numerous class of citizens ". It would be impossible therefore to prevent " some people from enjoying all the comforts of life, without work or trouble, while others, in much greater number, are compelled to seek the meanest subsistence by the sweat of their brow . . .; it would be impossible to prevent some from getting, in their illnesses, all the assistance which willingness and intelligence can offer, while others are reduced to sharing, in a public institution, the modest assistance which a prince's kindness makes available for the necessitous; it would be impossible to prevent some from being able to bestow upon their family all the advantages of a long education,

[10] C. *P.*, pp. 412-3. Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical *Rerum novarum.* For The Manifesto of the Sixty, see E. Dolleans, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier,* vol. i, pp. 278-81; G. Lefranc, *Histoire du mouvement syndical franfais,* pp. 124-5.

[11] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 454.

while others . . . are obliged to watch for the first development of physical strength, so that they may put their children to some gainful labour; finally, it would be impossible to prevent the display of magnificence from forming a continual contrast with the rags and tatters of misery".[12] Furthermore, there could be no question, even for a moment, of seeking any other foundation for society; the right to property is the sole principle which allows society to progress and, at the cost of some occasional ugliness, ensures the beauty of the whole. Hence the absolute necessity of a " religious education " for the people, to anticipate any " vexation " which might arise from " misfortune ". For, without" morals fortified by religion ", one could never hold in check " the numerous beholders of so many things and objects of envy, who are so close to what they call happiness but never can lay claim to it ",[13] The laws themselves would be powerless, without " this brake which is always working ".[14]

Up to this point, Necker was not original. Many were the writers of his century who spoke almost in the same terms as he did. In the *Seconde lettre* which he addressed to him, Rivarol also said that " if religion is necessary for the people, it is not so much to make them happy as to enable them to bear their misfortune: for it is in the extreme inequality of fortunes that one must make use of the expedient of religions: when one has made this world unbearable for men, one must at least promise them another one. . . . " And the witty writer continues, in a mocking, sceptical tone: " If my footman does not kill me in the depth of a wood because he is afraid of the devil, I am not going to take away a curb such as that from the unmannerly soul, any more than I would take from him the fear of the gallows: since I cannot make an honest man of him, I will turn him into a churchgoer."[15] This lofty doctrine of the " curb or brake " passed on into the eighteenth century and the disturbances of the Revolution. Balzac was one of its interpreters. Combining the incredulity of Rivarol with the seriousness of Necker, he wrote, in the very year in which the young Proudhon came to Paris to share his friend Fallot's distress: religion is necessary " to make the people accept their sufferings and their

[12] **Necker, *De l'importance des opinions religieuses* (1788), pp. 34-5.**
[13] ***Op. cit.*, pp. 37-46; cf. pp. 58-9, 99, etc.**
[14] ***Op. cit.*, p. 47. Necker, unable to forget that he is writing a work of apologetics, gives precision to his thought thus: " It may possibly be asked, after these reflections, whether religion, which strengthens all the ties and fortifies all the obligations, does not favour tyranny. Such an inference would be unreasonable. Religion, the comforter in so many afflictions, must likewise soften the evils which arise from despotism, but it is neither its origin nor its support" (p. 60).**
[15] ***Works*, vol. ii, pp. 136-8.**

continual work in life " and " to keep the ignorant section of the nation within the confines of its patient and resigned life ",[16]

Necker, however, did not stop there. Continuing his analysis with remarkable lucidity, he found, in addition, that in our days "the unequal division of property had introduced among men an authority similar in many ways to that of the masters over their slaves ": it must even be said that " on various points, the rule of the rich men is more independent still; for they are in no wise bound continually to look after those whose services they demand: the tastes and the whims of these happy favourites of fortune fix the terms of their agreements with the man whose sole patrimony is his time and his strength; and as soon as that agreement is broken, the poor man, absolutely cut off from the rich, is delivered anew to the luck of his lot; he must hastily go and offer his work to other dispensers of subsistence; he must expose himself to their refusals, and thus several times in the year he is made to feel all the worries which go with the uncertainty of his means ".[17] Consequently, in those days of Liberalism, there was a danger that the poor man's belief in a God who punishes rebellion and promises a reward beyond the grave to humiliated submission would in itself not be sufficient. Some other help must be given besides the discipline provided by religion. That was where charity came in and where its benefit was shown. " It was essential to find some salutary idea, calculated to moderate the inevitable wrongs arising from the free use of property. . . . Without the intervention of the most estimable of all virtues, the masses would have good reasons to regret those social institutions which, at the cost of their independence, gave the care of their subsistence to the masters; and thus it is that charity, in so many ways worthy of respect, has also become the intelligent and political idea which serves to combine personal freedom with the imperative laws of property."[18]

In reasoning thus, without dreaming for one moment of reviewing his premises, Necker, as a good " enlightened " Protestant, thought he was doing the work of an apologist. He enthusiastically hymned the " sublime moral code of the Gospel", which so marvellously " remedied the drawbacks which are inseparable from our imperfect human wisdom " by " the high value it set upon the spirit of charity ". " The ancients ", he went on, " no doubt honoured the beneficial

[16] *Sur la situation du parti royaliste,* in *Le Renovateur,* June 2nd, 1832. The Duchess of Langeais more cynically says: in order "to permit the rich to live peacefully ".

[17] Necker, *op. cit.,* pp. 496-7.

[18] *Op. cit.,* pp. 498-9.

virtues; but this custom of confiding the poor man and the weak man continuously to the protection, the care and the efficacious assistance of the rich and powerful belongs essentially to the moral code of our religion."[19]

O " reasonable Christianity " ! Is that not, however, an opinion peculiar to the worthy M. Necker ? Not at all. These solemn platitudes, displayed with a pious impudence, have all the value of a lofty creed. The " property " which they extol is not the traditional regime which the Church takes under the protection of her moral code; it is something new. Necker announced the reign of money, of which charity was to become the satellite. His views anticipated at one and the same time, disregarding all technique, the optimism of Bastiat, the pessimism of Ricardo and of Marx, with something of a smug fatalism all their own. They likewise anticipated the social philosophy which we have admired in Thiers. They united the self-complacency of the modern man with the " good conscience "—which we can tell is invincible—possessed by the heir to Christian traditions. Better than the purely economic theories of Adam Smith, from which they largely drew their inspiration,[20] they form the charter of middle class Liberalism.

Now, everywhere in the society which Proudhon beheld, this charter had gone abroad. Everywhere he heard coupled together the praises of the social progress which was a characteristic of the century and those of Christian charity which alone could save it. A twofold praise, he thought, and a twofold lie: one against the reality of so many facts; the other against the spirit of the Gospel. But what helped to warp his judgement and to lead him to rebel was the fact that it was very often Christians, and Christians as sincere as Necker or more so, who were spreading this lie. All too rare were those who declared, with d'Eckstein, that the precept of charity was not carried out" by throwing alms to a crowd to spare oneself the badgering of those in distress " ;[21] or those who thought, with Villeneuve-Bargemont, that" the principles and the development of charity have not yet been completely formulated as a real science . . . applicable to social economy ", that charity must in fact be put " into practice in politics, in laws, in institutions and in customs ", that kindness and pity were only human elements and very inadequate, that charity was corrupted and materialized "when, being subjected to cold calculations, it was brought down to the level of political schemes or those of public economics "—which

[19] Necker, op. cit., p. 492.
[20] *The Wealth of Nations* had appeared in 1776,
[21] In *Le Catholique** vol. v, p. 493.

was exactly what was done to it by Necker and his kind. All too rare also were those who saw that the uplifting of the poor, in our industrial society, was to be effected, not by occasional assistance, but " by a just distribution of labour " and who did not hesitate to say that the new conditions in the social world called for a " new phase of Christianity "[22] The majority of those who wielded the pen and of those who were forming public opinion expressed themselves very differently. Noting the extreme inequality which existed and which tended to increase, " It is charity ", they said, " which establishes among all Christians, rich or poor, weak or strong, that bond of brotherhood, a bond which permeates the whole of society with a family affection."[23] That idyllic perspective gave them satisfaction. It would disappear, it seemed, if charity were deprived of its object, if the natural distance between rich and poor were suppressed or too much reduced. They did not want the rich to be prevented, through legal obligations, from freely exercising the greatest of all the virtues. They were opposed to the violation in that way of " the most indefeasible of natural laws ", and at the same time to an encroachment in a sacrilegious manner upon " the sentence of the Saviour of mankind ": *The poor you have always with you.*[24]

Proudhon then was not wrestling with a ghost. He was wrong in including, far too indiscriminately, the clergy of his day in his reprobation. He was not able either to open his eyes to the real charity, to the charity in practice, which was very different in spirit from the servile interpretation of it given by the theorists who scandalized him. Still he knew well enough that his criticisms did not touch the genuine Christian virtue, but only a degenerate idea and a degenerate application of it. He knew well enough that charity cannot be reduced to

[22] **Vicomte Alban de Villeneuve-Bargemont, *Economie politique chritienne* (1834), vol. i, pp. 26, 89; vol. *ii*, pp. 191, etc. The remedies proposed by the author were nevertheless rather diffident ones.**

" Albert de Broglie, article quoted, p. 582. Dealing with " the social question ", Cardinal Pie recalled in a similar vein " the old virtues, the charity of the rich, the submission of the poor and the happiness of all ".

[14] **E. de Valmy, *De la force du droit et du droit de la force, ou de la restauration du droit divin dans Vordre social,* etc. (1850), pp. 34-7. Much later still, the Comte d'Haussonville also wrote, with the best intentions in the world: " The perpetuity of the wage-earning classes carries with it of necessity the perpetuity of pauperism. The perpetuity of pauperism and of distress is then the painful but inescapable conclusion to which attentive observation of economic facts leads us, and science, as well as history, .confirms those words of the Gospel, The poor you will always have with you. . . . To drive the State, as is the general tendency today, to join battle with the inevitability of the economic laws, is the surest way to aggravate the sufferings which one wants to alleviate, for Nature, when an obstacle is momentarily placed in its path, has a way of coming back upon us most unexpectedly and taking a terrible revenge"(*Socialisme et chariti* (1895), pp. viii-x).**

the level of an alms, and that in any case it rejected alms which would be used for the buttressing of an anti-human regime. " Such was not the spirit," he declared, " of the whole of antiquity nor the teaching of Christ."[25] " The spiritualist philosophy " may put up with such a system, but certainly the Gospel will not tolerate it. The very principles it laid down force us to be continually looking for a better solution to the problems created by the onward march of human communities, and in that sense we must maintain " that the Gospel itself is proof that there is something to look forward to other than the Gospel "[26]

To have an accurate idea of what Christian charity really is, we must watch it in the beginnings of Christianity, at a time when the new religion was in the first flush both of its fervour and its purity. Alms were certainly given and Proudhon was not sparing in his praise of this.[27] But what then lent beauty to it was the fact that it was inspired by something much deeper and much wider. The predominating feature of that early age was a perfect brotherhood among the members of Christ's little flock. This was quite admirable, and if it could have continued to exist and bear its fruits—in other words, be embodied in the social realities as those realities developed and were modified by the influence of the ages—no other rule would have been necessary. In its nature, alas ! it was too " mystical" to be fruitful, as events have shown only too well. Proudhon explained it all in a page of the *Creation de l'ordre dans Vhumanite,* which takes us right to the root of his grievances:

The spiritual power is incapable of laying down rules of conduct for the temporal: so true is this that religion has never been able to apply its own maxims. Why has Christianity not been able to carry out its law of charity and brotherhood ? unless it be because, as the expression of that law is quite mystical, the faithful, instead of seeing in it a principle to be developed by reflection, found in it only a divine precept to which reason had to submit. In the religious sphere, undeveloped ideas, the symbolizing of concepts, the crude fact and the letter which killeth, all these are for ever stifling thought and preventing analysis.

" C. D., p. 57. C. P., p. 406: " This charity, which is no longer anything but cleverness, is no longer a virtue."

•• *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 36. M. Auge-Laribe seems to me then to be doing violence to Proudhon's thought and to misunderstand, even more than he does, the meaning of the Christian teaching, when he writes, in his Introduction to the *Cilibration du dimanche*, pp. 29-30: " Seeking justice on earth, he could not fail to break away very quickly from a Church which gives its support to the privileged ones, and even to repudiate a doctrine which recommends charity and knows nothing of justice."

[27] P. M., vol. i, pp. 355-6: " Is it not true that spontaneous benevolence, so pure in its primitive notion *(eleemosyna,* sympathy, tenderness), alms in a word, has become for the unfortunate a sign of downfall, a public stigma ? " etc.

I admire the early Christians: thirsting for martyrdom, quick to give up their wealth, humble, fervent, austere, enthusiastic, the establishment of equality would have cost them less than all their virtues and would not have made a single victim: they could not understand that. Instead of seeking in detail the rules of rights and duties, they stood looking at those beautiful but barren words: " Love one another, love your neighbour as yourself "; and soon, through lack of theory and organization, love and fraternity disappeared. For a while they tried community life: soon distaste set in, and whereas the heroism of faith and the zeal for propaganda went on increasing, the agapes were discarded. . . . It was agreed that men, who are equal in the sight of God, cannot be equal here on earth; an eternity of joys was promised in return for all the privations here below, and alms, miserly alms, took the place of loving fraternity.[28]

This page is very characteristic of that " anti-mysticism "which we have encountered several times already. We find it again in *Justice.* There Proudhon compares the lot of the worker under the old " law of selfishness " and under the new " law of love ". In passing from one to the other, does it not seem that everything should change ? Henceforth, instead of being considered as a chattel, is not the worker going to belong to a family ? Yet, as a matter of fact, " the problem of labour remains in its entirety ". Christianity has produced but one fruit, " mercy ". The Christians did not know how to change " reciprocity of love into reciprocity of service ". The corollary seemed to be obvious: but " the mystic does not hear us. Charity is dinned into his ears". Unable to come down to the level of human realities, he saw no contradiction in proclaiming universal fraternity even while he went on recognizing pauperism as a law of Nature.[29]

The severity of these analyses cannot be denied from one point of view, neither can the keen perception which lies behind them. Could any one think of a more vigorous commentary on the words of St. John: " Let us shew our love by the true test of action, not by taking phrases on our lips?"[30] Proudhon, however, was not content to deplore the unfaithfulness of the Christian world to the Gospel ideal. Passing from what was in fact to what should be by right, he boldly asserted that Christianity "was condemned to impotence"; still more, that the practical application of the Gospel maxims "was repugnant to the Gospel thought". Merely on the facts, of course,

[28] C. *O. H.*, p. 55.'In the same way, in G. P., p. 407, he bemoans the fact that Christianity, the universal religion, has been unable to reform the pagan idea of war.

[29] *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 9,55-6,58. The reproach was answered by Cardinal Perraud,.. in his *Instruction pastorale sur la justice,* of February 7th, 1876 *(Works,* vol. i, p. 252;.

there is injustice here: and there is total misunderstanding of the necessary relations between the "spiritual" and the "temporal". How Utopian to think that if the former was powerless to create the latter, the latter would be brought into being better by itself. Proudhon should have seen that soon there would be nothing left for him but to smell " the perfume of an empty vessel ? " Because he was impatient to obtain social results, how unfitted he was to divine the radiance of the interior virtues, or even to gauge their worth ! It is odd—we shall have occasion to revert to this—to contrast submission to the divine precept with the careful thought which would make it effective ! As though, in order to apply the law of brotherhood to the ordinary run of life, one had to tear it away from that " religious sphere " in which it had first seen the light of day ! No doubt it is quite true that, by itself alone, a " mystical" principle is not sufficient, and that so long as no attempt has been made to develop it through a methodical organization, nothing has been done. You cannot object to the logic of a principle without vitiating the principle itself. Proudhon was not wrong in thinking that the " personal right" which the Gospel recognizes in every man should bring in its train a " real right", and that thus the law of love must become the law of justice, " under pain of inconsistency and retrogression ".[31] A Christian who took no interest at all in social justice would not be logical in his faith. But still less can the applications be understood without the principle which they apply. On this point, the school of Saint-Simon was clearer-sighted. After declaring that the Christian principle of brotherhood was " the most general of all the social principles ", the master added, as Proudhon himself afterwards did, that this principle remained for a long while in a speculative form, and that the great reform which was called for would consist in applying it to social realities, by organizing " the temporal society on the lines of this divine axiom ".3[2] For all that, he had no desire to strip it of its mystical character (understood in his own way), and his disciples still less: " Philanthropy without religion," said the authors of the *Doctrine de Saint-Simon,* " teaches me to love men only because they are my fellow-men, only by an extension *of my* love for myself; religious philanthropy adds to that this other equally powerful motive, that men are all reflections of the divinity, hallowed beings, united in the bosom of the infinite being in one and the same

[31] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 59.**

[32] **Saint-Simon, *Systeme industriel (Works,* vol. vi), pp. 229-30; cf. *Nouveau christianisme.* Like Proudhon, Saint-Simon wanted to see the social application of the law of love; but, unlike him, he did not demand its transformation into a law of justice.**

family. The love of men without God can never fill our entire being in the same way as the religious sentiment does; modern philanthropy cannot claim to take the place of religion in society ".3[3]

For that matter, Proudhon would not gainsay them. In his eyes, philanthropists and " charitable people " were on the same footing. He had no confidence whatsoever in philanthropy. Besides, was it not a legacy from that " soft-heartedness " which the eighteenth century had brought into fashion, and which was still being continued in one aspect of romantic sentimentality ? Those were feminine things, and Proudhon put little trust in the feminine side of our nature. Woman had her virtues, neither must these be spoken ill of, for they were necessary to balance and moderate the male virtues, but they were minor virtues, and Christianity had been wrong in giving preponderance to them. Thus, from another angle, we encounter once again his deep-seated contrast between charity and justice:

> Because woman has less moral energy than man, upon her justice she brings to bear an indispensable moderating influence, without which our judicial state would be in nothing distinguishable from a state of war; this moderating influence is clemency, tolerance, forgiveness, gracefulness, reconciliation, and mercy, and these are everywhere mingled with that idea of justice. Man is more inclined to make the pure, rigorous and pitiless right prevail; woman tends to reign by charity and love. That is the thought of Christianity, in the establishment of which women have had so great a part.[34]

There is an element of justice in these observations, but they are narrow and superficial all the same. In them we hear the echo of another bias, which Proudhon shared with his century. He who protested so strongly against the impious maxim: " A religion is necessary for the people," is not very far from saying, " A religion is necessary for women ". In *Justice* he wrote: " A woman who prays is sublime, a man on his knees is almost as ridiculous as a man kicking his heels in the air."[35] A short sentence and a bitter one, giving us a glimpse, as it suddenly does, of a blind spot in its author. Our anti-romantic relies upon Romanticism here ! But are we not forced to see how much the practice of religion in vogue in his century tended to put him in the right ?[86]

•• ***Doctrine de Saint-Simon, Lettres sur la religion et la politique,*** **1829 (Paris, 1831), p. 11.**

[34] ***Porn.*** **(1875), pp. 38-9. The final remark no doubt bears a trace of the influence of Renan's *Vie de Jesus.***

[35] **.just , vol. iv, pp. 293,442.**

[36] **In the nineteenth century the Catholic renaissance was often too sentimental and feminine in character. Under the influence of writings such as the *Genie du christianisme,* religiosity put religion in the background. Lamartinc's very beautiful**

At all events, we can agree with him that a soft-hearted charity would be powerless to remedy the evils in human society, and that, if society had no other surety, it would not progress but " would soon relapse into a state of savagery ". We can accept the analysis, free from all illusions, which he gives of the things which more often than not constitute pity: " The sympathy we feel for the proletariat is like that inspired in us by animals; the frail nature of their organs, the fear we have of misery, our pride in keeping from us any suffering thing, those are the selfish roundabout ways by which our charity is produced."[37] He is not wrong in distrusting those far too easy-going movements of the heart, that" soft-heartedness in which the animal nature plays a bigger part than the mind ",[38] and if he should still call it " brotherhood ", we will not quibble over the word; still less will we quibble, seeing that it was not he who chose the word. Among the many sects which sprang up everywhere in the 1840s, there was one called the " *Fraternitaires* ", and a paper was founded in 1845 called " *La Fraternite* ",[39] " I have always looked upon brotherhood," Proudhon wrote, " as an ambiguous commitment, which, like pleasure, love and many other things, under an alluring appearance, conceals more evil than good. That is perhaps a result of the temperament I received from Nature: I distrust brotherhood as I do sensual pleasure."[40] Those who put their hopes in such remedies are Utopists, and, if they set about trying to impose them, they become tyrants. If they think that thus they are drawing inspiration from the Gospel maxims, they are mistaken: "Charity, the Christian's first virtue, the legitimate hope of the Socialist, goal of all the economist's efforts, is a social vice as soon as it is made a constitutional principle and a law."[41] " When self-sacrifice is compulsory, it is called oppression, slavery, man's exploitation by man."[42] We must then distrust the " new mystics ": " by an error of the same kind

line, " Happy the man to whom God gives a holy mother!" is, as it were, at the top of a rise, at the bottom of which can be seen only an indulgent contempt. Talleyrand said to Mme. de Dino, in 1834: " How touching is a young girl's piety, and what a thing against nature is incredulity, especially among women ! Cf. the pastoral letter of Mgr. Terrier, Bishop of Tarentaise, for Lent, 1844, on *Men's place in the Church and in the parish,* " It is lamentably true," Paul Claudel writes in *Contacts et circonstances,* pp. 48-9, " that for some years now in large parts of France and Europe the Church has been deserted by men. Here and there, at Sunday Mass, they will still show you a few specimens of this vulgar sex. But during the week you will see around you only old women and old maids. . . . "

[37] *P. M.*, vol. i, p. 355.
[38] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 636.
[39] Cf. Thureau-Dangin, *Histoire de la monarchic de Juillet,* vol. vi, pp. 108-10.
[40] */. G. R.*
[41] *P. M.*, vol. i, p. 256.
[42] *Prop.*, p. 344, note.

as that of the economists, they want to extend to the whole of society the principle of brotherhood which exists in the family "[43]; but the family laws are not, and cannot be, those of society. The analogy between the two is deceptive: " The family is the sphere of authority and subordination; and if Communism is logical, it will recognize that in taking its type of society from the family, it will end in despotism."[44]

All these " society theories " which flourished in the middle of the nineteenth century are at least gravely wrong in that they mistake the end for the means. For brotherhood, to take it in its best sense, is not, as so many seem to think, " the principle of society's improvements, the rule of its evolutions "; it cannot but be " its purpose and its fruit '\[45] Now, " in a question of reform, it is not usually a notion of the purpose that is lacking, any more than the good intention; it is the means '\[48] Here, the means cannot be other than justice. A sound and human order can be established only upon interests and rights, upon " the strict right". In any case, how can you oblige anybody to renounce his own right by preaching generosity to him ? That is a detestable and contradictory pretension, a perverse mixture of Utopia and tyranny. Proudhon reverts to it many times :

Yes, it must be said in spite of modern Quietism, man's life is a permanent warfare, war against want, war against Nature, war against his fellow-men, consequently war against himself. The theory of a peaceful equality founded upon brotherhood and self-sacrifice is only a fraudulent imitation of the Catholic doctrine of renouncing the goods and pleasures of this world, a principle of beggary, an encomium of misery. Man may love his fellow-men to the point of dying for them; he does not love them to the point of working for them.[47]

Talk to me about *debit* and *credit,* the only criterion in my eyes of what is just or unjust, good or bad in society. To every one according to his works, first of all: and if, occasionally, I am led to help you, I shall do it willingly; but I do not wish to be forced. To force me to self-sacrifice is to assassinate me.[48]

Thus Proudhon protested both on behalf of realism and on behalf of the ideal. He will not have any one fail to appreciate either the hard

[41] To Michel Chevalier, April 14th, 1848 (vol. ii, p. 323).

" *Just.*, vol. ii, p. 71. Cf. *J. G. R.* (1851), pp. 117-18.

VJust., vol. i, p. 356. *P. M.,* vol. ii, p. 271. It is a question of[M] the effective brotherhood, that brotherhood of heart and reason, which alone merits the solicitude of the legislator and the attention of the moralist, and of which the brotherhood of race is but a carnal expression." And p. 272: ** Brotherhood is the goal, not the beginning of the community."

*• *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 56. *Prop.*, p. 344, note.

[4f] *P.M.*, vol. i, p. 219. Here, Proudhon is of the same mind as Thiers, who said: " They will die for their country, but they will not plane a plank or deliver a load of iron for it " (quoted by Albert de Broglie, article already mentioned, p. 580).

" *P.M.*, vol. i, p. 258.

but healthy conditions of human existence—in this connexion he went so far as to speak of "Gospel abstractions "[49]—or the gratuitous nature of genuine love. Further, his rebellion was prompted by a ** personalist" instinct, the most deeply rooted in his nature, which made him oppose the majority of the Socialist systems which teemed in his day. His idea of man and theirs were diametrically opposed. M. Daniel Halevy puts it very well when he says that he wanted " to keep his people free in the integrity of their morals ".[60] Now, " the majority of the revolutionaries, like the Conservatives they are fighting, dream only of building prisons ".[51] With the vague brotherhood they advocated, which so often went with the greatest laxity in morals, the " Community-seeking" Socialism leads us to an amorphous social state, to universal confusion, in which all that gives man and man's dignity their value is reduced and lost. In this " complacent and stupid uniformity ", the " free, active, reasoned, and unsubdued personality of man " is fettered.[62] We must rid ourselves absolutely of this assumption which, " under pretext of harmony and brotherhood, destroys opposition interests, antagonism of ideas and competition among workers "; " fatal error ", which carries with it the destruction of the most precious virtues.[63]

Quite as much as by Nature, by political economy and by history, the community-system then is " condemned by freedom "[64] itself. It forgets, just as does the system of a " centralizing and unifying " State, " with its administration, its police, its capital, its government and its dynasty ", that society " is a spiritual thing, to use the common expression; that, consequently, its unity must be likewise spiritual, in other words, must dwell in law and right": the unity which both of them effect is " materialism ", it is " pure slavery '\[M] Even more complete is the " community-seeking " tyranny, for, more than any dictatorship, it results " in the ruin of the family ".[6fl] Now, " with the family gone, the ideas of public life and private life are obliterated ",[67]

*• *P. M.*, vol. i, p. 255. And p. 219: " Man does not abandon his idleness until necessity worries him, and the surest means of extinguishing genius in him is to free him from all cares, to take from him the lure of gain and the social distinction which goes with it, by creating around him peace everywhere, peace all the time, and by transferring to the State the responsibility for his energy."

[60] *Con.*, p. 9.

[81] *R. S.*

"*Prop.*, p. 325. To the editors of *La Voix du Peuple*, April 20th, 1850: " Community-seeking Socialism drives us to confusion " (vol. iii, p. 217).

[53] *Organisation du crddit et de la circulation*, booklet published March 31st, 1848.

[54] *T. I. {Works*, vol. xv), pp. 143-4.

[55] Cf. to Gouvernet, May 22nd, 1861 (vol. xi, pp. 89-90).

[56] *Porn.*, p. 180.

[57] P. M., vol. ii, p. 280.

and the individual finds himself wholly absorbed in a group.[68] It will be seen how Proudhon's " personalist" instinct and his family instinct combine and reinforce each other. " Monogamous and permanent marriage ", which alone safeguards the stability of the family, is not only an effective symbol of Justice in his eyes: it is the rampart of personal liberty, the protection of private life. Consequently he raised it as a " radical barrier insuperable to Communism ", and condemned " the theories of the Saint-Simonians, the Fourierists and the humanitarians " as being " the disgrace of the century and the canker of Socialism ".5[9]

Proudhon readily admitted, no doubt, that an equilibrium had to be sought between what he called the " community " and the " personality ", both of which, together, he said, laid obligations upon us.[60] But in the disparaging signification which he more often than not gave to the first of the two words, we can see which way his mind was inclined. " What is the community ? " was one of his questions, for example; and his answer: " It is an economic idea of the State, stretched so far as to absorb individual personality and individual initiative."[61] Far from being a target for our advances, it is rather something antiquated, and progress consists in getting farther and farther away from it. Proudhon called it " a mummy",[62] a "death-trance" ;[83] he scoffed at "the antediluvian absurdity of Communism".[64] " The community is death ", he quite clearly proclaimed in the preface to the second edition of his *Celebration du dimanche,* and in that saying one feels that he intended to improve upon the criticism formerly made of property.[65] Already the first work on *Propria* said "The community is oppression and slavery ",[66] " In science as in Nature ", Communism is for him " synonymous with Nihilism, with the unsorted, with immobility, night, silence; it is the opposite of the real, it is the

"Resistance a la Revolution, in *La Voix du Peuple,* December 3rd, 1849 (/. *G. R.,* p. 379).

[59] To Robin, October 12th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 377).

[60] *P. M.,* vol. ii. p. 273.

[61] *Op. clt.,* vol. ii, p. 293; cf. pp. 256-310.

[62] .A.P.,p. 245.

"*Prop., p.* 173.

[64] *C. P.,* p. 117. *Letter to M. Bastiat,* January 21st, 1850: " . . . the ravings of Pierre Leroux and Louis Blanc on the community, brotherhood and solidarity " (Bastiat's *Works,* vol. v, p. 267). Cf. to Gaudon, April 10th, 1848: " three old ideas which should no longer appear except in history and in novels ": doctrinaire democracy, old Jacobinism, Communism (vol. vi, p. 369).

" C D . , p . 31.

•[8] *Prop.,* p. 327. " A community violates the autonomy of conscience and equality; the former, by curbing the spontaneity of hope and of the heart and free choice in action and thought; the latter, by rewarding with an equal share of comfort work and idleness, talents and stupidity, vice itself and virtue.

black background on which the Creator, God of light, designed the universe "; " an unfortunate copying of the property-owners' routine ", it is " a distaste for work, a weariness of life, the suppression of thought, the death of the ego, the assertion of nothingness ",[87] These declarations are taken from the *Philosophic de la Misire.* " Away from me, Communists ! " he again exclaims in the same work, " your presence is like a stench to me ".[88] A note written in 1847 states: " In all the Utopias, present, past or to come, effected or not effected, the worker is a slave, always a slave."[69] In *Justice* the " Communist system " is defined as " the downfall of personality in the name of society ", which brings it very near to " *oriental despotism* ", to the " autocracy of the Caesars " and the " absolutism of divine right". Until the very end, Proudhon stood his ground, and his invectives were addressed to German Socialism as well as to French Socialism; the scientific Utopia had the same value in his eyes as the sentimental Utopia, and found no more favour with him than did Fourier, Cabet, Louis Blanc, Pierre Leroux, or the Saint-Simonians, Feuerbach and Marx.[70] These last were perhaps " the most intelligent section of Socialism ", but by the fact that they brought "the community" back "into the social economy " they also brought back " low physical conditions and misery ". Moreover, under the name of " Humanism ", these " new atheists" built up again and consecrated mysticism; they were the founders of a " new religion " which aspired to deify our race. Thus they threw light upon the deeply-rooted vice of all Communism, the social aspect of that despicable and delirious doctrine, the religious aspect of which was Pantheism.[71]

•' *P. M.*, vol. ii, pp. 301-2.

•[8] *Op. cit.* And again, this definition of the Communists: " oysters clinging to the rock of brotherhood "•

••Cf. the article in *La Voix du Peuple,* January 8th, 1850: "The patriciate and the proletariat are the two poles of civilization; collective life results from our mutual exploitation; when I have finished eating my brother in the name of property, I eat him in the name of the community; that is what the mystics call communion " (*/. G. R.,* p. 426). Zola took advantage of the riglit men of letters have to get rather mixed up in questions of doctrine when he depicted Proudhon for us in the following way: " I see him, at the gate of his future city, inspecting each man who comes forward . . . labelling him and giving him a number for a name, and a job for life and hope *\ and also when he took him aside £md said, " your ideas of community . . . " and spoke to him of his " sleeping city ". *Proudhon et Courbet,* in *Mes Haines,* new edition (1879), pp. 22-4. Alfred Sudre had written with greater accuracy: " Proudhon's hatred for property was surpassed only by the execration he vowed to Communism." *Histoire du communism, ou Refutation historique des utopies socialistes,* fourth edition (1850), p. 394.

[70] It will be noted that Marx rejected not less vigorously the Communism " quite primitive and devoid of thought" of Fourier, Owen, etc.

[71] *Op. cit.,* vol. i, p. 395: " Indeed, if there is a preconceived notion, a mysticism the deceitful ways of which seem to me to be feared today, it is no longer Catholicism which is disappearing, but it would be rather this humanitarian philosophy. . . . .

Fortunately the French people were not prepared to plunge into these dreams. With them Communism had never existed, " except in a state of protest", because of " the repulsion which the self-seeking monopolies, anarchic competition and all the disorders of an individualism pushed to excess, inspired in them ". It had never taken root there.[72] For a moment, in 1848, the working classes may have stopped to contemplate " the ideas of life in common, work in common, the family-State or the servant-State ", but they quickly " abandoned that Utopia ". Now (round about 1860) " their thoughts are concentrated on a single principle, equally applicable, in their thoughts, to the organization of the State and to the legislation of interests, the principle of mutuality ".[73]

As he contrasted charity with justice, so Proudhon contrasted the community with mutuality.[74] This last was, moreover, nothing else but the systematized application of justice, its methodical embodiment in the details of economic and social realities. The idea of this was born very early on in Proudhon's mind. In 1848, it was upon this idea that he based the whole of his *Solution du probleme social* It was towards the end of his life more especially, however, that he developed it, and the fullest statement of it is to be found in the *Capacite politique des classes ouvridres*.

Mutuality is not association. The latter is not entirely to be rejected,[75] it could even be prescribed for technical reasons, but it does not form an ideal, and to generalize it would be dangerous. Mutuality is a reciprocity, as its etymology indicates. The Latin *mutuum* means a co-operative loan and, in a wider sense, exchange. It consists then " rather in an exchange of good services and products than in a group-

We have previously seen how the anti-Theism professed by Proudhon caused him to reject all Pantheism; see also, in the next chapter, the relation which he establishes between the two ideas of Humanity and Justice. As early as the *C. D.*, he took a stand against Pantheism (pp. 95,475-6). In the *A.* P., too, p. 217: "I detest logical Pantheism as much as religious Pantheism; for if the latter is the negation of morality, the former is the negation of reason." Or in *P. M.*, vol. i, p. 377: " I put aside the pantheistic hypothesis as an hypocrisy and heartlessness."

[72] To Michelet, April 11th, 1851 (vol. xiv, pp. 164--5). This Communism " has not as many roots as the Communism of the Christians in the primitive Church, who were not together ten months in community and probably never numbered more than a few thousands ".

[73] C.P., p. 131.

[74] Op. cit.. p. 119.

[75] To Beslay, May 27th, 1861: " I also said that there was a true principle in association, provided it was not extended too far, and above all provided all imperialism and Communism were banished from it " (vol. xi, p. 98).

ing together of forces and in a community of labours ",[76] It is a " reciprocity of services " which is based upon a " reciprocity of respect" and which carries into the real order of economics the principle governing personal relations among individuals themselves in other words, "the application of Justice to political economy ",[77] " In order to obtain perfect mutuality, each producer, entering into a contract with others, who, for their part, contract in the same way with him, must retain complete and entire independence of action, his full freedom for dealing, and all his personality in working."[78] The idea is a simple but fertile one, and if resolutely taken as a principle, should enable " a system of relationships to be built up, which aims at nothing less than the transformation of the social order from top to bottom ". The social order, which hitherto was based upon authority and which some people would now like to transform into a community, must gradually become a vast network of organized exchanges, thanks to the various institutions of " Mutualism " Its law would be: " service for service, produce for produce, loan for loan, assurance for assurance, credit for credit, security for security, guarantee for guarantee, etc. It is the ancient talion, *an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life,* in a way reversed, transferred from the criminal law and the atrocious practices of the *vendetta* to the economic law, to the works of labour and the good offices of the fraternity."[79] Besides, it is capable of being extended to all the realms: " transferred" for instance, " to the political sphere ", it would be called federalism.[80]

In a social order of that kind, " the worker is no longer a serf of the State, swallowed up in the ocean of the community ", he is truly " a free man ".[81] " Mutualism " provides " the strongest and most subtle bond, the most perfect and the least inconvenient order which can unite men together ", it ensures " the greatest amount of freedom to which they may aspire '\[82] So it may be said that, " of all economic forces, the greatest, the most sacred, the one which brings together all the conceptions of the mind and all the vindications of conscience with

[7t] C. P., p. 124. " Proudhon's conception of justice," M. Yves Simon wrote, in *Notes sur le fiddralisme proudhonien* (in *Esprit,* April, 1937, p. 58), " is above all characterized by the reduction of all forms of justice to the type of commutative justice."

[77] *Just.,* vol. ii, p. 149.

[78] C. P., pp. 141-2.

[79] C. P., p. 125.

[•°] 0/>. c//., p. 198. *U./., passim.* May 8th, 1862: "universal federation, into which every historical evolution must resolve itself" (vol. xii, p. 87); to Buzon, January 31st, 1863 (p. 269).

["] C. P., p. 125.

["] *Op. cit.,* p. 204.

He also declared that the idea of justice, as a corollary of which the idea of mutuality presented itself, was likewise a Biblical idea. It was Moses again who made it the basis of his legislation,[91] and as far as the Gospel was concerned, that was the idea which made the Gospel triumphant: "The idea of the just man acquired in this revolution an extension such as had not hitherto been suspected, and from which the mind of man has never turned away."[92] In this Proudhon could not foresee what would happen in our day; but would anyone dare to harbour resentment against him on those grounds? And have we not reasons for hoping that the exception is but an interlude? It was all very well for him to add that neither the Synagogue nor the Church had been able to make use of the treasure entrusted to them,[98] that neither the Bible nor the Gospel " had had a complete notion of Justice ",[94] that did not prevent him from seeing in certain great events in social history, such as the abolition of slavery, a genuine effect " of the spirit of justice inculcated with religion " by the Christian apostles.[95] He admitted that " everywhere, in the name of the Gospel, slavery was tempered, transformed: husbandman under the crown, small farmer or hireling, the workman began to have a share in property for himself. Until then he had been a chattel, he became a person "\[96] He did not hesitate to declare that the Gospel, which had been the first of all " revolutions ", still remained the greatest of them all: " Its fundamental dogma was the Unity of God; its motto, the equality of all men in the sight of God . . . Christianity created the law of nations, brotherhood among races; it was through its dogma and its motto that idolatry and slavery were successively abolished ", and it was thus that " the Good News renewed the world, and in renewing it preserved it [97] However biased and blind he may have been in a number of his judgements, yet whenever he personally tries to salve,

•[1] C. P., p. 129. C. D., pp. 54-5.

[92] *Prop.*, pp. 145-6,

[93] C. P., p. 166: " We have never seen in this lofty legal prescription anything but a counsel of charity, a purely voluntary and benevolent form of words, which do not bind in conscience; we have gone forward only with the help of the executioner and the policeman, we are still just as savage as the first men, who, when they grew tired of murder, rapine and rape, agreed to respect one another's goods, wives and lives, and thus established the first societies.*' *Prop.*, pp. 143-4. *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 9.

[94] .T.I..,p. 15.

L. A, PP. 67-9 (a discussion on Guizot's and Laboulaye's theses). *Justice*, vol. iii, p. 58: " What Christianity, by what is called the abolition of slavery, did for the working-man, everybody knows '•; and p. 54, a commentary on St. Paul's note to Philemon. " In the very passages in which the Apostle recommends submission and by word of mouth asserts the duty of bondservice, he warns the slaves that they depend only upon God."

•• *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 9.

•* *Toast d la Revolution,* in *Le Peuple,* October, 17th, 1848.

to multiply or to put a number of these results or consequences together, Proudhon very consciously labels himself by the best part of his thought, a follower of a Christian tradition.

A philosopher who was unfair to Proudhon,[98] but who mentally agreed with him on " personalism "•• (i.e. the personality of man, in contradistinction to his being a chattel), also brought an action, like Proudhon, against charity in the name of justice. Their arguments have a curious similarity. "What have I against love?" Charles Renouvier wrote in 1869, " Why ! that it is not a rule, and cannot be a precept, an obligation."[100] " If kindness is a duty, since, by its very nature or in as much as it is a passion, kindness has no rule, it is bound to lead the other duties into incertitude and into contradictions."[101] The object of kindness cannot be the person in other people, but only the nature, in other words, " man as an animal and not as a man "; not the being " who has a dignity like ours, inviolable rights for us, rights upon which he insists ", but only " the tangible being, which suffers perhaps and to which guilt may possibly be imputed ",[103] Consequently the spirit of justice is inevitably on the downward grade in any society which gives too big a place to love. It would be like trying to live on fancy cakes instead of on bread.[108] Arbitrariness becomes law, and consequently the law changes into tyranny:

[98] In his article on *La philosophie du XIX* sUcle (Uannie philosophique,* 1867, p. 65), Renouvier says of Proudhon: " The most tempestuous friend—as one would have called him—of liberty . . . has offered sacrifice to the common idols and embraced . . . the religion of Pantheism." In his article on *Les icoles contemporaines de morale en France (La critique philosophique,* 1873-4, vol. i, p. 37), he attributes to him " a complete denial of the bonds of society " and sees in his thought no " feeling of the joint responsibility and obligation towards the whole ", etc.

•• Proudhon had made Renouvier's acquaintance on May 1st, 1846 (Note-books); he had read his first works. Renouvier in return owed certain elements of his thought to Proudhon, as has been pointed out by M. Henri Michel, *Vidie de VEtat,* p. 411, and by M. Georges Weill, *Histoire de Vidie latque en France au XIX* siicle,* new edition, p. 203. They engaged in controversy on the subject of the absolute and of liberty. Criticized by Proudhon in *Just,* Renouvier made reply. Proudhon answered this in his second edition of *Just.,* (vol. iii, pp. 450-5). " M. Renouvier," he wrote, " in spite of all his knowledge, will never be a real philosopher because he does not know how to write." He added: " Let truth go all naked, if you like, but not in the form of a skeleton."

[100] Letter to Secr&an, February, 21st, 1869 *(Correspondance de Renouvier et de Secritan,* p. 15). *La critique philosophique,* vol. i, 1873, p. 215: " Since love excludes rules and boundaries (that is its claim), it carries nothing within it which can save it from arbitrariness."

[1,1] *Science de la morale,* book i, chapter 22 (new edition, 1908, vol. i, p. 97).

[tn] *Op. cit.,* p. 98. Cf. Proudhon, to La Chatre, August, 1856: " If Communistic inclinations have entered into certain fine minds through the gateway .of sympathy, they must go out again through a higher understanding of human dignity." It it less costly to be charitable than to do justice; so "justice is the last word and tile greatest utterance of morality ".

[101] Letter to Secr6tan, August 26th, 1869: " Man after his sin is scarcely any longer capable of merit or of reasonable love. . . . He may at times rise to the

The spirit bloweth where it listeth, where passions are concerned. Love invoked under the name of reason to warrant the sacrifice of self, next warrants the sacrifice of others, an involuntary and obligatory sacrifice, in order to bring into being a plan alleged to be for the common good, or perhaps for some transcendent happiness . . . (In this way we come finally to) an arbitrary arrangement of society, and then of the universe... and no guarantee any longer exists for justice.[104]

To conceive the contrast between justice and charity in this manner is to conceive a contrast between religion and morals, or again between passion and reason.[106] We must be grateful to Renouvier as well as to Proudhon for the care they took to ensure human dignity together with the reign of justice, and their insistence on this point may have a healthy effect in reminding the faithful themselves of their duties as a whole. This contrast, however, as it is formulated by both these writers in terms which are equivalent and which sometimes go so far as to coincide, implies a conception of a love which knows nothing of Christian love. This contrast will be seen to be an empty one, if we decline to look upon love, as they do, as being tantamount to a sentiment or a passion, to an " impulse of the heart '\[10e] Only by comparing love in this way, a comparison governed in both of them by a narrow theory of the reason,[107] could they possibly think that the

notion of certain general principles of duty: equality, passive respect, formal contracts, etc. But not having been able to reach, from the social point of view, even a middling degree of perfection in these very things, he fell back on others, love, sacrifice, etc. Having no bread, he tried to subsist on fancy cakes; passion took precedence of reason; . . . thence, improvement, a raising of the heart, but a lowering of mind and character." And on August 14th: " I a m struck by the weakness of the spirit of justice in the religious world '* *(Correspondence,* pp. 30,36).

[Xf4] *Science de la morale,* vol. i, chapter 46 (p. 206). Cf. Proudhon, *Just.,* vol. ii, p. 17: " With the law of love as with the law of bondage, society is right in the thick of arbitrariness.** Secr6tan wrote to Renouvier on November 6th, 1872: " You want justice, the guarantee of each one's personal liberty, and reciprocity of services ** *{Correspondance,* p. 75).

[m] Renouvier, *Science de la morale,* vol. i, chapter 49 (p. 213).

[1,f] *Capaciti politique,* p. 406. Cf. Renouvier, *Introduction a la philosophic analytique de Vhistoire* (1864), pp. 116-18: " It is then through the heart, and not through the reason, that morality is revived. . . . .The man of love is a man of passion, for love is a passion . . .; for him everything is a matter of exceptions and particular cases . . .; evil is transfigured into good in his eyes; he steals so that he may give, lies to be useful or pleasant *to* his dupes. . . . But the man of justice subordinates passion to reason. . . .** And *La critique philosophique,* 1878-9, vol. i, L'*amour et la justice,* p. 33: the passions " of which love is predominant '*....

[197] Gabriel Madinier, *Conscience et amour,* pp. 35-6: "This idea that love is sentiment and belongs to nature must be linked up with Renouvier's general inspiration. Reason is for him understanding; reasonableness is measured by discursiveness and by non-contradiction.*' Similar remarks by Jean Lacroix, *Personne et amour,* p. 50. M. Ourwitch, too, has this criticism: "Proudhon's all too large Rationalism, which looks upon love, even in the moral sphere properly so-called, as an inferior element to justice " *(L'ide'e du droit social,* p. 373, note).

reign of love would be the reign of " arbitrariness " or free choice, as though love, for all that it admits no " rule ", had not also its own law.[108] It is true that, in order to understand this, they would have had to cross the boundaries of the " understanding " and go beyond the horizon of social relationships, to enter the mysterious region of the relationship between man and God[109] . . . There lies the congenital impotence of all philosophy of man which limits itself to man.

At least Proudhon did not always maintain the paradox which he set forth in the *Philosophic de la Miskre* when he said that " charity is contradictory to justice " just as " God is contradictory to man ".[uo] He did not always abide in that dialectical mood. He brought himself to admit—though in far too negative a manner and in a form above all critical—that in our terrestrial world charity was necessary to bring forth justice. " I maintain," he said, " that the precept of charity has as a necessary consequence the production of the precept of justice."[111] And again, addressing his archbishop, the Church's representative: " Your charity (is only) the first lispings of justice."[112] He believed, however, that the "lisping" age was over, and that in human society now grown up justice alone should reign. " Charity has had its day."[118] The religion of the future, " which must complete the Gospel, is the religion of justice ". That was already fundamentally, he thought, the religion promulgated by Moses, and then by Christ. Those great founders, however, had to take circumstances into account. " In the days of Moses, the common Hebraic people could grasp only an affective idea, paternal authority ", that was why the Law, " albeit desiring Justice, subordinated it to the cult of Jehovah ". Then when the Jewish priesthood had betrayed its trust Christ substituted the law of fraternal charity for their authority. Meanwhile, until the people reached a sufficient maturity, " he founds the Gospel fraternity, the Church ". That was, however, only a stage. For Christ himself at the same time announced the Paraclete, " the advocate, or as a man of the law would say, a Justicer "—a lover of Justice, whose hour had at last come.[114] Proudhon did not see that that hour can never

[108] Cf. Yves de Montcheuil, *La loi d'amour*, in *Citi nouvelle*, June 10th, 1942.

[109] Renouvier indeed envisages this relation, but he does so in a legal spirit destructive of all profound religion. See, e.g., *Introduction a la philosophic analytique de Vhistoire*, p. 119.

[110] P.M., vol. i, p. 389.

[m] /art., vol. iii, p. 36.

[IM] *Op. c//.*, vol. iii, p. 150.

[u] * C. *P.* p. 406.

* [m] *Op. cfc.*, pp. 129-30. " This Paraclete, for whose coming the Apostles waited, and who has been expected from century to century, and about whom so many fanciful ideas have been retailed, why should I not say that we have his full

be said to have come in all its fulness. He did not see that justice can never, *in* any sense, be effected, nor even its ideal completely conceived; neither did he see that if, in itself, it can be considered as an absolute, in actual life its boundaries are always on the move. He did not dream that, if justice consists in giving to every man his due, it cannot itself be an answer to the query as to what exactly is due to every man.[115] So that, even if we keep within the perspectives of Proudhon, we must say that it is impossible to abolish the reign of charity without provoking a catastrophe for justice itself: for if justice is the principle of equilibrium, it is charity which is, for justice itself, the principle of progress; and " if the Justice of today is born of the Charity of yesterday, only the Charity of today can bring forth the Justice of to-morrow ".[116]

There is more than that, however. If we go beyond the purely temporal and social aspect of the problem to set the problem as a whole, there is no doubt that between charity and justice other relationships must be conceived, more intimate and of a more intrinsic necessity. The former not only prepares the way for the latter, it presupposes it also, so that it could not consent to be its substitute, even provisionally;[117] and the latter, in turn, is incapable of bringing an order into being and bringing forth a really human society, unless it is founded upon, and also completed by, the former. Charity is the law of the spiritual world, as justice is the law of the temporal world; but these two worlds are not separated, in us they form but

manifestation today in the regenerating movement of the modern populace? The same reason which made the prophet of Nazareth understand, more than eighteen centuries ago, that the charity he preached was not the last word of the Gospel, enlightens our Democracy when, speaking through the mouth of the Sixty, it says to us, * We reject alms; we want justice V Cf. *supra,* p. 200.

[118] Gabriel Madinier, *Conscience et amour,* pp. 53-4.

[116] Gaston Fessard, *Pax Nostra,* p. 148. Proudhon himself put it very well, *Just.,* vol. i, p. 328. ** The progress of Justice, both theoretical and practical, is a state from which we are not allowed to emerge and to see the end. We know how to distinguish' good from evil; we shall never know the end of right because wc are always creating new relations among ourselves. We are born perfectible; we shall never be perfect: perfection, immobility would be death." Cf. Mgr. Lavaltee: Report read at the solemn opening of the Catholic Faculties of Lyons, November 15th, 1944: " Charity instinctively went wherever justice faltered. It outstripped the laws and juridical organizations which are formed by reason, for love has antennae more delicate than those of reason. St. Augustine says that it possesses eyes, and that to love is to see. *Amor oculus est et amare videre est,* and its gait is swifter, the *Imitation* claims that it has wings. In the past, it has outstripped justice; in the future it alone is capable of completing it.** *{Bulletin de Facultes catholiques de Lyon,* August-December, 1944, pp. 26-7.)

[117] This is very well demonstrated by the dialectic of Christian alms, as set out by St. Augustine in his fine 8/A *sermon on St. John's First Epistle,* No. 5 (P.L. 35, 2038-9). Cf. *Catholicism,* third edition, pp. 385-6.

a single world, the human world. That is why, if justice still reigns in the heart of the spiritual world, charity cannot be missing from the temporal world. " To desire the reign of justice is not a work of justice ", it is already a work of love.[118]

Coming down from the plane of the spiritual communion to the level of the earthly society and to the objective relationships of men among themselves, charity becomes of necessity justice. The latter might be said to be the symbol of the former in a social refraction in the City of spirits. Or, to observe a more generic order and to take our stand precisely at the temporal view-point of the terrestrial city and its organization, justice reveals itself as an apprenticeship and preparation for chanty. It is the rough outline and the condition of charity, and in a way remains its framework. " On earth," Proudhon rightly said, "justice is eternally the condition of love."[119] To wish to found society here below upon charity, without first of all and always taking justice into account, can be nothing but hypocrisy.[120] " Love without justice," Secretan also says, " the sentiment-love, is not love." [m] It might be, we could also add, a sort of Indian love, a Buddhistic or Schopenhauerian pity, it is not the love known to Christian morals and metaphysics.[122] But, on the other hand, justice, the condition of charity, is also only the condition of perfect social life, it is not the principle and soul of it. It creates, to use an apt sentence of M. Gabriel Madinier, a *social space* which should allow human persons " to develop relations among themselves other than biological ones, spiritual relations ", but justice is not at all adequate to the setting up of such relations.[123] It is a pure illusion to believe

[118] Secretan, Letter to Renouvier, December, 1872. *(Correspondance,* p. 83.)

"• *P. M.,* vol. i, p. 368. And vol. ii, p. 299: " Without justice, without an exact definition of mine and thine, charity becomes an extortion and brotherhood is impossible.'* *S. Q. S.,* p. 93: " In the social order, Reciprocity is the principle of social reality, the formula of justice. For basis it has the eternal antagonism between ideas, opinions, passions, abilities, temperaments and interests. It is the condition of love itself."

[1,0] Cf. Nicolas BerdiaefT, *De la destination de Vhomme,* p. 126: " Every society claiming to be founded on grace and refusing the authority of the law is a despotic society. Communism realized is proof of this; itself founded on an act of grace, albeit of an obscure and non-Christian order, it presents us with a tyranny, in other words, an inverted theocracy."

[121] Secretan," Letter to Renouvier, March 17th, 1869. "Love,** Secretan adds, " is the will that the creature should exist" *(Corresponfance,* p. 19). For this profound nature of love, which is act, and for the difference from sentiment or passion, see Yves de Montcheuil, *Le ressentiment d'apris Max Scheler,* in *Recherches de science religieuse,* 1937.

[122] This confusion of the two things often occurs, notably in Renouvier, *La lot d'amour et de justice, La critique philosophlque,* 1873-4, vol. i, p. 210: " . . . the essence of love. See it in Buddhism ", etc.

[123] G. Madinier, *Conscience et amour,* pp. 122-3.

in an order of justice which would suffice by itself, and which, so to speak, would enclose itself; an order of justice in the promotion of which charity might indeed have helped from without but which would not be enveloped on all sides by charity, and which would not aspire to go further and become an order of charity. Not only will alms and self-sacrifice always be sadly needed—to fill in the gaps of a justice always imperfect in actual reality, to creep into the thousand and one crevices which will always be left by a social order, even as perfect as it is possible to suppose it; but, still more, love is essential to ensure in any case the union of individuals and to cement society from within. Justice respects, and by that very fact confers nobility upon, people, but inevitably also justice rises in opposition, and it is by no chance encounter that Renouvier, the philosopher of justice, is at the same time the philosopher of antitheses,[124] or that Proudhon, who seeks passionately for harmony over and above war, is unceasingly led to overstep or to broaden his notion of justice. The struggles which follow the claiming of rights may have a part to play in the onward march of the world, but they cannot constitute in themselves an end. By itself, justice does more in the way of separating than of uniting,—*metun ac tuum, frigidum Mud verbwn*—so that it comes to a point when it is divided against itself, and in proportion as it tries to raise itself up, it finds itself threatened with destruction. " A human society reduced to juridical exchanges is both unintelligible and impossible, and the ancients themselves saw in friendship the foundation of the city."[125] We must therefore conclude that moral and social progress cannot consist solely in an evolution which transforms what had hitherto been duties of charity into duties of justice.[126] Charity alone is the perfection of justice. In charity alone will all justice be fulfilled.[127]

[124] Cf. Secrtan, *Correspondance,* p. 89: " You despise the synthesis too much."

[125] Jean Lacroix, *Tradition nationale et vocation personnelle,* p. 174. Cf. St. Thomas, *In Ethic,* bo6k 8. vii

"•Madinier, *op. cit.,* p. 69; and p. 71: "Justice does not realize this perfect unity in which full intelligibility consists. Societies whose members are bound together only by legal relations are collections of atoms, in other words, beings constituted before they enter into relationship. These beings, conceived as existing prior to all social life, cannot make up among themselves that community which is perfectly one, wherein each member is inside all the others." ** Justice," also says M. Gurwitch, L'*idee du droit social,* p. 103, " is not by itself an ideal; it is only an instrument in the service of the ideal. And the moral ideal to which we aspire is union and harmony, a friendly exchange of lives, love. This ideal is the one which reason, working for unity, demands: love is more intelligible than justice because it can realize a more perfect unity." See also p. 82. It is true that here Proudhon points out that it is not primarily a question of defining an ideal.

[117] After having shown that the law, the expression of justice, is in fact, from a social point of view, more fitted to defend the dignity and the liberty of the person,

Charity presupposes justice, just as the New Testament presupposes the Old. And justice is not destroyed by charity any more than the Old Testament is destroyed by the New. Charity is appropriated by justice and becomes homogeneous with it. As Christ, in a sense, created the Old Testament which yet prepared the way for him, so is it with charity, which at one and the same time creates and consummates justice.

" One cannot with impunity break away from love, the source of all creation, be it poetic or social. . . . Proudhon, looking with suspicion upon love and establishing his whole revolution on justice alone, took no notice of the hierarchy which must be respected between love, the principal virtue, and justice, the conditional virtue. His re-establishment of justice is a necessary, even an indispensable, operation, but a preliminary one; an operation of a political order, more than the profound revolution Proudhon likes to think it is."[128] Moreover, he was not above admitting it, at least incidentally. After all, it was not against Christian love that he had a grudge. It was against that love which accorded with the " religiosity " of his day. It was against love according to Fourier, against love according to Michelet, against love according to the " Communists " or according to the disciples of Saint-Simon and of " Pere " Enfantin. It was not Christian brotherhood he criticized, it was Robespierre's brotherhood, the brotherhood which reached its peak in the bloody cry, " Brotherhood or death ! "[la9] He knew how. to distinguish between human love, even the most lawful, and charity.[130] He even caught a glimpse of the pre-eminence of charity over justice. In *Idie ge'ne'rale de la Revolution,* for instance, he glorified " something superior even to justice, the feeling of brotherhood ".[m] *Celebration du dimanche* was an academical thesis, an incidental work of his youth, but one has always to return to it

M. Jean Lacroix, *Personne et amour*, pp. 65-9, concludes, just as soundly, that the order of justice is still an impersonal order and that the personal order is that of love. The former of these two orders is " subordinated to the latter which it makes possible, but the latter does not exist, or else threatens to disappear, without the former ". Between might and love, the same writer says, right " is the necessary mediator". Cf. Berdiaeff, *op. cit.*, pp. 124, 135-6. Pius XII's Christmas message of 1942, we know, insisted strongly on the rejection of "the dilemma: love *or* right", and proclaimed instead " the fruitful synthesis, love *and* right".

[128] Andre Rousseaux, *Proudhon et nous, be. cit."* His virile genius bears a strong likeness to the Old Testamsnt, wherein the God of Justice lays down the rule which enables the God of Love to come."

[129] *P. M.*, vol. ii, pp. 266-7, 270-1. Cf. to Villiaume, March 19th, 1851 (vol. iv, pp. 44-5).

[130] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 253: " . . . Let the wife show herself: she has overcome the flesh, no longer through love alone, but through justice and charity." Cf. pp. 280-1.

[181] l. *G. R.*

when studying one of his fundamental ideas: in it he was already speaking of that " communion of love and faith ", of that " fusion of intelligences and hearts ", of " that invisible bond, stronger than all the interests", which is "really a brotherly society".[132] In the *Philosophie de la Miskre* he finds that in fact, " alas! charity in man is puny, shamefaced, soft and tepid ";[133] all the same he admits that " the law of charity " is the law *par excellence*, which would suffice to make " society perfect ",[134] and that the end one must have in view is " to make charity come forth from justice, as a flower from its stalk ",[136] The only thing that stops him, at bottom, is the fear of a pantheistic fusion, in which all personality would be lost. This fear was not unfounded, as the history of the Socialist doctrines shows. Whatever its form, in more subtle guise or coarser, more spiritual or more cosmic, humanitarian Pantheism is one of the most frequent temptations. During the period in which Proudhon lived, its mirages were particularly powerful. In Christianity itself, we know, the mystical language of love, depending too much at times upon sources alien to revelation or too much the slave of our spontaneous representations, has not always been able to avoid a similar reef. It may well be the moment to call for the formulation of a mystical theology resolutely " personal", founded more upon the Gospel,[136] making use of the doctrine of the Trinity, and having, among its essential words, not " fusion " or " absorption ", but the two words with which Proudhon himself defined his ideal: " communion " and " reciprocity ".[137]

[132] **C. D., p. 41. For this word, communion, see also *The Letter to the Working Men* of March 8th, 1864: " cut off from the communion " (vol. xiii, p. 264); *Just.*, " social communion ", '' communion with mankind ", etc.**

[133] **P. M., vol. i, p. 372.**

[134] ***Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 354.**

[135] ***Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 372.**

[136] **A philosopher so careful to guard against any shadow of Pantheism as M. Lachieze-Rey is, can yet crown his doctrinal structure with an ontology of charity, *Le moi, le monde et Dieu,* chapters v-vii.**

[137] **We must remind ourselves, however, that this reciprocity on our side is " the reciprocity which is accessible to a created being who cannot think or act in relation to God without grace which is continuously granted to it.'* (M. N6doncelle, *La riciprocite des consciences,* p. 86; cf. pp. 108-9.)**

PART FIVE

MORAL IMMANENTISM

CHAPTER XI

EVOLUTION AND RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

PROUDHON'S ambition was not confined to an analysis of economic facts coupled with a social moral code. It was a complete moral code he wished to build, and thereby, or consequently, a whole philosophy. Nobody had uftdertaken to give a thorough explanation of the Revolution : he wanted to be its exegete. This Revolution to which he appealed was a complete human fact: he undertook to give the theory of it. In fine, it was to be " the theology of Immanence ".[1] It would be in two parts: first of all the theology of Transcendency would have to be studied, showing how it was born, what part it had played, how it is transformed, what its outcome should be; it would be a kind of " natural history of theology and of the cults ". Next would be set out the system which henceforth will take its place.

" Ideas rise but slowly on the horizon, especially those which betoken the progress of conscience."[3] Social spontaneity always precedes careful thought, just as childhood precedes maturity. So mankind began by believing in a divinity outside and above man. " The beginning of all metaphysical speculation is an act of adoration of the Creator: that is what the history of the human mind discovers, among all races, in an invariable manner."[4] Religion is not an artificial creation, it comes from " the womb of mankind". It is " man's nurse "; without it, " mankind would have perished in the beginning ". " Thought's first shape, the first hypothesis offered for the intelligence to work upon, a bond of love between man and God ", it " has been good, and one will always delight in recalling that poetic age of the heart and reason ".[5]

What is true of religion in general is eminently so of Christianity, which is its highest form. In every point of its doctrine, Christianity " has but . . . set out the myth from which philosophy afterwards extricated and explained the truth ".[8] " Christianity was prophetical"

[1] ***Just.*, vol. i; cf. vol. iv, p. 423: "Nobody has explained the revolutionary dogma." Vol. i, p. 281: " . . . to write the Bible of the Revolution."**

[2] **Just., vol. i.**

[3] **C.P., p. 156.**

[4] ***La Voix du Peuple*, November 5th, 1849 (preface to the third edition of *Con.*\ p. 57.**

[8] **C. 0. *H.*, p. 125. *Programme Revolutionnaire* (1848), p. 331.**

[5] **., just ., vol. iii, p. 521.**

in a measure beyond comparison, and it was a judicious presentiment, for example, which made it " exalt virginity above all the virtues: in this as in so many other things . . . it was social spontaneity which, at the instigation of the people, came from the lips of the popes, pending the time when careful thought would speak for itself through the writings of philosophers ".[7]

Proudhon multiplied the formulas. They were not all perfectly clear, neither were they always consistent one with another. Patient and methodical analysis was not his forte. But the idea which emerged, simple enough when all is said and done, appeared quite clearly. " Religion and Society," he said, " are synonymous terms." Or again: " Catholicism and Socialism, identical in substance, differ only in form."[8] Catholicism is " an allegory of society, or else it is nothing".[9] " Religion is essentially a soothsayer: it is the mythology of right."[10]

But, after having educated mankind in a manner which was sublime, the Church needed to be instructed in her turn. For she did not know herself at all. Like the seers who needed interpreters, she is " ignorant of her own mysteries ",[11] Now, the myth which proclaims the truth must not enshroud it indefinitely. There comes a time when allegory must give way to truth. Religion is certainly " the starting-point of thought and liberty ", but it is only a starting-point: it is therefore of a " transitory "[12] nature, and if it stays on, it gradually becomes detestable because it stands in the way of that which it was commissioned to represent and set going. When it becomes theology it loses that which gave it a value, but gains nothing in return; it rationalizes faith, and yet does not answer the questions which faith puts to it.[18] Thought cannot always remain in a state of primitive spontaneity any more than society can abide *ne varietur* by the laws of Providence. Finally, religion must break down " the hallucination "[14] to which it owes its being. It must reabsorb what had originally been set outside it only so that religion might be conscious of its own being.

[7] *P. M.*, vol. ii, p. 385.
[8] *Con.*, p. 60. (*La Voix du Peuple*, November 5th, 1849.)
• *Con.*, p. 69. *Just.*, vol. Hi, p. 629 (speaking to Bossuet): " Your Christianity is the masterpiece of human symbolism."
[10] *Just.*, vol. i, p. 28.
[11] *Just.*, vol. ii, p. 350.
[12] C. *O. H.*, p. 241; and p. 65: " Religion, which is the first form of human thought, a kind of preparation for knowledge, has a tendency, not to live, but to die . . .
[* *P.M.*, vol. i, p. 81: " The theologians' only answer to metaphysical problems is in the form of myths and allegories, which always reproduce the problems without solving them."
[14] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 347.

Now that time had come, so much so that today "theology is impiety, arid faith sacrilege. . . . Which is the order of salvation which has nothing in common with the order of the world, the religious life which kills all other interests, the contemplation which degrades all ideals, the would-be inspired science, set against all other sciences?"[15] "At present", we must open our eyes to the fact, ** symbolism is worn out'\[16] Our concern then is "to teach the masses that prayer is only something additional to thought, good for children and simple folk; the sacraments and the mysteries, an allegory of social laws; worship, an emblem of universal solidarity".[17] The very idea of revelation must be brought down from heaven to earth: "There it is, easy to pick out from the mythology which enshrines it, as the gold setting enshrines the precious stone without merging into it or tarnishing it: it is an exaltation which seizes the conscience when for the first time it comes into contact with the notion of Justice, made more attractive by the poetic form of the concept."[18] The fact must at last be grasped: "All the metaphysico-theological systems, brought into being by dreams of the absolute and the ideal, are, in short, but the archaeology of Justice, the apocalypse of the Revolution."[19]

Formerly Socialism was contained in Catholicism. Henceforward, having broken away from it, Socialism has become Catholicism's "antipode, its inverted image".[20] An inversion such as that could not happen in a day. First of all philosophic thought had to be brought into play. Philosophy, "the soaring of intelligence towards certitude, the rebellion of conscience against the religious yoke, the cry of liberty," succeeding Religion, "was good" also, because, in its turn, it revealed itself as being necessary. When Religion had finished its task as man's nurse, "Philosophy, like an enchantress, following behind, carried

[16] *Con.*, p. 69. Besides, theology, for all that, in rationalizing religion, is playing an essentially progressive part. It "leads man, step by step, to reason; it never had any other purpose. All its investigations are philosophic attempts. We have *sacred physics,* a *Polity drawn from sacred Scripture, Canon Law* and *Scholasticism,* what are all these? Rationalism in revelation. From the very beginning, theology sought truth *outside* itself; it was theology which embarked upon the excavations which were to lead us outside the circle in which it had been the first to imprison us. As it built up its dogma so it wrought its own undoing through its interpretations and its glosses. . . ."• (*/. G. R.*, 1851, p. 344). In *C. O. H.*, too, p. 103: "... The syllogism alone made theology; reasoning was in the service of unreason; but we have nothing to complain about, it was an immense progress. A religion which argues is a religion which kills itself. . . ." *P.M.*, vol. ii, p. 238. *Droit au travail* (October 5th, 1848), p. 425. *Con.*, p. 71, etc. Previously, C. *D.*, preface, p. 34.

[ie] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 376; vol. iii, p. 481: "The time has come to cut the rope.**"

"*. S. (1852), p. 28.

"/w*f.,vol. iv, p. 359.

"/. P., I, no. 3.

[t0] *La Voix du Peuple,* October 21st, 1849.

man off and brought him to the temple of truth, putting him down again only upon the threshold ". Without Philosophy, " he would have remained sunk in eternal childhood ". Still it is not, any more than Religion, " anything other than a particular state of consciousness and understanding ". Neither is that state meant to last for ever. If it is prolonged and becomes hardened, Philosophy, too, grows " detestable ". " A little philosophy has always been mingled with Religion, and a breath of religion has always pervaded Philosophy." Even at the present day their fates are still linked together ! Conceived as a revelation of divine dogmas, Religion has become theology; conceived as the knowledge of causes, Philosophy has become sophistry. Now both are condemned by that very fact: " theology has fallen, sophistry is mortally wounded."[21]

The truth is that society has become acquainted with new and decisive steps in progress. The mind has made strides towards knowledge[22] man has reflected upon the laws of politics and economics. Putting aside philosophy, which was only a stage, we can say that the " theory of free contract", which now replaces the " governmental theory ", eliminates all belief in a supernatural revelation and even in a Supreme being. " Thus the religious tradition breathes its last in economic truth ",[28] henceforward everything shows " the theoretical and practical inadequacy of the divine principle ", God has become, so to speak, an " economic nuisance ",[24] The religious problem and the social problem are so intermingled that, truth to tell, they form but one problem. This is the " paradox " which already served as a " basis " for the treatise on *Calibration du dimanche.* It explains the position we have seen Proudhon take up with regard to the relations between the spiritual and the temporal. It is " the identity between religion and politics ",[25] Opposing the short-sighted economists and politicians, Proudhon claimed the right, and showed the need, to introduce theology everywhere into his studies; then turning round upon the faithful, he reproached them in a similar manner with their unreal speculations,

[21] *C.O.H.*, pp. 125-6. To Pauthier, April 9th, 1838: "Philosophy must get away from the antiquated forms of language and mythology."

[22] *C. O.H.*, p. 6: " By Progress I mean the mind's ascent towards Knowledge, by the three stages of Religion, Philosophy and Metaphysics or Method." Proudhon did not keep this distinction between Metaphysics and Philosophy, to which he was very partial at the date of his *C. O. H.*, an essentially methodico-logical work.

[23] P. M., vol. ii, p. 363. Vol. i, p. 63: " Don't you see that the same applies to religion as to governments, the most perfect is a negation of the lot ? "

[24] *I. G. R.* (1851), p. 291. To Tissot, December 22nd, 1853: "The nineteenth century is destined to substitute the economic and social principle, in the government of mankind, for theological and political principles " (vol. v, p. 299).

[25] C. D., p. 47.

which did not take into account the present state of society. If so many theological disputes nowadays leave us indifferent, he tells them, it is precisely because these disputes were formerly merely a symbol of the social disputes about which we now feel so keenly and which were then working under their cover:

> There was a time . . . when religion, as manifested by rites and dogmas, was by itself alone the whole of society; a time when everybody knew God, but nobody troubled about politics, political economy, labour or property. Those things existed but were, so to speak, latent: thought allowed them to slumber on; they had no proper part to play, no official existence. The spiritual absorbed the temporal, the rights of men and of the citizen were only religious rights. Free man had the privilege of religion and had no intention of sharing it; the slave fought to have gods of his own, as the serf in the Middle Ages struggled to come by property of his own, as the proletarian of the nineteenth century fights to secure work for himself. The enemies of society then were not Communists, Socialists, labour organizers, a Saint-Simon, a Fourier or an Owen. They were Protagoras, Pyrrho, Aeschylus, Lucian, the contemners of the gods, the atheists. . . ,[26]

In thus bringing together the historic or evolutive principle and the symbolic principle, to explain the greatness and the decadence of religion, Proudhon was conscious that he was speaking in the name of the Revolution as the Church speaks in the name of Christianity. Revolution and Revelation, divine Rights and human Rights, are not simply placed in dialectical correlation. They do not form an antinomy between themselves, which might leave us to hope that they can be made to agree in some higher synthesis. Christianity is to the Revolution what the religion of Israel was to Christianity. It is its Old Testament:

> Revolutionary Justice and theological Justice are not two powers which balance each other; they are to each other what the positive idea is to the allegory, knowledge to myth, reality to the dream, the body to the shadow. I do not exactly say that they exclude each other, since, on the contrary . . . one appears in history as the sign or symbol of that which the other fulfils; I say that, the truth being known, there is no reason to trouble about the allegory, and that the latter must be put aside, as the Christians say about the Old Law in their hymn:
>
> *The old is by the new replaced;*
> *The substance hath the shadow chased;*
> *And rising day dispels the night.*[27]

[u] ***Le Droit au travail et a la propriM*** **(October 5th, 1848). Historical analogies between religion, monarchy and property.**

[v] ***Just.*****, vol. iii, pp. 244-5. To Clerc, March 4th, 1863 (vol. xii, p. 340).**

That is why Catholicism may be considered both as the promoter and as the opponent of Socialism, just as in God one may see either man's essence or man's antagonist. Fundamentally, we can still say, even today, that " Socialism has nothing which is contrary to Christianity ", since it raised it to " the level of a strict science ". " By the reformation of society" Christianity finds itself " mathematically squared ". To be more precise, we see that " the fanciful forms in which religious thought was spontaneously produced", and which are called revelations or theophanies, " gradually disappear in the real form ",[28] This general interpretation of religious symbolism enables justice to be done to religion, to Christianity and to the Church. Proudhon did not mince his words in according them the most sincere praise. " Christianity," he wrote, " is the most complete, the most wonderful monument that has come forth from the womb of humanity "; and, with a slightly oratorical flourish: "To every soul that is pious, but more devoted to Justice than to piety, it seems that in going over, with me, from the Gospel of Christ to the Gospel of the Revolution, it is not making a change of doctrine, but merely speaking another language."[29] The Revolution, in fact, came less to destroy than to " fulfil". For religion it was not so much a matter of death as of " metamorphosis ". The " science of religions " killed free-thinking; Spinoza's disdain or Hobbes', Voltaire's irony, are all out of date: " the irreverence shown to worship has been succeeded by an interpretation of it". There could be no excuse for those bogus free-thinkers, typified by B6ranger, who wanted to bring back into fashion again " the blackguardism of the Regency " [of Philip of Orleans, 1715-23], What is needed nowadays is, on the contrary, men who will take over from the old priesthood and carry out what they have failed to do; men who do not mistake the letter for the spirit, as they did, and who do not become hopelessly wrapped up in ceremonies, but who know how to give a spiritual, or, to use another word, a social interpretation to the " wonderful allegories of the faith ".[30]

Let there be no mistake, however: this new attitude, albeit not so sharp in its tone and more comprehending, permitting " neither derision nor insult", is, deep down, more radical. " From religion we are taking everything and assimilating everything, ideas, myths, sentiments, in a word, its soul; we leave to the Church only the dead letter, the mummy." The false Liberals are not serious. " Beranger died an

" To abbe* X., January 22nd, 1855 (vol. vi, pp. 114-6 *Con.*, p. 397 *(Le Peuple*, September 2nd, 1848, manifesto).

•• /. P., pp. 215, 217. Cf. *supra*, p. 92.

••C.0.J5T.,p.374.

edifying death; the man who separates morals from religion and sees in the latter only a dead language, that man *will never be reconciled"*[1]

Mankind's history is reproduced in every man. The " period of sentiment and imagination " is renewed in each one of us, and that is why the dawn of our life is naturally religious: the deductive course is always the first which offers to lead us on to things unknown, and that is why we all of us pass through a metaphysical phase as well. It is no use trying to change the order of Nature. Yet that is what Rousseau tried to do. Through fear of superstition and in order better to base law upon conscience, he forbade his pupil to speak about God until he was twenty—then gave him over to theology:

Excellent method for perpetuating superstition. The notion of God, like that of substance and cause, is a primitive one, particularly suited to untrained intelligences, and must lose its sway over them in proportion as they rise to real knowledge. Metaphysics, by themselves, are only the mere surface of knowledge. Let children then speak just as they like, let them have their bellyful, of God, of the angels, of souls, of fairies, of griffins, of strong men, as well as of kings and queens; let their understanding sow its wild oats, a necessary condition for positive speculations at the age of virility. In the early years, conceptions of mysticism, so easily received by the imagination, serve as a supplement to, and a preparation for, reason; they are the first rung on the intellectual ladder, metaphysics are the second. Take care, however, lest these conceptions, turning into fanaticism, take the place in their hearts which belongs to Justice alone and to truth. When the time comes, they will fade away of themselves.[82]

A pedagogical conclusion which is perfectly in agreement with the philosophy of history.

The sentences are full of life, they are striking, the thought is noble—the doctrine is poor enough. Proudhon was scarcely original, save in his second thoughts, which we shall consider elsewhere. On the whole, he depended upon his reading, without adding anything essential to it. Why did he not remain more faithful to the soul of his method ? If he had, he would have steered clear of those evolutionist diagrams, the appearance of which is so deceptive. But, as often happens to self-taught men, he received his ideas already made when he thought he was being most individual. He had not shaken off the ideology prevalent in his century, an ideology which he had feverishly adopted.

At the outset, we can notice Michelet's influence. His Introduction to the *Histoire de la Revolution,* to which we have already called

[31]/. P., pp. 218-20. *G. P.,* p. 121.
[32]., just vol. ii, p. 401.

attention, had just appeared when Proudhon was getting his *Justice* ready. When Proudhon, likening the Revolution to Justice, says that it at once continues and contradicts Christianity, that it is at the same time Christianity's heir and opponent, he is echoing the great historian.[83] He did not, however, confine himself to these immediate considerations. Other authors made a deeper impression upon him. In his very way of laying down the problem Kant's influence is unmistakable. He himself recognized this. Mankind, he said, had been asking itself about God for centuries, without getting any definitive answer. It seemed to be "eternally placed between an insoluble question and an impossible negation ", when Kant took it into his head to attack the theological problem in quite a new manner. He no longer asked himself, as all the others had done before him: "What is God?" or: " Which is the true religion ? " but out of a question of fact he made a question *of form* and asked: " Whence comes it that I believe in God ? What causes this idea to be produced in my mind ? " Instead of taking the being of God itself as the object of his musings, he analysed faith in God. " From that moment the spell was broken. . . ."[34]

After Kant, but in a quite different manner, Proudhon undertook to do what he called " the biography " of the idea of God. His manner of seeking for it in the " history of the human mind " showed that it was rather Lessing's or Hegel's domination that he was under. He was also and more directly, as we shall see, under Auguste Comte's. When he placed Monotheism at the beginning of mental evolution, he was recalling theses which had nourished his young years, theses which were not only traditionalist, but traditional, which he strenuously defended in his *Celebration du dimanche*[35] and from which he but slowly broke away, partly under the influence of his friend Bergmann. But for the remainder he accepted the positivist plan.

It was not that he held Auguste Comte in great veneration. After having promised to visit him he could never make up his mind to do

" Michelet's Introduction appeared in 1855. Like Proudhon—and like Renouvier —Michelet made a contrast between the " Justice " of the Revolution and the " arbitrariness " of Christian " grace ". Lamennais, on the other hand, had shown only the continuity between Christianity and the Revolution, *Del'absolutisme et de la liberti* (vol. xi, pp. 166-7).

[34] *La Voix duPeuple,* November 5th, 1849 *(Con.,* pp. 57-9).

[35] *C. D.,* 1839 edition, note (suppressed in the 1841 edition): " Monotheism is the primitive form of religion, etc." (Auge-Laribe\ pp. 475-6). Comte, on the contrary, maintained that " man had everywhere begun with the crudest form of fetishism " *(Positive Philosophy,* vol. v, p. 17). But Proudhon later gave up his first position. In *Justice* he admitted that " the dogma of God's unity, considered as a principle of religion, is the product of an elimination which took place naturally and slowly among all the races, much less by means of philosophic reflection than by means of political revolutions in the States '' (vol. i, p. 444).

so, but on the day of his funeral, he said: " I can come today; in the past I could not have agreed with him."[86] Speaking of his *Systkme de politique positive,* the first two volumes of which he was reading during the summer of 1852, he wrote to Boutteville: " I do not understand how the author can aspire to any other originality than that of his intolerable style."[37] Yet, though Comte was unreadable, he read him. The *Creation de VOrdre™* and the *Philosophie de la Misere**[9] quote the *Cours de philosophie positive.* A note in *Justice* says that Comte's authority " should always be cited, even though his opinions are not strictly accurate ",[40] No doubt M. Daniel Hal6vy is exaggerating a little when he says that " Proudhon had a great regard for Auguste Comte " ;[41] his exaggeration becomes almost a misconception when he says that the *Creation de l'ordre* and *Justice* are " positivist in their inspiration ".[42] The latter work criticizes in particular Comte's claim to reject all metaphysics.[43] M. Raoul Labry seems to us to exaggerate in the opposite sense when he says that in all likelihood Proudhon owes nothing to Comte.[44] It is true that the famous law of the three stages, of which Comte was so proud, did not come out of his head fully equipped. To find out the successive phases through which

*• *Notes sur Auguste Comte par un de ses disciples,* pp. 122-3.

[37] August 29th, 1852. He added: " It is all pure Humanism, minus the grandiose metaphysics of the Germans, and reduced to the materialistic jejuneness of a d'Alembert and an Ampere. Here again I see scarcely anything which we did not already know, as well as, and often better than, M. Comte." To Darimon, September 3rd: " To read that brute Auguste Comte, the most pedantic of savants, the most shallow of all philosophers, the most insipid of Socialists, the most unbearable of all writers, revolts me; the Revolution must be rid of him " (vol. v, p. 7). There are also some critical observations in the Note-book for June, 1852. In 1853, Comte sent his *Politique positive* to Proudhon with his compliments, but, judging by certain passages in his letters, without any serious hopes of converting Proudhon to his views. Cf. Roger Mauduit, *Auguste Comte et la science iconomique,* p. 60.

[38] *C. O. H.,* note in second edition. Proudhon notes that what he calls " metaphysics " and " positive philosophy " amount to the same thing. He borrowed several things from Comte and once even calls him his '' master '' Cf. Guy-Grand, Introduction to *Justice,* p. 127.

"P.M., vol. i, p. 41. "Every science is developed in three successive stages, which may be called, by comparison with the three great stages in civilization, the religious stage,the sophistic stage andthescientificstage. (a)... (a) See, among others, Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive,* and P. J. Proudhon, *De la Creation de Vordre dans l'humaniti"*

[40] *Just.,* Social purpose of love (vol. iv, p. 318).

[41] Introduction to *Con.,* p. 75, note. Cf. Guy-Grand, *be. cit.,* p. 66.

[42] *Proudhon d'apres ses carnets inidits, loc. cit.,* p. 17. Occasionally, Proudhon calls himself a " positivist", but it is in a broad sense. *Just.,* Vol. iv, p. 462: " Since we all of us, spiritualists and positivists, have a common ground, which is morality.

[43] Comte " was apparently under the impression that you had only to say to metaphysics * begone* and to theology * go away• for both of them to bolt. . . . By dint of metaphysicizing unwittingly, he finished by theologizing without being any the wiser either."

[44] *Herzen et Proudhon,* pp. 22-3.

mankind passes, Proudhon took a point of viewless intellectualist than Comte's was at first: with him it was more a question of states of consciousness than of intelligence. Moreover, under the influence of the Hegelian philosophy, the preceding state seemed to him to be absorbed rather than eliminated by the following one. The symbolism, on which he insisted so much, not without a certain pedantry,[45] is not unindebted to Creuzer's big work, which he had read in its French adaptation by Guignault, or to Saint-Simon;[48] in its application to the relationships between Catholicism and Socialism it is a copying of Feuerbach. Besides, Proudhon did not need anybody to teach him to do justice to the religion of his childhood, and if Comte's thought seems here to coincide with his own, the coincidence is scarcely more than a verbal one.[47] The same can be said of the coincidence with Saint-Simonism.[48] As for the question of women, the very incomplete agreement of which he gives evidence, does not imply any influence.[49] The fact that he attempted, in *Justice,* a rehabilitation of polytheism—" the magnificent polytheism which had given such splendid wings to human personality and the recollection of which is associated, in men's memories, with the creation of the most wonderful poetry and of the most finished art "[50]—might be explained by his having read shortly before the *Politique positive*[51]—although in this passage he refers only to Renouvier. Comte's influence seems to be more important and

[45] He wrote, e.g., in *Justice,* with slightly naive confidence: " Supported by the inferences to be drawn from the system of symbols, we maintain that Religion has no worth in the sight of reason save as a poetical expression of society " (notes and explanations, vol. i, p. 335).

[46] To Clerc, March 4th, 1863. After citing the example of Christianity figuratively interpreting the Jewish history: " Philosophy, in turn, has done the same thing for polytheism, and latterly, the famous Saint-Simon, founder of a sect today so little worthy of him, has explained in the same way the feudal and military regime, as being, in the historic series, the precursor and the mythical manifestation of the economic and industrial regime " (vol. xii, p. 340). Proudhon's attention was no doubt more particularly drawn to Saint-Simon by the articles which Pierre Leroux published in 1850 on " the middle of the nineteenth century "; these articles, dedicated to Proudhon, were largely devoted to Saint-Simon. Cf. Berthod, *Idee de la Revolution,* p. 399, note.

[47] See, e.g., *Catichisme positiviste,* p. 31: " Humanity definitively takes the place of God, without ever forgetting his interim services." *Systime de politique positive,* vol. i, p. 87, etc.

[48] *Doctrine de Saint-Simon, Lettres sur la religion et la politique,* 1829: *' Humanity . . . is fair towards its past only when its denial is transformed into gratitude, when it is able to read in its traditions the eternal promise of its destiny " (p. ix). " Shall we one day cease to be ungrateful to Catholicism ? " (p. 11).

[49] He was glad to see that Auguste Comte " rejects with all his might the assumption that the sexes are equal, and that he does so on the grounds of woman's very *excellence,* whose *dignity* demands subordination ", *Just.,* Social purpose of love (vol. iv, p. 318).

[50] . just ,vol. i, p. 445.

[51] *Politique positive,* vol. iv, pp. 22-3; *Discours sur l'esprit positif,* p. 73. *Cours de philosophie positive,* vol. v, pp. 65-77,119, etc.

more certain in what concerns the capital part attributed, on various counts, to society. Proudhon wrote in *Justice*: " no social conscience, no individual conscience ". Certainly, he added, " such is the thought of the psalmist"; but no doubt the new " sociology " helped him to work out that thought.[52] Let it be noted, however, that he reproaches Comte with not being sufficiently distrustful of " the collective absolute ", and with being too neglectful of " individual liberty ",[53] His manner of speaking of Mankind owes as much to Comte as to Feuerbach, though not taken completely from either of them. No doubt he also owes to Comte his reaction against " Nominalism " which sees nothing but individual reality, whereas the genuine " Realism " which is characteristic, he says, of the adult mind, recognizes the primordial reality of higher organisms, the first of which is society itself.[54]

Feuerbach's philosophy, which Proudhon, to Grun's admiration, had so rapidly assimilated, is here perhaps a more determining factor than Comte's. " Notice," wrote Herzen on September 1st, 1848, " with what terror Proudhon is heard here (in France), because he is saying openly and boldly what Feuerbach said a few years previously."[65] Is it not indeed sheer Feuerbach that we find in these sentences taken from an article in the *Voix du Peuple*, a paper of which the editorship was, as a matter of fact, in the hands of Herzen conjointly with Proudhon ; " What we seek and what we see in God, as Malebranche said, is not at all that being, or, to speak more accurately, that chimerical entity, which our imagination unceasingly magnifies. . . .; it is our own ideal, the pure essence of Humanity. . . . The human soul sees itself (first of all) outside itself . . .; it is this inverted image which is called God."[56]

Proudhon no doubt showed himself to be a disciple of Feuerbach and Comte when he headed a host of plans with that " humanitarian

[52] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 366; cf. pp. 365-8, etc.
[52] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 176.
[54] *Porn.*, pp. 118-19. Comte's influence is discernible even in Proudhon's language, thus, when he speaks in *Just.*, (vol. iv, p. 334), of "My amnesty to 'exhausted* Christianity."
[55] *Lettres de France et d'Italie.* Quoted by Raoul Labry, *Alexandre Ivanivitch Herzen*, p. 335. Cf. Proudhon, *Revolution Sociale*, p. 143: " The Christian legend is no longer anything but the vision of humanity, as has been shown in turn by Hegel, Strauss and last of all Feuerbach, after Kant and Lessing." *Justice*, vol. I, p. 199.
[56] *Voix du Peuple*, November 5th, 1849 *(Con.*, p. 59). *Just.*, vol. ii, p. 351: " Adoration of the human soul, which mistaking itself for Another, calls itself, adores itself like Milton's Eve, without knowing itself." Vol. i, p. 234: " God, philosophy finally says, is . . . from the point of view of Humanity, a fantastic representation of the human soul elevated to an infinite degree."

theology " which was to take the place of the " old Catholicism " ;[57] when he said " I solemnly affirm my belief in Humanity instead of in the supreme Being, that is the asseveration around which I revolve, and which must be the first and unshakeable article of my *Credo*. . . . All my studies are turned in that direction " ;[58] when he declared that " God is both, on the one hand, human nature raised to infinity and idealized, and, on the other, the concept, in no wise absurd though unprovable, of a cosmic conscience, as you might say, of a universal Humanity".[59] He seems even to go further along their own path than the two who inspired him when he wants " for good and all" to substitute for the traditional God " humanity in flesh and bone, in thought and action, in organism and in psychism ".[60] Still we must not take him too literally. The complementary texts must not be forgotten. He had no intention of instituting a cult of a real, empiric humanity, nor even of calling for the adoration of a humanity yet to come, an ideal humanity. The distinction made by Feuerbach between the individual and the species is not sufficient to account for his thought here, still less are the precise details on the composition of the " Great Being " given by Auguste Comte, and one may rest assured that the humanitarian mysticism which Alfred Loisy more recently drew from a symbolical interpretation of the Christian dogma would have met with no sympathy from him either. For him fundamentally, the only thing which could rightfully replace God, was conscience, from a subjective point of view, and Justice, from an objective point of view. It was in order to prepare for the reign of Justice that Nature first of all created religion.[61] Now he places humanity and justice,[62] society and justice,[63] in juxtaposition; now he appears simply to identify them;[64] but when he is more detailed in his explanations, it can be seen, without the

[57] To Edmond, August 28th, 1851 (vol. iv, p. 92).

[53] To Tissot, December 22nd, 1853 (vol. v, p. 299),

[59] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 440. Vol. ii, p. 350: " This source of all good and all holiness which the religious soul calls its Lord, its Christ, its Father, is itself which it contemplates in the ideal of its own power and beauty. . . . God is the eternal power of humanity."

[59] To Tissot, December 22nd, 1853 (vol. v, p. 299).

[61] *Just.*: " The use of the moral sense, of the judicial function, is slow in establishing itself in humanity. Who does not see that it is precisely in order to make up for this slowness that Nature creates in us that other quite ideal conscience . . . divine respect, religion ? " Vol. iv, p. 401: " Religion, philosophically interpreted, symbolizes conscience, its manifestations and its laws. It is the poetry of Justice. . . . "

[62] *Just.*, preliminary treatise, 3: "The Revolution affirms its belief in Justice; it believes in humanity " (vol. i, pp. 268-9). Vol. iv, p. 440: " A representation of Justice, in other words, of respect for Humanity."

[63] *G. P.*, p. 121: ** Religion—which we today consider as the symbol or primitive form of society and justice." .

•* *Just.*, preliminary treatise, 5: " What is Justice ?—The essence of humanity " (vol. i, p. 280). Vol. iv, p. 353: " Justice, in a word, is Humanity."

slightest possible doubt, that it is Justice which prevails in his thought, as we have already seen it prevailed in his heart. As far as Humanity is concerned, he declined to see in it an " adorable essence ";•* he did not, in the long run, wish to make it the object of a cult, but, and this is something quite different, the subject of a culture:

What Humanity seeks under the name of God in religion is its own constitution, its own self; nevertheless, as, according to the theological dogma, God is infinite in all his attributes, perfect, immutable, absolute, and Humanity, on the contrary, is perfectible, progressive, mobile and changing, the latter term can never be equivalent to the former. They remain therefore inevitably antithetical, one being always the inverted expression of the other. The consequence of this antithesis or anti-theism, as I have called it, is the abolition of all religion or adoration, idolatry, pneumatolatry, christolatry, anthropolatry—since, on the one hand, the idea of God, opposed to the ideas of movement, group, series, progress, does not represent any possible reality, while, on the other, Humanity, essentially perfectible, never perfect, continually remaining below the level of its own idea, remains consequently always below the level of adoration, all of which I have summed up in this formula both positive and negative, and perfectly clear in our language: the replacing of the cult of the alleged supreme Being by the culture of humanity.[66]

This text dates from 1852. It is an echo of those in the *Misere*. Already in 1845, when Grun had just revealed Feuerbach to him, Proudhon was jotting down similar reflections in his note-book. Agreeing too much, alas ! with the German philosopher in his negations, he yet refused to allow himself to be shut in by the horizon which the latter proposed for him; he dubbed his doctrine a " perpetual logomachy ", reproached him with mistaking " the infinite for the indefinite " and with attributing to the ego " the reality which is outside it ". True to his fighting nature, he almost immediately turned against the man he had seemed to be following for a while: " While Humanity denies God, I deny Humanity." He finally ended up with " Humanism is a false religion ",[67] In *Misire* he made this concession to Feuerbach, that so long as he adored God, man was mystified; but it is conceded only to bring in this point against him, that now that humanity adores

•• ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 177.**

•• ***P.* P., 1st Letter (1851), VJ (*Works,* vol. xx, p. 47).**

•* **Note-books of 1845 (Halevy, *he. cit.,* pp. 22, 24). *A fortiori,* he rejected Frederick Feuerbach's Humanism, which Everbeck was lauding to him. Transcribing his two sentences, " Human nature is sacred, outside of man no salvation ", he commented," Radically false. Human nature is *tainted,* not *sacred;* but it *sanctifies itself,* in other words, it progresses. Salvation is not in man, and no mortal wil reach it " *{Ibid.,* p. 18).**

itself, humanity mystifies itself.[68] He said it again when he wrote *Justice.* Going further than Feuerbach and contradicting him afresh while making use of Feuerbach's terms, he wrote: " Man, incapable in the early days of unravelling in himself that Justice of which he had a conscious feeling, is led by the constitution of his understanding to seek a subject in which it dwells. . . . " Notice those last words. If Proudhon here rids himself of a subject of which Justice would be but an attribute, it is not only, like Feuerbach, so that he may take divinity away from what he believes to be the figure of the traditional God: but that he may also take it from man. For his part, " the God-Humanity is in no way a God ".[69] Humanity must not continue to adore a being constituted outside itself, neither does he want it to adore itself, in any way or condition whatsoever. It has no right to attribute Justice to itself either. If the priest in the ancient cults was unable to find the key to the adoration which rose spontaneously from his heart, neither have the new philosophers been more successful in finding it. In reality, " it is a perpetual hymn which it sings to itself " not to honour its alleged divinity, but " to urge itself to think, love, speak and act rightly, the *rhapsody,* ever new, of its struggles, its miseries and its triumphs, the beating of wings which rise towards the sublime heights of *Justice* ".[70]

In pages such as these, in which one strongly feels, despite the peremptory tone, that thought is groping its way rather than finding satisfaction, we should not be afraid to recognize an endeavour to purify the idea of God, rather than to deny it in the old style or to absorb it after the new fashion. Proudhon is not content to dispense with a supreme value, outside the vissicitudes of time, at once the source and the pole of all being as it is of all activity. He feels that thought, like morals, needs an eternal climate. But he is not less strongly aware of one of the essential problems which result, and which at all times have forced themselves upon the mind. Must we not exclude from that which forms the ultimate object of man's thought, of his aspirations and his worship, all duality, all distinctions between form and content ? Do we not in fact say that in God no real dissociation between nature and subject, between essence and being, or again between being and having can be admitted ? The First Principle

•• *P. M.,* vol. i, p. 41, etc.

••Note-books, April 22nd, 1852.

[70] *Just.,* vol. ii, p. 350. It does not therefore appear to me to be quite accurate to say with M. Daniel Halevy, *he. c//.,* p. 26: " Ten years earlier, writing his book on *Justice,* Proudhon . . . maintained to the very letter Feuerbach's thesis and developed his controversial line. In 1845, his attitude is quite different. It is a strange sight, in fighting Feuerbach he is fighting himself in advance."

is not a just being, he is Justice itself! God is *Ipsum suum esse.* God is *Esse subsistens.* But, having no intuition of this divine simplicity, our weakness obliges us to envisage it always along two lines which cannot come together again save in infinity. On the one hand, there is the tendency to posit a reality, an individual nature, with the danger of ending in anthropomorphism, in materialism, in idolatry; on the other, the tendency to conceive an ideal, a pure form, with the corresponding danger of ending in unreality, in rationalism, in abstraction.[71] Proudhon allowed himself to be carried away by the second tendency. He did not escape the dilemma. Was it solely philosophic incompetence? Those who would come too hastily to a decision may have stopped short of the region wherein are propounded the most human problems which the intelligence has to debate. The speculative solutions provided by the threefold Dionysian way or the Thomist analogy do not themselves bring any enduring term to the oscillations of thought; and through our faith we know that, apart from the adoration of the Word made flesh, though man is able to rise to an affirmation of the true God, it is practically impossible for him, as universal history bears out only too well, to remain at that level without aberrations of all kinds.

Later on we shall again come across the Proudhonian divinity, which places its supporter very far away from both the " Humanists " and the " Positivists ". We shall also see that Proudhon did not take his stand in an abstract cult of Justice, as in a perfect and definitive religion. Misgivings never left him alone. He had never admitted that religion was a pure illusion or an invention of men, " the product of erroneous notions ". He had always recognized its object as being real, so that Teligion was not only " the most ancient, the most universal of all facts ", but also, "in its principle, the most indestructible of our race".[72] That did not, however, prevent him, in an early period of acute Scientism, from thinking that man was "destined to live without religion ", once he had found in " pure science ", for which there are no mysteries, the truths of which religion offered him but a symbol: *' sooner or later " science would resolve all the problems.[73] Then in this symbol itself, religious teaching, he thought he recognized above

[71] The problem recurs, for instance, among the Buddhists of the Mahayana, who tried to solve it by their notion of Dharmakaya, always an elusive notion, insisting now on the Kaya (body, substance, reality, individual being), now on the Dharma (pure essence of the Law or the Word).

[72] " *C. O. H.,* p. 241. To abte X., January 22nd, 1855 (vol. vi, p. 114). *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 344: " religion is an ideal conscience, created in us by Nature. . . . "

[73] *CO. H.,* pp. 63, 73 and 126. *Le Peuple,* September 2nd, 1848 *(Con.,* pp. 396-7). To Bergmann, December 26th, 1842 (vol. ii, p. 65). Cf. *supra,* p.230, **note** 12.

all-the symbol of Justice, the idea of which no science was capable of determining.[74] Later, he came more and more to understand that though this sense itself of Justice took precedence over the " mystical sense ", it could never succeed in completely eliminating it.[76] Is it not possible that from that time onwards, despite the denials to which he never harked back, he had at least a suspicion that the one—Justice—is in no way destined to kill the other—Mystery—but that, on the contrary, it draws from it, with all its power of self-affirmation, its right to our adoration.

[74] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 345: " This religiosity . . . is nothing other, at bottom, than the primary, ideal, objective and symbolic form of Justice, a form which must diminish and become atrophied by the progress of that Justice for which it stands "; pp. 543-4, etc.

[75] To Charles Morard, December 31st, 1863 (vol. xiii, pp. 212-13). Cf. *infra*, Part Six.

CHAPTER XII

CONSCIENCE

WHAT is true from the point of view of thought is also true from the point of view of action. This is where Proudhon voices the idea he had most at heart. This is where Proudhon, touching upon the most profound truths, made his most grievous mistake. Broaching the moral question, he informs us that it is " the most momentous and the most sublime of all questions ",[1] From what has been said already we can guess the kind of solution to expect from him: it consists in excluding—at least to all appearances, in a rebellious moment—everything that is supernatural and everything that is transcendental. Yet, though he expressly connects " practical reason " with what he calls "the social Essence, the collective being which contains and permeates us ", his moral code is very far from being merely a sociology. It is something very different from a history or science of morals. According to him, society, by its influence and its revelations, intervenes to " complete the constitution of our soul ",[2] but he sees this soul inside itself, he sees it as being active and autonomous, and he places in it, in conscience itself, the whole principle of the moral life.

It is impossible to deduce morality from hygiene, for instance, or from economics; it is equally impossible to deduce it from metaphysics or from theodicy.[3] Considered primarily in its form, it is an irreducible category: neither God nor any revelation whatsoever can explain it. " Even if Revelation was proved, it would still be like a master's instruction to his disciple, useful only if the soul possessed within itself the faculty of recognizing the law and appropriating it: which radically and irrevocably excludes the transcendental hypothesis."[4] No commandment, whatever its provenance or the form in which it is manifested, is capable of engendering conscience, without which there can be no morality. As for the content of that morality, which is summed up in the ideal of Justice, that jalso is purely immanent. There are even two ways in which it is immanent, first of all, in the sense that it can neither be imposed nor determined from outside, then in the sense that sanctions cannot be applied to it from

[1] *Just.*, vol. iv[f] p. 341.
* To Cournot, 1851.
• To Cournot, 1851.
* *Just.*, vol. i, p. 325,

outside either. Man, who is his own legislator, also finds within himself the laws for his own sanctions. This is demanded by human dignity. This last " is absolute, such is its nature. It may bow before the majesty of a supreme Being, but only on the explicit condition that that being deign to give it an account of things."[5]

That is " the theory of immanence "[6], so called after the Germans, because, according to this theory, everything begins and is completed inwardly. There is no law for man other than " the one recognized by his reason and his conscience"; no penalty or sanction other than " the soul's joy or its remorse ".[7] This immanence is perfect, not only because it excludes all alien intrusion, but also because the various elements which integrate the moral life interpenetrate one another in the depth of the conscience, to such an extent that they become identical. " Here," indeed, " the law and its subject appear to be identical; nay more, the seal of the law, or the sign which authenticates it, is likewise identical with the law; the penalty or the reward is also identical:" " the sanctions of Justice are identical with Justice itself ", being " nothing other than the stir of conscience, which is pleased when we do well, and sad and ailing when we incur guilt *\[8]

"Thence it follows that conscience, such as it is given to us by Nature, is complete and healthy; everything that happens within it comes from itself; it suffices unto itself." Any other explanation is anti-philosophic and immoral. What need is there, for instance, " after recognizing an inner sanction, to talk of an outward one, to be administered by God, the Church or society" ?[9] That, however, is what Kant did; but " in taking God for a buttress of Justice, by that very fact he annihilates Justice". " The intervention of an external authority, be it natural or supernatural, in the order of Justice, is destructive of Justice. In other words, Justice asserts itself and defends itself all alone, or else it does not exist."[10] Moreover, God is excluded from it as an authority or as a judge, and he is just as much excluded from it as the author of all good by the action of his grace: " The principle of our virtue is within us, only waiting to be developed by

[8] *Just.*, vol. i, p. 366.

• ***Just.*, vol. iv, p. 354; vol. i, p. 461, etc.**

[7] ***Just.*, vol. iv, p. 364; and p. 354: " Man, when delighted by virtue or tormented by sin, rejoices or suffers, not *qua* a bondsman of the law, awaiting a punishment or a reward from his sovereign, as so many moralists give us to understand; he suffers, he is pained *qua* sovereign, *qua* legislator.****

• ***Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 351, 363, 365.**

• ***Just.*, \ol iv, p. 363.**

[10] ***Just.*, vol. i, p. 449; p. 140, etc.**

the help of its two powerful aids, work and study." Conscience does not need a " doctor " any more than it needs some one to reveal things to it. " Nay, more, this heavenly aid, upon which it is supposed to rely, can be only an obstacle to its dignity, a shackle and an impediment." That is why the " priestly virtue " cannot be in every way approved: no doubt " wherever it appears, (it) is admirable; it verges on the miraculous; but, like any art which slavishly pursues an ideal, there is nothing underlying it". A priest is like an artist enslaved to an ideal placed outside himself in the absolute; between the former " whose conscience finds its strength only in God " and the latter " whose genius is nourished on vague ideals of form, on idols, the analogy is complete; both will perish and fade away in the same manner."[11]

Now what do we see in man's history? Everywhere, hitherto, religion has come before justice. Everywhere respect for the gods has taken the place of respect for man. Everywhere revelation and transcendency have placed "morality below faith";[12] they have befogged conscience, taken from it its inner self, its autonomy in other words, its very existence. " In the Revelation system " which is the exact antithesis of the " immanence theory " " knowledge of Justice and of morals is founded of necessity, *a priori*, on the word of God, explained and commented upon by the priesthood. It does not wait for conscience to give its adhesion, nor for confirmation by experience. . . ."[13] The " mysticism " of this system supposes always an " Invisible one " who *' stands behind conscience " and prompts it in its rights and duties. " The imagination of the early races made " this Invisible one " first of all into an external object, an animal, the sun, or the sky, the author and protector of the law, adored under the name of God ",[14] Elaborating these spontaneous views, but also improving upon them, Christianity drew from this concept of an " Invisible being " " all the consequences with which it was fraught". It reinforced them by its teaching about sin, the fruit of an " unfortunate period ", an " abominable superstition " which declares mankind to be fallen from birth. Thus in getting to " the depths of the religious idea "[15] it goes " so far as to deny the possibility of human

[11] ***P. A.*, (1865), pp. 267-8.**
[" ***Just.*, Notes, vol. ii, p. 297.**
[11] ***Just.*, vol. i, p. 326.**
[14] **Just., vol. i, pp. 350-1.**
[18] **Cf. *Just.*, vol. i, p. 460, for the dogma of the Fall: " Religion, well studied, necessarily implies it. Adoration is a confession. Whichever way you look at it, religion presupposes this idea, that man is incapable by himself of doing good; that his existence on earth is not in relation with his destiny; that alone he is not self-sufficient; that his being is impaired, etc."**

virtuality ", " so far as to despair of Justice, a despair which, under the pretext of bringing us back to God, succeeds in ruining our morality ". That is the meaning behind its denial of progress—which some apologists vainly herald, seeking to reconcile it with their faith—for the doctrine of progress is nothing but a belief " in the justification of mankind by mankind itself", whereas the dogma of the original fall is the " systematic humiliation "[ie] of mankind. This religious " extrinsicity " still bars the way to the advent of morality at present. " In spite of our free-thinking ways, or rather as a punishment for them ", " God is the great *Perhaps* on whom . . . we continue to base all our policing, for, really, I should be ashamed to call it Justice."

Religion involves a threefold " extrinsicity " and a threefold source of corruption—for a totally external principle is given at the same time as revealing what is good, as being its author and its guarantor. A system such as that, " whatever its God may be, whatever its dogma ", is not only " a mythology of thought", it destroys all thought by dividing the conscience. For the positive notion of Justice, it substitutes " a surreptitious and unwarranted notion ".[17] Duplicity of conscience: in other words, destruction of the conscience, that is the fatal danger for every Church, for every religion. " O vanity of mysticism, folly of transcendency !" Religion itself cannot subsist indefinitely on the ruins of the conscience and of Justice. You can see it on the point of fading away itself. Even if the exigencies of morality do not transform it, it is at least being eaten away by criticism. Then atheism appears, " It is no longer the scientific atheism which consists in eliminating every consideration of a supernatural order from the conscience, in the interests of truth and Justice, but the atheism which is the father of crime, an atheism peculiar to those who have been taught that religion consisted entirely in morality, and who, having worn out their faith, turn without

[u] *Just.,* vol, i, pp. 327, 458; vol. iii, pp. 246, 596, etc. There again Proudhon gives way to his " mtegrist" tendency, which exaggerates and falsifies the doctrine in order better to condemn it (a tendency which he shares with Renan and many other adversaries of the Christian faith). For him, Jansenism " is true Christianity" (Notes, vol, iii, p. 457); the Church, in disowning it " evidently contradicted herself[M]; she let logic give way to certain considerations of policy and practical morals; after being thus unfaithful to her own mind (just as after the condemnation of Quietism), •* she is no longer the Church of Christ the Redeemer, she is the unfrocked sponsor of the Revolution": *Just.,* vol. iii, pp. 437, 459. Elsewhere he recognizes that [M] the revival of morals in the converted world was due precisely to the deep sense of humiliation and bitter repentance aroused in souls by the theory of original sin " *(Just.,* vol. i, fcp. 459-60).

[17] *Just.,* vol. ii, p. 362.

hesitation from contempt for their idols to contempt for mankind "[18]

A similar danger, already only too obviously a reality in our civilization, dictates our line of conduct. To stop the effect we must get back to the cause. Now, " religion and morality, paired as sisters by common consent of all races, are heterogeneous and incompatible "; " the transcendent Being, conceived and adored as the author and mainstay of Justice, becomes, in practice, an obstacle to Justice ". What is imperative then at present is a " reaction of the moral sense against the religious sentiment".[19] That means therefore, in plain words, a fight against the Church:

> . . . If then, upon examination, the belief offered to me as the indispensable pledge of Justice compromised it, instead of assuring it; if, as must necessarily follow, the Church, the organ of religious thought, was at the same time the medium of our temptation . . .; then, without tolerating the false belief any longer, I should have a right and a duty to protest against a disloyal security, to take up the cudgels on behalf of Justice against the Church and against God himself.[20]

The Church's God was undoubtedly an immense advance upon the divinities of antiquity. He was in fact " the living and eternal image . . . of good and of moral beauty ". Following in the wake of the cults with no morality, such as were the majority of the pagan religions, Christianity, for which Israel prepared the way, came and established a moral religion: " it purified God, placing in him the seat of Justice "; in the Bible it gave men an admirable " poetry of Justice " and allowed this same Justice to grow up " under religion's wing ". Its mission, however, was not of itself to establish Justice, but merely " to prepare the soil in which it was to germinate ".[21] A final stage remained through which it had to pass, and this now was becoming a most pressing matter, all the more so since the traditional God of Christianity

[18] ***Just.*, vol. iv, p. 436. Vol. ii, p. 363; cf. p. 365: " The priest who believes in virtue on account of religion may always, so long as he believes, become a citizen and a just man; the priest whom impiety has made immoral is beneath punishment; the only thing to do with him is to smother him in a dung-heap."**

" *Just.*, vol. i, p. 277. /. *P.*, p. 130.

****Just.*, vol. i, p. 276 *(Philosophic Populaire).* " Once it is recognized that the religious principle, given ostensibly to be a support and safeguard for human virtue, is the very principle of human dissoluteness, it follows that wherever you find the centre of the cult there also you find the centre of immorality! '* Cf. vol. iii, p. 302.**

[21] ***Just.*, vol. iv, p. 365. Vol. i, p. 397. Notes, vol. iii, 311: Christianity made religion " both more rational and more moral; it was therefore positively a progress *'. Vol. i, p. 460: it established in the world " a notion of a higher justice ".**

was.being more undermined by criticism than ever: we have to admit that Justice alone is the true God. That then is the completion of the " religious-juridical evolution" to which history bears witness and which has been worked out by mankind's conscience in its efforts to find itself: " with Justice taking nothing further from faith and worship, religion will pass completely into the Law".[22] Morality will be " positively freed from all mystical alloy ",[23] Then only will human dignity be fully assured. A wrench is inevitable to bring it about. Disregarding " his innate and eternal beliefs, his aspiration towards God and the Eternal one ", man " is so constituted in his reason and his conscience that, if he takes himself seriously, he is bound to give up faith". Once again here Proudhon's pen traces the words which summed up his thought when dealing merely with social problems: " God is Evil *\[M]

Proudhon is aware of his audacity. If, however, he gives way to " blasphemy ", in other words, to " a denial of the divine right", he insists upon making it clear that his atheism here again is only " systematic ". The Revolution does not deny " the hypothesis of God " to establish human morality any more than it does to assure social progress; it is content to put it aside. Its interpreter does the same. He does not intend to maintain that God is " evil in himself", but, as we have seen, he claims to have established " that his intervention in human affairs is baneful on account of the consequences, the abuses, the superstitions and the laxity which it brings in its train ",[25] Mankind does not really reach the adult stage until it " seeks the rules . . . of morality, for the sake alone of Justice and of virtue, and without any theological consideration '\[28] In declaring this, is one doing aught else but " apply the precepts of the purest orthodoxy " ? As a matter of fact, are we not falling in with " the doctrine of the saints " who " had to prefer damnation to sin, if, to suppose the impossible, God laid such a choice upon us ". " But, what is merely a fiction of casuistry for theology, has become for the Revolution an actual truth." Immanence and gratuitousness are but one. The moment then has come for us to rally round "pure love". Formerly, in

" /. *P.*, pp. 130-1. Cf. *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 540: " The religious era, whose coming end is announced by so many signs. . . . The era of Justice, into which we are entering. . . . "

[23] *Just.*, vol. i, p. 412.

[24] *Jisus* (1896), p. 93 (In referring to Mgr. Parisis' booklet).

[25] *Just.*, vol. i, pp. 411-12; vol. iv, p. 436. Cf. 7th treatise, chapter i: " Shall we not be able, at length, to place outside of moral philosophy all the assumptions about another life, heavenly essences and the great master of destinies, and then, that elimination over, look to what concerns us ? " (vol. iii, p. 165).

[26] *Just.*, vol. i, p. 277; cf. 393 vol. iii. p. 299.

Fenelon, it was to be condemned because it stood for the annihilation of man and of man's virtue in God's sight. Now it is perfection itself because it denotes the gratuitous character of the moral act and its perfect inwardness. We have to choose between Justice and the quest of bliss, in other words, in the final reckoning, between Justice and God. In choosing the former we imitate the saints who gave up the joys of heaven out of pure love.[87]

Proudhon had no intention of defending an unpublished thesis. Looking round for an ancestry for himself, he called in Montesquieu, Mably and Grotius. He even went as far back as Cicero.[28] It is noteworthy that he speaks in almost the same way as Fichte: " The ancient religion," says the latter in the third of his famous *Addresses to the German People,* " used God only as a means of transporting our egoism into other worlds after the death of our body, and of strengthening it here below by fears and hopes of that future life. The official slave of egoism, a religion such as that must disappear with the days that have already passed away."[29] What is more peculiar to our philosopher is his earnest endeavour to establish a bond between the immanence of the moral law and the gratuitous nature of Justice. Also peculiar to him is the way he approaches the moral problem and resolves it by beginning with the social demands;[30] but what is especially his own is his passionate eloquence. Though many others in his century, like him and previously to him, had taken up an attitude of revolt, yet his eloquence makes him the outstanding symbol of the modern revolt against God. " I was always disobedient,"[31] he once wrote. An instinct of revolt mingles with his scruples of moral rectitude, spoiling his finest gifts. We have already seen the apostrophes he addressed to Satan. What heat he shows when he exclaims that "man's glory on earth is to be sufficient unto himself", that man possesses within himself " all the conditions of virtue and happiness ", and that man's first law is not to bow down " before any divinity whether of heaven, of earth or of hell" ![32] What frenzy he puts into

[27] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 544.**
[28] ***Just.*, vol. i, pp. 461-4.**
[29] ***Addresses to the German People, 3rd Address* (Philippe's French translation, P. 72). Cf. *2nd Address*, pp. 56-7.**
[29] **Thus, in *Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 462, 466-7, on immortality and sanctions. " Let nobody then talk to me any more about the sanction of an after life: that is preaching cowardice and driving to demoralization. . . . To claim, as a reparation for the anomalies of the present life, justification and blessedness in the next, is to combine hypocrisy with iniquity."**
[31] ***Porn.*, p. 330, note (letter to Mme. Jeanny d'Hericourt).**
[32] ***Just., vol* i, p. 441.**

the affirmation of his ego! In banishing God, he says, " man loses something, that is beyond question; he loses immensely; he loses his immortal hopes; he loses that intercourse with infinity which so fully satisfies his pride and his intimate sense; he sacrifices his own eternity so that for a moment he may be something, and may be able to affirm his own self; he willingly places himself in the shade, *in tenebris et in umbra mortis*, between the first cause which he renounces and the final cause which he will never attain; all this, in order that during a life with no past and no future, a life which runs away with the rapidity of lightning, he may be able to say, * I! "'

And Proudhon haughtily adds: " My conscience is mine, my justice is mine, and my freedom is a sovereign freedom. Let me die for eternity, but at least let me be a man while the sun once revolves ! "[33]

We must not, however, let this pride keep us from seeing the serious side of his thought, nor the loudness of his provocative sentences keep us from listening to some of his grievances. We should be equally wrong in making too much capital out of his lack of experience. Proudhon, we must repeat, was not a professional philosopher. For all that he was perhaps the one who most vigorously laid down the problem which commands the attention of all philosophers and which believers cannot evade: the problem of immanence. He did not lay it down in purely metaphysical terms nor did he reduce it to a problem of intellectual criticism, but he placed it in the centre of conscience so that it should be the essential subject for dispute between the " Revolution" and the " Church ", and that the latter might be judged in the name of the former:

A religion's hour has come when a troubled conscience puts to itself the question, not whether that religion is true: doubts about dogma are not sufficient for the downfall of a religion;—nor whether it needs to be reformed: reforms in matters of faith are proof of religious vitality;—but, whether that religion, so long reputed to be the protector and the mainstay of morals, is equal to its task, or what I might put in other words, whether it really has a moral code.[34]

That objection is the only one, it seems to him, which is worth anything. It is the only one which gets to the bottom of things. So far as the remainder of the field of controversy is concerned, he willingly acknowledges that the Church is right and her opponents wrong. Those who without giving God up flatter themselves that they can

33 Jesus **(1896), pp. 93-4.**

34 ***Just.*****, vol. i, p. 393. And p. 250: " Which is in future to be the instrument of virtue for the nations, Revolution or Religion? "**

replace or do without him, reminded him of pretentious children. He himself had no desire to make the same mistake:

I never would have contested the Churches authority, if, like so many others who set themselves up as her rivals, I admitted that Justice needs a supernatural guarantee. I would not have the strange presumption, starting with the hypothesis that the idea of God is indispensable for morality, to think that I am more capable than the Church, more capable than mankind, which has worked at it for more than sixty centuries, of deducing such an idea in theory and putting it into practice. I would have bowed before so old a faith, the fruit of the most learned and longest-lasting elaboration ever put forth by the human mind; I would not have admitted for a single moment that insoluble difficulties in the order of knowledge had the slightest value when it was a question of my faith; I would have thought that it was precisely that which made the mystery of my religion, and because I had happened to tease apart a few strands of metaphysics I should not have thought I was a man to make revelations. Above all I should have been afraid of disturbing in others, by my rash attacks, a guarantee which I myself had proclaimed as being necessary. . . .[35]

He next pays homage to the Church; he scoffs at her " inept rivals "; he admires her might in the way she lasts when confronted with all the powers of politics, philosophy and science; he exalts the religion by which she keeps her sway over souls. He always comes back, however, to his essential objection, the one which forms the substance of his great work and which dominates his thought and to which he gives himself up unreservedly. If he does happen to formulate it with a kind of frenzy, there is always, nevertheless, a certain nobility about it. Listen to what he has to tell us, in solemn terms, at the end of an address with which the first treatise on *Justice* opens:

He who would seek a sacrilegious pastime in this book may close it. I am seeking the laws of what is just, good and true: it is for that reason alone that I take the liberty of questioning religion.

Religion ! it belongs to humanity, it is the fruit of its womb. To whom should it be despicable? Let us honour in every religious faith, in every Church, whether recognized by the State or not, let us honour even in the God which it adores, conscience; let us maintain charity and peace with the persons to whom that faith is dear. It is our duty, and I shall not fail in it. But once public piety has been satisfied, the system of theology falls within the range of my criticism: the State law gives it over to me.

[35] ***Just.*, vol. i, p. 275. Cf. p. 276: The Church " will last so long as she is not attacked in her strong point, so long as the Revolution, lifting the issue on to a higher plane, has not rid Justice of this divine sanction which lames it and of which the Church is the supreme representative ".**

Let each one read what is written here just as it was written, with the calmness called for by truth. Our mortal life is at stake, our eternal salvation, as the Church puts it: and never was a more lofty question raised among men.[36]

No, the dispute is not a paltry one. Proudhon did not go astray, as so many others have done, in contests wanting in importance. Before we go any further, however, let us say here and now that the Church does not recognize her teaching in the theses against which Proudhon waged war. " The transcendental hypothesis " which he " radically and definitely excluded ", is not that of Catholic theology. The latter does not at all, as he believed, make " the claim to deduce from a direct communication with its ideal Founder . . . the precepts of morality and right ",[37] It has no " hatred for Nature ",[38] It does not teach that rights and duties are " things revealed " in the sense in which he explains the phrase, and far from claiming them as an " integral part" of its own preserves, it is opposed to any doctrine which does not first of all ground them in reason. It does not show fright—quite the contrary—at the idea that consideration should be shown to human dignity " even in the person of criminals ", and, if there is indeed a " theory of divine right " which denies to man " all justice, all fitting dignity ", that theory is contested not less by Catholic theology than by Proudhon, though the arguments and the spirit may be different.[39] When Proudhon tells us: " In the last analysis man recognizes no other law than that admitted by his reason and his conscience; all obedience on his part, based on other considerations, is a beginning of immorality ", we are at one with him: no " obligatory laws " for man without "a kind of secret commandment from himself to himself".[40] We likewise admit, as he does, " that innateness of soul", which is what he calls Justice, and in which we recognize a reflection of God. If we own that man is a dependent being, it is not that we would deny to him an inwardness of conscience: divine sovereignty is no substitute for it, it is the basis of it. However they explain it, all orthodox systems admit a natural, human order, prior to all supernatural revelation; and they see this revelation not so much as adding to the order, but rather as amplifying it.

[36] .just , vol. i. pp. 291-3.
[37] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 548.
[38] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 549.
[39] , J.P., pp. 153,233.
[40] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 350; vol. iii, pp. 440-2; vol. i, p. 325. We can also give a very acceptable meaning to what he says on this last page: " Even if Revelation was proved, it would still be like a master's instruction to his disciple, useful only if the soul possessed within itself the faculty of recognizing the law and appropriating it."

As soon as Proudhon's great work appeared, Abbe Lenoir pointed all this out to him. He told him that he too professed " the immanence in human reason of a whole lot of moral truths and others directly perceived, which did not have to await the idea of God in order to be the rule of our judgements and our morals ". Proudhon, however, fancied that this was " an enormous concession " which the priest was making to him after having been shaken in mind by reading *Justice.*[1] He thought, quite wrongly, that " theological speculation " deduced the whole of morality, " in theory and in practice, from the knowledge of God and of his attributes ", and in no way from " the knowledge of man and of his faculties ",[42] No doubt he suspected that there might be some exaggeration on his own part. The Church herself, he once admitted, does not deny that God's law is " the expression of our nature "; " she admits the immanence of Justice in us "; but, he added, she admits it only " for the period of innocence " and she maintains that, since the fall of the first man, everything has been changed. Therefore it would be impossible for any man concerned about human dignity to put up with the Church's dogma.[43]

He is a trifle over-scornful. Is there no excuse for him ? No doubt Abbe Lenoir was not alone of his kind. Proudhon could have found similar statements, even in the theologians of his own day. He could have read the explanations given a few years previously by a Jesuit, Pere Chastel, in a short treatise which was worthy of his attention, *De l'Autoriti et du respect qui lui est du,* (1851). In it Pere Chastel showed how God, being man's end as well as his author, was not like some external master; how " God's dominion in no way prevented man's own dominion over himself"; how, finally, quite on the contrary, God was a safeguard for man, allowing him to exist for himself, so that "he can never belong to another man and is not free to renounce his mastery over himself so as to alienate his person in favour of his fellow-men ". In short, he showed conclusively how faith in God, far from victimizing our dignity, established it and preserved it in each one of us.[44]

Still, what was Pere Chastel, what was this Jesuit with his lifeless style and his far too classical ideas, compared with the powerful and brilliant school which then occupied the front of the stage, and which by a " strange abuse " called itself, and succeeded in getting many

[41] ***Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 299-300.**
[42] **.P., p. 153.**
[43] ***Just.*, vol. i, p. 451.**
" **Pp. 11-12.**

others to call it, " the Catholic school ? "[45] We are speaking of the traditionalist school. It arrogantly called itself " the Tradition [46] It was on the writings of this school that Proudhon had subsisted in his youth. In them he thought he found the expression of the Church's thought. Speaking of de Maistre and de Bonald he rightly said that " their only worth came through the Revolution, which they aped while they contradicted it "[47] and he denounced their " materialism " ;[48] but that did not prevent him from seeing in the former not only " the great theosopher ",[49] but " the most profound of the Catholic writers ",[50] and it was in referring to the latter that he controverted—thinking he was controverting Catholicism itself—the doctrine of the primitive revelation with its moral and social consequences.[51] " Unheard of system, rash and deplorable, strange novelties, frivolous arguments, futile theories ", was how Chastel qualified, and rightly, Traditionalism.[62] He himself recognized, however, that, towards the middle of the century, it had spread everywhere. The influence of the two men whom Barbey d'Aurevilly was to honour as " the lay Fathers of the Roman Church "5[3] still brought all its weight to bear upon it. The condemnation of Lamennais' doctrine on the common sense, i.e. the universal assent of mankind, in 1834, had been no setback to it.

Since so many Catholics made a mistake about it, Proudhon could do so, too. What undoubtedly contributed to his error, however, was his assiduous reading of Bergier. For, however new it might be, the traditionalist system had not sprung all at once from the brain of a de Bonald or of a de Maistre. A whole theological current had preceded it, a whole pre-Traditionalism, whose chief witnesses were the *Treatise on the True Religion* and the *Theological Dictionary.*[54] In

[45] **Cf. Chastel, L'*Eglise et les systimes de philosophie moderne* (1852), p. 162. '' The Catholic system ", was Bonald's phrase *{Principe const it ut if de la socidte);* " the traditional school", said Bonnetty.**

[46] **Cf. the title of Pere Ventura's work, *La Tradition* . . . (1856).**

[47] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 629.**

[48] **C. P., p. 211.**

[49] ***G. P.*, p. 31. Proudhon gave a very good diagnosis of one of the features of that group of minds of which Maistre was one of the most brilliant representatives. '' Pure truth," he said,'' has no attraction for them " (p. 70). At about the same time Khomiakoff called Maistre '' that eloquent archsophist" (Benon, p. 68).**

[50] **C O . if., p. 49.**

[51] **C. *O. H.*, p. 65. *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 70-1. *C. P.*, p. 206.**

[52] **Chastel, *Les rationalistes et les traditionalistes, ou les ecoles philosophiques depuis vingt ans* (1850), pp. 1-4.**

[53] ***Philosophes et ecrivains religieux*, first series, p. 41. *(Pays*, July 6th, 1859).**

[54] **French titles, *Traiti de la vraie religion* and *Dictionnaire die theologie.—Trans~ lator. '' This means of avenging religion for the attacks made upon it by its enemies is not new; other writers made use of it before M. Lamennais. Bergier makes use of it in the opening chapters of his big *Treatise on the True Religion.* You can also see *La Religion vengie d'increduliti* by M. Lefranc de Pompignan, not to mention**

Bergier, a copious and mediocre theologian,[55] Proudhon, we know, thought he heard the whole Church and all the Fathers. Now this is a sample of what he read:

No purely human reason can establish the distinction between good and evil; and if it had not pleased God to make his purpose known to us, a son could have killed his father without incurring any guilt.

He quoted this text in *Justice*, remarking that Bergier was here " supported by Mgr. Gousset ".[56] According to " the doctrine of transcendency " then there could be nothing essential or intrinsic in good and in evil.[57] God was the author of morality in such a way that no element of spontaneity came from man. In a system such as that, " man cannot speak, think, have any spiritual knowledge, or religious or moral truth, save as a result of an outward and positive revelation ".[58] Authority takes the place of conscience, just as revelation takes the place of reason. That Proudhon rose in protest is understandable.

To tell the truth, he rose a trifle quickly, and if he had taken the time to weigh Bergier's sentences, he would not have found in them quite the " frightful doctrine " which he denounced. Bergier did not demand that revelation should take absolutely the place of " Nature's lessons ", but only that it should " confirm " them. He certainly minimizes reason's share when he claims that "it can indicate to us what is

a great number of others. . . . " (Letter to the Editor of the *Defenseur*, from B. Professor of Theology in the Seminary at N.) (in Lamennais, *Defense de l'Essal*, second edition, 1821, p. 319; cf. p. 334). Chastel, *De la valeur de la raison humaine* (1854), p. 191: " Today the new school claims Bergier as its first ancestor. It has discovered the traditionalist doctrine in his *Treatise on the True Religion* and in his *Theological Dictionary*. It is said that it is not as completely formulated therein as n M. de Bonald, but it is there in germ and in its entirety. Bergier is the first inventor of Traditionalism.**

[55] **Chastel, *ibid.:* " This writer, estimable from several points of view, has never been considered as one of the big theologians and big philosophers of Christianity. Everybody appreciates the important services the untiring apologist rendered to eligion; there is frequently occasion to admire the wide range of his knowledge, he lucidity of his reasoning, etc. But, so far as we know, nobody has ever admired n him that vigorous thought, that sure decision and that accuracy of doctrine which would make of him a Father or a Doctor of the Church; and practically verything that can be said in favour of Bergier has been said when we call him, n the words of the Council of Amiens, *Celebris, in praecedenti saeculo, religionis pologista, apud nos vulgatlssimus."***

[56] ***Just.*, vol. iii, p. 334. Gousset had been professor of moral theology, and later car General at Besancon.**

[57] **Cf. Chastel, *Les rationalistes et les traditionalistes*, p. 39. According to this octrine, Chastel also tells us, " the free will alone of God has framed our duties. The moral truths and the moral precepts have been revealed; and that is the only way in which they may be known." " It is high time,'' he said, " to disclose all the langers of this rash and deplorable system " (p. 4).**

[58] **Cf. Maret, *Philosophic et religion* (1856), vol. i, p. 311.**

good for us to do or to avoid, but . . . it does not impose upon us any necessity to do what it dictates "; yet if he does deny that it has " force of law ", he does not go so far as to deny that it can " notify us of the law ". When he adds that " if God had not ordered us to follow it, we could hold out against it without being guilty", his sentence is at least equivocal, and likewise when he says that " revelation has given us the true notion of good and moral evil, in showing God to us as a sovereign legislator, who has exercised that august function since the creation." Still our misgivings are met at least halfway when we see him making a distinction between " the torch which guides us " and " the law which obliges us ".[59] He does not then, as Proudhon thinks he does, go so far as practically to suppress conscience and reason. Nevertheless, he had a leaning in that direction, and the Traditionalists who re-echo him are scarcely any more concerned than he about the reasonable distinctions which theological tradition still imposed upon them. Proudhon interpreted him as they themselves interpreted him, and in the *Theological Dictionary* he thought he had found the genuine teaching of the Church.

It is not our intention to maintain that there was nothing more than a misunderstanding here between the Church and Proudhon. All the same, a misunderstanding lay at the root of his mistaken ideas. His reaction against the stupid statement of doctrines led him to excesses in the opposite direction. From the " extrinsicity " which he rejected—at that time it was known as " exteriorism "[60]—he went oh to an immanence every bit as unilateral, every bit as unreasonable. The arbitrary subjection which they wished to impose upon him provoked him to rebellion. Carried away by his impatient nature, he could not see that if, on the one hand, conscience necessarily implies inwardness and immanence, on the other, there is no conscience without a " must-be'*, in other words, without an appeal, a call, a pressure; or again, without, in the final reckoning, the active presence of a transcendent being. The God who binds us is at the same time the one who frees us; he who draws us to himself is the one who gives us our inwardness : *Deus interior intimo meo*. Proudhon, who is so careful to save the autonomy of the human person, does not sufficiently analyse the idea of it. So he misunderstands the very condition of that autonomy. He does not see that the welcome offered to the sovereign Guest

••Bergier, *Dictionnaire de thiologie*, second edition, vol. v, pp. 2, 5 (art., *Law);* vol. vii, p. 164 (art., *Revelation);* vol. i, pp. 359, 360 (art., *Good);* vol. ii, p. 362 (art., *Duty).*

•° Cf. J. Henry, *Le traditionalisme et Vontologisme a VUniversiti de Louvain*, 1835-65, in the *Annates de l'Institut supirieur de philosophic*, vol. v, (1924), p. 68.

of the conscience assures autonomy, in bestowing upon the person a substantial inwardness. He does not see that faith in God not only balances, as they say, the principle of authority and the principle of liberty, but bases them each upon the other. He does not see either that public acknowledgement of Him, who is the master of societies as of individuals, forms the only supremely effective barrier against collective tyrannies. Why did he not give greater consideration to the *System of positive politics* which had just been completed at that very time ? Possibly the consequences of Comte's atheism, which could not see in the law any more than in the individual anything more than a futile and baneful abstraction, might have led him to reconsider his passionate denial. Possibly he might have perceived that his immanence was leading to an end the exact opposite of the ends he had in view. Comte, we must admit, was more logical here than Proudhon, more sadly logical. Having taken God from the human conscience, he saw without hesitation that he had thereby taken from it every absolute. In the cult of a chimerical Humanity he did not hesitate to immolate man himself.

In rejecting all transcendency, Proudhon by that very fact rejected all ideas of revelation. As far as he was concerned, everything still came from man, from man's conscience, from his moral sense, without there ever being any need to go higher. It was imagination which transformed a totally inward illumination into a divine word. His psychological analyses had in some respects a great deal of truth in them. It is beyond dispute that men have often taken " for a supernatural inspiration, evidence of a divine will" what was in reality only " an emotion of their heart "[61] Does that mean that revelation is never anything else but " an exaltation which enraptures the heart when for the first time it comes into contact with the notion of Justice, made more attractive by the practical form of a precept ? "[62] Is it not again a very short and fallacious analysis which makes a parallel between " poetic fiction " and " priestly fiction " ? Is criticism of the imaginative forms, under which the faithful picture to themselves the revelation by which they benefit, sufficient to bring the illusion home to them ? No one will think so unless the very idea of transcendency is already eliminated beforehand. There again, the very free use made

[61] **Emile Boutroux has voiced the same idea in expressive terms, which L6on Brunschvigg has also made use of: *Bulletin de la societe frangaise de philosophic*, meeting of March 21st, 1931, *La notion de philosophic chritienne*, p. 74.**

[62] ***Just.*, vol. i, p. 328; vol. ii, pp. 357-8: " Is it then so difficult to understand that the man who prays to God is like a poet invoking the Muse, the latter calls upon his guiding spirit, the former upon his conscience?"; vol. iv, pp. 356 and 359.**

by the Traditionalist school of the idea of revelation had a lot to do with Proudhon's reaction. For all that, his reaction was as arbitrary as it was excessive, because he misunderstood, like the Traditionalists before him, the real part allotted to revelation by Christian theology.[62]

Similar misunderstandings blurred Proudhon's outlook where the problem of moral sanctions was concerned. He himself was faintly aware of this, since he once wrote: " Theologians teach that the love of God in heaven is inseparable from (eternal) blessedness, that it is that blessedness itself. That is exactly what the theory of immanence says."[64] Pleased with the remark he had made, he stopped short at that argument *ad hominem* spiced with irony, without finding in it any food for thought. So he was afterwards able to say, without the slightest hesitation, that according to the system of transcendency " moral sanctions come, like lightning, from the throne of God: he it is who, in his own sweet will, tries us, afflicts or rewards us, pending the final adjustment ".[65]

We shall make no attempt to justify many of the then current ways of speaking of divine justice, of its rewards and its punishments. That the part played therein by the imagination is great is obvious, and cannot be explained solely by certain abuses of speech or by the need for a popular form of adaptation. How else express religious realities which are beyond us, except by human analogies ? And in our subject, what analogy other than the juridical one? The faithful know well that all this is but a rendering, in a rough refraction, of the substance of the faith, and they give their adhesion to that substance above and beyond all words and pictures, above and beyond all analogies and concepts. They also know, however, that to use imagination, consciously or naively, is less harmful, in religious matters, than critical pretensions too unmindful of human conditions. The former sustains a spiritual impulse, and the latter corrupt it. All the same, the faithful do not object to attempts to bring things into philosophic focus, and when they are reproached, as Proudhon reproaches them, with seeing in God a distributor of external and arbitrary sanctions, they have a right to protest. " As virtue is put before us," Pere Sertillanges explains in a commentary on St. Thomas Aquinas, " as a means of happiness and has no other reason for existing, it must lead those who practise it to happiness. Neglect of virtue must lead away from happiness."

[53] **Cf. C. 0. *H.*, pp. 65, 81. Letter to Eugene Noel, August 16th, 1864 (vol. xiv, pp. 27-8).**

[54] **just vol. i, p. 422.**

[55] ***Just.*, vol. iv, p. 365; cf. p. 363.**

Being rewarded then means " simply reaching the goal, and being punished, losing one's way ". There is no question then of counting " upon extrinsic rewards, but upon the effect of a normal evolution, which takes place inwardly and under the safeguard of the divine order ''[66]

Still, if one wished to insist, such an explanation would be more satisfactory to a pure philosopher than to a moralist. And Proudhon, as we have seen, speaks above all in the name of morality. What does he care whether. ontological arbitrariness be excluded or not, if the conscience is to remain vitiated by self-interest ? " An act is moral", Pere Sertillanges continues, " when it is reasonable, when it is fitted, by its nature, to obtain the end which reason seeks, to wit, blessedness . . . Virtue is meant to be useful, it is a means, not an end. The value of life is the reason for respect for life, the value of health the reason for hygiene, that of knowledge the reason for study, that of our pacific relations the reason for justice, that of happiness in its delightful completeness the reason for virtue in its own completeness."[67] Here the dualism still exists between means and end, between path and terminus. To dispel Proudhon's objection, we should have, besides, a clear vision of the immanence of the terminus in the path, and of the hidden community of structure between the means and the end. The Christian who understands Christ's command will find no difficulty in seeing this: " You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect". According to this command, the perfection to be acquired by man is not only the means offered to him so that he may one day attain to divine union: it consists in resembling God here and now. For it is summed up in charity, which is itself the definition of God's Being. Between virtue and blessedness, as between " grace " and " glory ", there is then a continuity. Both are, so to speak, of the same material, and if moral activity is such an excellent thing, it is because already, of itself, it is registered in the realm of the absolute.[68] It is not sufficient to say that the reward which crowns it is not its external sanction but its fruit, unless one also takes into account that the taste of the fruit is itself really a good thing only by reason of the sap which it draws from it. The kingdom of God is present in the depths of the heart before blossoming forth into fruits

•• *La philosophic morale de saint Thomas d'Aquin,* **p. 568.** *Les grandes theses de la philosophie thomiste,* **pp. 238, 239.**

[67] *Les grandes theses . . . ,* **p. 220***

[68] **Cf. St. Augustine,** *In psalmum 134,***11, for the " chaste love " or " gratuitous love '' which he preaches to a Christian:** *Hoc est gratis amare non quast proposita acceptione mercedis, quia ipse merces tua summa Deus ipse erit, quern gratis dillgis.**

of glory. Eternal life is still "moral" in its essence, the acquired perfection is still liberty, blessedness is still, and more perfectly, charity. To believe that—which is only the all but immediate explanation of the Gospel—is to believe, more even than Proudhon and those who with him criticize the Church's moral code, in Justice as an absolute. It is to believe it in a more forthright way, in the only way which is fully consistent, by making it eternal.[69]

[69] Proudhon, rightly, wished to avoid egoism and exclude what FSnelon, in the mystic tradition, called "self-interest". But what he does not see, for want of analysis, is that it is neither necessary, nor possible, nor even desirable to practise a negative disinterestedness which would be, spiritually, suicide and which, metaphysically, implies absurdity. Against a disinterestedness such as that certain analyses of Nietzsche have their worth.

PART SIX

TRANSCENDENCY. DIALOGUE WITH PROUDHON

CHAPTER XIII

CRITICISM OF THE ABSOLUTE

PROUDHON always protested, " and with the utmost earnestness " against the epithet of atheist. " I have been thinking of God since began to exist", he proudly proclaimed, " and I do not admit that anybody has a greater right to speak of him ". As a matter of fact, the indictment did not alarm him a great deal in itself, but he felt that it misrepresented his thought.[1] Above all, he did not want it to degenerate " into calumny and banishment ", he did not want it to be used against him to place him " so to speak, beyond the pale of justice and morality ".[2] He knew in fact" by experience that there is no deeper antipathy among men than that roused, in a religious soul, by the idea of atheism ",[3] An atheist, in the eyes of the believer, is "an abject materialist, without respect for justice or humanity, who makes a law of his egoism, a god of his belly and a cult of the satisfying of his passions **. If then he repudiated that name, it was not " out of hypocrisy, or out of any religious fear, but because the word, taken in its common meaning, involved an odious insinuation ".[4] In short, he did not wish to be taken for a common " atheist", any more than for a common " anarchist ".[5] Moreover, he himself returned the verdict: " Atheism thinks it is intelligent and strong: it is stupid and timid."[6] His opinion was that the " small number of men " who " in all ages ", " not understanding God, resolved to deny him ", were not bolder than the others, save "to all outward appearances"; "far from showing

[1] *Just.,* vol. i, p. 448: " Let us not argue about God's nature and attributes; let us abide by the common definition, he is an atheist who dogmatically denies the existence of God. Now, I profess to believe and to say that we cannot legitimately deny anything or affirm anything of the absolute; that is one of the reasons why I rule the divine concept out of morality. . . . Let none make an atheist of me, when my philosophy is all against that."

[1] *Just.,* vol. i, pp. 282-3.

• /. *P. (Works,* vol. xx), p. 124.

[4] To Pierre Leroux, December 7th, 1849 (vol. **xiv,** p. 284). " It was not in this way," he goes on," that Spinoza was an atheist; it was not for similar reasons that Kant, Fichte and Hegel later deserved the name. The alleged atheism of these great men was nothing other than Idealism raised to the highest power, the culminating point of metaphysical and religious speculation."

[6] J. P., p. 315: " When I pronounce the name of God and when I think of **the** immortality of my soul a feeling of indescribable veneration for myself takes possession of my heart. . . . That is why every impious proposition wounds me in my innermost heart, as though it **were a** violation of my own person."

[6] *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 179.

strength of mind," he added, their atheism " gave only evidence of mental despair".[7] Towards so many of his contemporaries who complacently flaunted their unbelief, he evinced a cruel severity:

In vain does this or that man who never thinks of God or of his soul, boast that nothing surprises him, that he believes only in the evidence of his senses, and that he feels no religion towards any living being; as though the idea of God seized hold of us by a flash of lightning or by a miracle ! This self-styled strong mind simply proves that he has never reflected upon anything.[8]

He was quite well aware, too, that for many the loss of faith is at the same time the loss of moral sense. He deplored " the religious indifference " which had overtaken his century.[9] He had no illusions about " the perverted peasant, with no religion or conscience, consequently without reason for existence ". He named those responsible, the nobles and the middle class, who had been the first to succumb to irreligion. His scorn fell not only upon the atheistic middle class and the self-styled Liberals of his day, " business men, traders hungering for the clergy's powers and goods . . . a tribe of exploiters and cannibals, whose preponderance in the nineteenth century is the corruption of the period".[10] He also included the doctrinaires: those of the previous century, " Diderot, d'Holbach, Naigeon were ridiculous atheists, who did not understand atheism any more than they had understood theism" ;[11] as for those of his own time, Feuerbach and his set, we already know that, though he was deeply influenced by them, their Humanism was nevertheless not in his line.[12]

Still it was for the Deists, as we also know, that he reserved his most trenchant sarcasm. The old underlying Catholic strain in his blood combined here with the audacity of his thought to dictate his judgements upon a lack-lustre religion of the supreme Being. No doubt he considered as so much gained the essential results achieved by the German

[7] *La Voix du Peuple*, November 5th, 1849 *(Con.*, preface to third edition). Atheism again is " less logical than faith " *(ibid.)*.

[8] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 181. And *P. M.*, vol. i, p. 43: "I mistrust those strong minds, just as much as superstitious ones."

[9] *M. L.*, (vol. xvi), p. 106: " Religious and political indifference, the relaxing of the moral code in private, above all the invasion of Utilitarianism under cover of the ideal, have depraved and obliterated a whole order of faculties in us."

[10] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 477. *G. P.*, p. 148: " We who live without religion, who for the most part, in losing the religious sentiment, have lost even the moral sense." To Joseph Ferrari, November 7th, 1859, for the "atheistic middle classes" and self-styled Liberals of his day (vol. ix, pp. 224-5).

[11] To Micaud, December 22nd, 1844 (vol. vi, p. 348).

[12] Cf. *P. M.*, vol. i, p. 50: " Atheism, otherwise known as Humanism."

philosophers, who had devoted themselves to criticism of the spontaneous form of belief; and when, for instance, he reproached Michelet and Quinet with holding on to Deism, he did so not because he wished to bring them back to " the ancient fiction of a divinity ", but, on the contrary, because he wished to push them forward, towards some mightier idea, " more real, and more luminous ".[13] Yet he was always obsessed with the problem of God. That problem never appeared to his mind as definitively resolved. Though he pretended to speak of himself as not at all a mystic, he would not have others call him a positivist either. " The truth for which I am seeking, I do not yet know, I am seeking it, and shall always seek it . . . it is fugitive and mobile, and the more one longs to fix it the less can one grasp it."[14] One feels here that he himself is always on the move, always questing. " About God, the soul, Revelation and faith " his system is and is meant to be only " a system of researches ". That was what he said to himself in his Note-book, in January, 1853. In July, 1855, he again noted: in religious matters, " I have rather raised difficulties and set forth problems than published an opinion ". He could have repeated that again at the end of his life.

Edouard Droz has written that in his work there is " an encroaching and enigmatical theodicy, spread out everywhere and everywhere casting a shadow, so much so that one still wonders what were the [real] thoughts and feelings about God of the author of the famous imprecation: 'God is Evil' ",[15] This observation goes with the satirical dictum of Marx, who compared the *Philosophie de la Misere* to a Bible.[16] This work contains two surprising chapters about God. And this was not merely because Proudhon felt the need of a metaphysical basis for his economic doctrines, or because it is impossible, as his contemporary, Pierre Leroux,[17] said, " to deal at all deeply with politics " (or with economics) " without raising religious questions ". It was not merely that he wished to take advantage of the occasion to place himself with regard to the German school. It was also, he himself admitted, because he proposed to lead his reader on, from concrete applications of economics and of the social order, to reflect, as he did,

[18] **To Michelet, July 19th, 1851 (vol. xiv, p. 170).** ***CI*** **to Micaud, December 22nd 1844, on " the new German school" (vol. vi, p. 347).**

[14] **To Tissot, December 22nd, 1853 (vol. v, pp. 298-9).**

" P. /. ***Proudhon,*** **p. 141. Droz also quotes this judgement of Diehl, p. 169: " In Proudhon, the man was more religious than he was a Socialist philosopher."**

" ***Misire de la Phil.,*** **preface (French trans., 1896, p. 35): [M] M. Proudhon's work** ***is*** **not just simply a treatise of political economy, an ordinary book, it is a Bible."**

[17] **Pierre Leroux,** ***De la philosophie et du christianisme, Revue encyclope'dique,*** **August, 1832.**

" upon the highest questions of philosophy ".[18] Whatever the problem was which filled his mind, the weight of his thought brought him back always to this single problem. He never ceased to repeat under a thousand forms what he wrote in his first work, *Calibration du dimanche*:

> The existence of God is proved neither *a priori* nor *a posteriori*, because he has no before or after. One sees him, one feels him, he is in one's thoughts, in one's speech, in one's reflections, in one's reason. He is necessity, the alpha and the omega, in other words, the beginning and the completion of all things; he is the Unique and the Universal, embracing all truths in an infinite chain. Here and there we catch hold of a few links, a few fragments more or less extensive of that chain; the immensity of the whole chain escapes us. Whoever puts forth a thought, by that fact alone names God; all our knowledge is but partial or incomplete statements of the absolute knowledge, which is the *scitum* and the *fatum* of God himself.[19]

However aberrant it may be, it is impossible for a reflection as sustained as that not to hold some lessons for us, were it only in the deviations themselves. Let us at least try to follow some of the meanderings, without flattering ourselves that we can smooth out the contradictions, or that we can make the issues clearer than the author himself has done.

The idea of God is twofold. It is presented under two contradictory forms, both equally inevitable. According as he is envisaged " from the point of view of humanity " or " from an ontological point of view ", God appears now as " man's ideal", now as his " opposite ". Now he is a personal being, necessarily limited, and now he is the Infinite, the impersonal substratum of all possible reality. The mind thus comes up against two series of antinomic attributes: on the one

" To Bergmann, October 24th, 1844: " My supreme purpose is to accustom men to reason for themselves, by presenting reasoning to them first of all in concrete form, by making metaphysical speculation interesting to them by showing its consequences in society; in a word, by showing them, so to speak, *metaphysics in action* " (vol. ii, pp. 167-8). To the same Bergmann, on June 4th, 1847, he complained about the " pretensions of certain blase" minds " who were content to speak of misery but not of evil, of the value of products but not of ideas, of humanity's government but not of Providence's; he declared that he was not a man to submit himself to such unreasonable demands. " I persist in believing that the questions about God, human destiny, ideas, certitude, in short, that all the lofty questions of philosophy are an integral part of economic science, which, after all, is only the outward realization of them, as the phenomenon is the expression of the noumenon." He regretted that his contemporaries were " tired of theology and metaphysics " (vol. ii, pp. 258-9). Cf. *Confessions*, p. 108: " Society is metaphysics in action,"

[19]• C. D., p. 88.

hand, infinity, necessity, eternity, immutability; on the other, life, consciousness, the will, progress.

Such at least were the reflections prompted in Proudhon by Renouvier's *Manual of Modern Philosophy*, which he read and re-read in the years which followed the publication of *La Philosophie de la Misire*. The antinomy which then haunted him was, in other words, that of Theism and Pantheism. However, instead of dwelling upon it or making a choice of one of the two terms, he came to the conclusion that both were unintelligible as was also their reunion, and that the duality posited by the mind was, in reality, that of collective man and of Nature, of man who reflects and progresses, and of Nature, " matrix and matter of all things ". In that way he thought he was unravelling the " chaos of metaphysics " and banishing for ever all mysticism. Yet his notes show him, as always, unsatisfied. Soon the questions crop up again. He stammers and gropes his way, and he admits it to himself. Might it not be that God and man, real beings, are brought together in a supreme synthesis ? Must it not at least be thought that the two ideas of the Divinity, however exclusive of each other they appear to be, are bound nevertheless to be re-united ? That was how he was inclined at the time of *Justice*. For " the antinomy of the attributes", he said at that time, " far from being a hindrance to the being's existence, is, on the contrary, the condition constituting it ", and if we were permitted to say anything about God, we could but attribute to him all the human qualities, extended to infinity.[20]

But—and here we are back again on the wide ocean—can we say anything about him ? God is reducible neither to man nor to Nature. But is that not because he is *par excellence* the Absolute ? And is it not ridiculous in principle, as well as disastrous in practice, to try to transform the Absolute—who, *ex hypothesis* eludes all relations with our intelligence and our activity—into the God of religion ?

No doubt, it must first of all be acknowledged, the absolute is everywhere present, everywhere implied. Every act of the mind presupposes the absolute. " We do not possess a single idea which does not hide an absolute, and which does not crumble, if the absolute is taken from it. Our knowledge, experimental as it is, only continues to exist by the discovery and the affirmation of the absolute." In every field " the absolute is a conception of the mind, indispensable for the onward march of reasoning and the clarity of ideas ". Now is not God the

[20] ***Just.*, notes, vol. vi, pp. 297-8. He even thought that the concept" of a cosmic conscience, or, as you might say, of a universal Humanity ", was " in no wise absurd although it could not be proved " (vol. iv, p. 440).**

" sovereign absolute " ? Is he not " the absolute of all absolutes " ? In denying him atheism " goes beyond the goal". It denies " what the-understanding presupposes as entirely necessary", denying "by that very fact the legitimacy of all concepts ". It destroys the foundation of all science and plunges us into " chaoticism ", into " Nihilism ".[ai] Some atheists tell us that if we admit the concept of the absolute " a pretext is given to all the superstitions". It is quite possible. But what does that prove against the concept itself ? Nothing can prevail over its innateness, its necessity and its persistence.[22]

There is nothing, however, for believers and all the dogmatists to crow about! It is one thing indeed to admit the absolute as a postulate of all knowledge, as a " necessary hypothesis of the reason ", and quite another thing to consider it as the *object* of knowledge. Speculative criticism and revolutionary criticism are at one in their agreement on this point. The former, by the examination alone of the working of the intelligence and its laws, forbids us a direct, immediate, objective consideration of the absolute, and it is " Kant's glory " that he demonstrated this in a definitive manner.[23] The latter, without giving any further opinion about its existence, " eliminates it " in the name of social progress and of human dignity.[24] There is nothing to be done therefore but let " all the hypotheses relating to the Divinity fight it out among themselves "; they are futile speculations. Considering the absolute in itself, we can have nothing to say about it, since our criticism " declines to enter the regions of the absolute ", and thus we are " neither Theists, Pantheists, nor Atheists ".[26] On the plane, however, in which our faculties are legitimately active and our action unfolds, in the sphere of the temporal and social life as well as in that of science, we cannot but declare war upon the absolute, war upon God—war upon all the absolutes, war upon all the gods.[26] On this

[21] *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 179, 180, 302.

[22] *Just.*, notes, vol. iii, p. 292.

[22] /. *G. R.*, (1851), pp. 288-9. *Just.*, pp. 183, 300: " M. 1'abbe Lenoir is one of those people who cannot manage to grasp this universally critical principle, the demonstration of which was Kant's glory, that the absolute is given, as a postulate, in all knowledge, but that it does not follow for all that that it can itself become the *object* of knowledge." Notes, vol. iii, p. 296: " A positive metaphysician sees that the human understanding naturally forms the concept of God, and he stops there. What more can he say or know ? "

[24] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 179: " The Revolution is not atheistic, in the strict sense of **the** word; speculatively, it does not deny the absolute, it eliminates it, *qua* direct **and** positive object of knowledge, principle or motive of morality."

[25] *Just.*, vol. i, p. 276 *{Philosophie Populate).* Cf. vol iv, p. 436: " What shall we call this philosophy of the Revolution, which is evidently not Theism, but which is not Atheism either, nor Pantheism ? " etc.

[16] *Th. P.*, p. 73: " Is there any need for **me to say that philosophy, or seeking for** the cause of things, is war **waged** by **the reason against the absolute ?** " ***Just.*, vol.**

plane, which is that of the " practical reason " rather than of. the speculative reason, the absolute can appear to us only " as a dangerous chimera, as a logical absurdity and an immorality ",[27] We are then in the final reckoning, " purely and simply anti-Theists, in other words, we exclude from our morality religious consideration of the absolute and we reject from human government all intervention by the divinity ".[28]

Proudhon's anti-Theism has a tendency then to become general. It spreads to fields other than that of the social sphere in which we have already analysed it. Yet its significance must not be exaggerated. Proudhon himself at times gave it another name. He spoke of a " methodical Atheism "[29] and he repeated, on various occasions, that his denial of God or his opposition to God only constituted a phase in his thought, a phase necessary to arrive at a better conception.[80] Where he is concerned, despite a frequently peremptory tone, we never come to an end ! One thing struck him and prevented him from taking a stand in any of the negative conclusions which he seemed to have reached: it was, as we have said, the great fact of " universal assent". Perhaps we should see in this a remnant of his early upbringing, impregnated with Traditionalism. What impressed him was not so much the universality of belief in God among widely differing races as the permanence and the resurgence of the idea of God after all attempts to deny it or to eliminate it. A " primitive " fact, but also a " subsisting " fact, it made acceptance of Atheism as a solution for ever impossible.[31] Spontaneously blossoming forth everywhere, he saw this idea of God everywhere resisting the corrosive endeavours, under forms more or less renewed, of reflection. He discovered that it was independent of the weakness of its proofs: " The persistence of the theist idea alongside the jargon of the schools is the greatest of miracles; it forms the

iii, p. 181: " It is war against God, you will say. All right: wage war on God himself, on *God just the same* as on the God-Humanity, on the God-Christ, wage war on all the realized absolutes, on all the living and commanding gods, in the name of Justice and truth."

[27] ***Th.* P., p. 71.**

" *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 299. Cf. p. 302: " If God is outside knowledge for us, he must remain outside practical matters. . . . When religion, through its theology, its revelations and its cult, brings God out of the absolute, it drives man out of morality.*'

[29t]**o Micaud, December 22nd, 1844 (vol. vi, p. 348). Cf. *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 436.**

[30] ***Ibid.*; " All who have any precise knowledge of the latest findings of philosophy will tell you, as I do, that in order philosophically to reach the idea of God, you must pass through a complete negation of God. That may sound like a conjuring trick, but you will soon see that nothing is more credible and more rational , etc,**

[31] ***La Voix du Peuple,* November 5th, 1849.**

strongest assumption which can be adduced in favour of the Divinity."[83] Away beyond the proofs and counter-proofs he had an inkling of something more profound, something elusive, the true nature of which he was never able to capture, but of which he never ceased to take account for all that; a mysterious call which he never consented to stifle, as so many others did. So he persisted in trying to find a way out, which the positions he had adopted rendered impossible, towards a new affirmation. He even persuaded himself that he had discovered it. On one occasion he compared himself to the early Christians, " accused, rightly, of Atheism by the pagans " but protesting, with no less right, against the accusation.[33] On another occasion he wrote to a priest whom he knew:

I am an Atheist like Malebranche, like Spinoza, like Kant, like Leibnitz, like Hegel, neither more nor less. In other words, not that I profess the same philosophy as any of those great men, but that for God, the soul, religion, I have a theory of my own, as far removed from d'Holbach's or the Epicurean materialism as from Barclay's idealism. The criticism which I made of the idea of God is similar to all the criticisms I have made of authority, property, etc., it is a systematic negation which is meant to come to a higher affirmation equally systematic.[84]

In this way he had reached a position pretty near to that of the extreme modernist; so sensitive to everything which is imaginative in our representations of the deity that he thought he was obliged to deny everything in order to build everything up afresh; in other respects, perpetually tempted by immanence, often using its phrases, and yet always keeping himself from succumbing to it; accepting " all the categories of Catholicism, but reserving the right

[32] *P.M.*, vol. i, p. 377. Concerning the proofs in use in schools for the existence of God: "That is what the pick of French youth is condemned to bleat out after its professors for the space of a year, or else be in danger of losing their diplomas and not being able to study law, medicine, science, or for the Military Academy. Certainly, if we have a right to be surprised at anything, it is, that with a philosophy such as that, the whole of Europe is not yet Atheist. . . ." *Suard Award*, p. 10: " I remained then what I was, believing in God and the immortality of the soul, but—and I beg philosophy's pardon for it—it was much less on account of the evidence of its syllogisms than on account of the feebleness of the reasons on the other side." Proudhon scarcely made any attempt to fathom the tenets he had received, so his fundamental reaction here is all the more significant.

[33] To Robin, October 12th, 1851 (vol. iv, pp. 373-4).

[34] To Abbe X. (vol. vi, p. 114). The editor of the *Correspondance* gives the date of this letter as January 22nd, 1855, but this seems to be wrong; should it not rather be 1849? Proudhon ends with these words: " I f the revolutionary turmoil ever leaves me any leisure and any time, it will be to study unceasingly these great questions which seemingly must eternally fill the thoughts of, and ever divide, poor human mortals."—Barclay here is evidently meant for Berkeley— *Trans,*

to interpret them ";[85] distinguishing in the religions between a series of " fanciful forms " and " legends ", the spontaneous but passing flowering of religious thought," accessory creations of the imagination, variously impressed, of all races ", and a solid, real and unique content, destined to be freed in its equally real and unique form by progress in reflection. With these distinctions and reserves, he could again say to the same correspondent: " I admit that religion is a prerogative of our species, a quality of our understanding, and so is not subject to human discussion, and is, in its principle, indestructible.'* ** I believe," he added, " that for three centuries past Catholicism is in process of being transformed ", losing all the peculiarities, which formed a contrast with other positive religions, and all its pretensions to be founded upon a special revelation, so that at length it may take on the true form which must make it into the definitive religion.[86]

During the course of a sitting of the National Assembly, on July 31st, 1848, Proudhon, held up by Thiers to the scorn and indignation of his fellow-members, drew himself up proudly and delivered this moving challenge:

I will challenge my accuser to a *duel of conscience.* I will say: Bring your secret life before this tribune. Make your confessions and I will make mine. Let us appoint a board of inquiry. Let them put us both through the sieve, and let the public judge which of us, you or I, is the hypocrite, *which the ungodly one.*[27]

He was asking for the impossible. Such a " duel of conscience " may not take place, either before society's eyes or at the bar of history. God alone knows who are the ungodly, and who the true believers. It is not for us therefore to pass sentence upon Proudhon's own personal case. He did indeed " seek God ".[38] Nevertheless, if we take his thought as a whole, objectively, we cannot hoodwink ourselves. A few expressions of repentance apart, and whatever we may think of his obviously sincere protestations, we have Atheism. Does

[M] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 445.

*• Same letters to Abbe X. and to Robin.

[27] *Moniteur universe I,* August 1st, 1848, p. 1826. Cf. *Confessions,* p. 67: " Intriguers, enemies of any society which will not honour their vices and of all morality which condemns their dissolute ways, have accused us of Anarchy and Atheism; others, their hands filled with pillage, have said that we advocate theft. I will set up our faith, the democratic and social faith, against that of these men of God, and we shall see on which side lies the true spirit of order and religion, and on which side hypocrisy and rebellion." *R. S.*, p. 189: " (The priests) cast a slur upon Socialism, as being atheistic, on the information of those misers who have never known God, and who mistake the gleam of their coins for the sun of religion !"

[22] Note-book, January 1853: '• I have sought God. And I mean to tell those sanctimonious hypocrites how," etc.

that mean that no positive lesson is to be gained from it all? Who would dare to maintain that? We have spoken of the providential part played by the Atheist, and Proudhon himself put it fairly correctly when he said " methodical Atheism " was " the *fiat lux* of philosophy ".[39] He lauded " the ventilation of ideas " which this Atheism made possible and " without which the divine Word would remain expressionless ".[40] May not a real Atheism, or one which thinks it is real, play such a part where the collective development of the conscience is concerned? In a profound sense Atheism may in some cases be useful *against ourselves.* Thus Proudhon's criticism puts us on our guard against our natural tendency to bring the idea of God down to the level of what Bergson called " static religion ". It jolts our torpors and our timidities, and our hypocrisies, too. It is a timely reminder for us that there can never be any question of calling a halt, either in our search for God or in the fight for justice. In fact the intelligence must come to grips with the idea of God whenever this idea might tend to be formalized or warped and by that very fact become a fetish; like, Proudhon tells us, the " nation continually unfaithful to its God, which only begins to be attached to him when, after losing its territory and possessing not even a rock whereon to erect an altar ", it at last succeeds in forming a conception of him solely because all the forms are destroyed in which it hoped to hold him.[41] The will, too, must rise up against a certain manner of understanding Providence, by which Providence is stereotyped and changed into a *Fatum.* Thus for intellect and will there are two contests, equally necessary and equally beneficial, one in behalf of truth, the other in behalf of justice, which are divine demands within us. In reality, when we wage them, it is God himself who fights in our conscience against the deformations of God. Proudhon at times felt that this was so, as in the page where he makes God himself speak and encourage man, his son, to smash the idols of his Father.[42] Thus we carry out, he said, " the decree of eternal Reason "—and of eternal Justice. He also said, in a sentence which may be understood in a correct and profound sense: " God is humanity's conscience "[43]

Proudhon had no desire " stupidly to wage war " against an idea over which he quite felt he had " not the mastery ". He had no desire

[40] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 436.
[41] Just , vol. iii, p. 262.
Con., p. 136.
[42] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 442. The slightly vulgar humour which breaks through in this page does not, in our opinion, overshadow its deeply serious side.
[43] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 445.

either to refute " by metaphysical arguments that which was .the inevitable product of all metaphysics ", or to put aside in the name of experience " something the ultra-empirical notion of which was suggested by experience itself".[44] He believed, however, that " man's destiny on earth is a fight against God ",[45] It was Jacob's tussle with the angel. It is the condition of all greatness, and it may also be the means—but here Proudhon would no longer follow us—of a purer submission.

[44] **Guillaumin, November 21st, 1846 (vol. ii, p. 227). Cf. *supra*, Part Four, chap. ix.**
[45] ***Just.*, vol. i, p. 366. Proudhon himself referred to the[41] myth of Israel struggling against God ". Cf. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *La Mystique de la science*, in *Etudes*, vol. 238, p. 742.**

CHAPTER XIV

ADORATION OF JUSTICE

THE CRITICISM of the idea of God undertaken by Proudhon does not end for him, as it does for Auguste Comte or for Feuerbach, in setting man in the place of God. As we have previously seen, his religion is fixed, not upon Humanity, but upon Justice. If the question of God remains in some respects in suspense, Justice absolutely commands the attention of conscience:

> Whether there is or whether there is not a God, a sovereign personality, the soul of the universe, whose product is Nature and whose daughter is Humanity, science, which proceeds by observation, cannot say. It does not affirm it, neither does it deny it; it does not know, it does not even understand and is in no way concerned about it. What does this hypothesis matter to Justice, which must exist of itself and prove itself to conscience without any outside aid 7[1]

But this Justice, what is it exactly ? The large number of definitions placed before us is first of all perplexing. Justice, Proudhon tells us, like religion, is " a sentiment *sui generis* ": it is " the sentiment of our dignity in others, and, conversely, of the dignity of others in our own person ".[2] It is the " respect, spontaneously felt and reciprocally guaranteed, for human dignity, in whatever person and whatever circumstances it may be imperilled, and whatever may be the risks to which we expose ourselves in defending it ".[3] In each one of us then it is the correlative of Right, of which it is the " spontaneous affirmation ": " To feel and to affirm human dignity, first of all in everything which belongs to us, then in the person of our neighbour, and that without any selfish consideration or any thought of the deity or the community, that is *right.* To be ready on all occasions to take on vigorously, even if need be against oneself, the defence of that dignity: that is Justice."[4] It abides consequently " in our will and resolution to treat others in everything as ourselves, in other words, in following the principle of equality, in so far as it appears to us, and notwithstanding

[1] *Just.*, vol. ii, p. 427.
[2] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 175; cf. p. 410.
[1] *Just.*, vol. i, p. 423. Vol. iv, p. 440: it is " respect for Humanity
[2] *Just.*, vol. i, p. 414.

the mistake made in good faith by the parties ".[5] " Immanent in humanity ", it is " a faculty of the human soul ", " the highest of all our faculties V Replying to Langlois, who had written to him on the subject, Proudhon said: "You have understood perfectly what I meant when I said that my theory of justice was a *realist* theory, thus making of justice a faculty and special support, similar to the faculty of loving and the sentiment which is the outcome of it; and that in that I was drawing away especially from the jurists, for whom justice is only an *ideal,* not to say an abstraction."[7]

All the same, for him Justice is not, as these first definitions might have led one to believe, a simple faculty or a simple sentiment. It is not a simple subjective reality. There is " dualism " in it: " pure notion as much as a fact of experience, (it) is the Muse of metaphysics "; it is " at one and the same time, for a reasonable being, the principle and the form of thought, the guarantee of judgement, the rule of conduct, the goal of knowledge and the end of existence. . . . " Thus it is " the point of transition between the sensible and the intelligible, the real and the ideal, the notions of metaphysics and the perceptions of experience ".[8] On the other hand, " it cannot be reduced to the mere notion of a relation proclaimed by pure reason as being necessary to the social order; it is also the product of a faculty or function which has for object the realization of that relation and which sets to work as soon as man finds himself in the presence of man ".[9] Let us say then that it is the " supreme reason ",[10] " the synthesis of" the law of selfishness and the law of love ", the " social sacrament of liberty ",[11] Let us say that it is the noblest thing in man, the most characteristic element of his nature: " what is excellent in me, what distinguishes me in the highest degree, and establishes me most forcibly as man, is not intelligence, nor love, nor liberty, it is *Justice"*[12]

If, however, we are to have an adequate idea of it and not unduly restrict it, we must remember that " Justice is greater than the ego ". It cannot be fully defined in relation to an individual existence; "it

[8] *Just.,* vol. Hi, p. 164; cf. p. 129.

• To Charles Morard, December 31st, 1863 (vol. xiii, p. 213). *Just.,* vol, iv, p. 373.

[7] April 12th, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 44). In opposition to this abstract Idealism, Proudhon said that he professed " a Realism, the Positivism of justice " *{ibid.).*

• *Phil, populate,* chapters 8 and 9 *{Just.,* vol. i, pp. 217, 21fr, 223).

**Just.,* vol. iii, p. 150.

[10] " This supreme reason, Right."

[11] *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 515, etc.: " Justice is the covenant of liberty, its sacrament. Through Justice liberty multiplies its power; through liberty Justice assumes an ideal character and acquires that penetrating force which makes it the most enduring of all our inclinations and the most sublime of all our ideas. Upon every ground, Justice and liberty are dear to each other."

" *Just.,* vol. iv, 12th treatise.

does not live alone, it presupposes reciprocity "; " it needs, in order to act, to be developed in a common conscience, dual or plural ", and '* it is this community of conscience which, in the last analysis, constitutes " its " strength ",[18] Going even beyond the boundaries of conscience, we must remember also that " Justice assumes different names according to the faculties to which it appeals. In the order of conscience, it is Justice, properly so called . . .; in the order of intelligence, it is equality or equation; in the sphere of the imagination, it is named ideal; in Nature, it is equilibrium. Justice commands the attention of each of these categories of ideas and facts under a particular name ". Thus if we ask ourselves, for instance, how the idea of beauty is formed in us, " by what transition our mind rises from the aspect of imperfect and miserable realities to divine contemplation of the ideal ", the answer will be " through Justice ",[14] Nay more, both " idea and sentiment", Justice is not only " man's law ", it is at the same time " Nature's law ".[15] To have a full conception of it, we must not only go beyond the boundaries of the individual conscience, but beyond the very boundaries of humanity. It is then " the most complete and the most primordial" notion, corresponding to what Hegel " calls now the Idea, now the Spirit or the Absolute ".[18] " Universal and absolute criterion of certitude ", " the eternal formula of things, the idea which upholds all ideas, the law which asserts itself ", it is to be hailed " as the first and last reason of the universe ",[17]

It is clear that if the definitions which Proudhon multiplies disconcert at first by their vagueness, their breadth, or their variety, the cause is to be found in the very richness of Proudhon's idea of justice, in a fulness which cannot be labelled otherwise than as religious:

> Justice . . . under various names, governs the world, Nature and humanity, knowledge and conscience, logic and morality, political economy, history, literature and art. Justice is the most primitive thing in the human soul, the most fundamental in society, the most sacred among the nations. . . . It is the essence of religions at the same time as it is the form of reason, the secret object of faith. . . ,[18]

M. Gurwitch has called attention to this almost infinite extension of the notion of justice, which makes it, he says, " the universal prin-

[19] *Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 367, 401.
[14] *Phil, populate,* chapter 8 *{Just.,* vol. i, pp. 217, 219).
" To Chaudey, March 15th, 1859 (vol. viii, p. 350).
" *Phil, populaire,* chapter 8 *(Just.,* vol. i, p. 217, note).
[11] *Just.*, vol. iv, pp. 437-8. *Ibid.:* " Since then, according to all the testimony, Justice is the real object which all philosophers seek, since in Justice the true, the useful and the beautiful find their guarantee and their identity. . . . "
[x]» *Phil, populaire,* chapter 10 *(Just.,* vol. i, pp. 226-7).

ciple of a system of monist metaphysics '\ Proudhon, he concludes, ends by making justice divine. In that he sees a deviation and a perversion.[19] The judgement is perhaps debatable, but the essentia* of his finding is correct. It is certain that in the presence of Justice Proudhon feels a shudder run through him as he would before sacred things.[20] When it is a question of justice his style grows stronger and catches fire. His fervour towards it is that of the faithful for their god. We could compose a litany of the titles he bestows upon it. He suffers to see it " unknown and insulted ", this Justice which he " adores", and he exclaims: " *Crucior, crucior in hac flamma".* Through it, he declares, " I feel that I am in communion with mankind, and all the centuries are in communion with me"; provided I possess it, " I can do without everything else ", like the Christian who had no desire to know anything or possess anything save his Christ, and with Ecclesiastes it is fitting that we should say of it: " *Vanitas vanitatum, practer illi soli servire!* "[21] He scoffs at the philosophers who, wishing to speak of it, can utter only cries of admiration,[22] without being able to draw from it a specific morality. Yet that is the way in which he himself at least begins; he admits that " however well it may be explained", it " remains always, fundamentally, a mystery like life itself ",[23] and no doubt he was never more deeply sincere than the day when he wrote in his Note-book: "Where does this passion for justice in me come from, a passion which carries me away, excites me, and sets my blood boiling? I cannot account for it. It is my God, my religion, my all; and if I attempt to justify it by philosophic reasons, I cannot do so."[24]

Those are not hyperboles. Justice truly has a divine character for him. He sets up a kind of ontological argument, which recalls the argument of St. Anselm: " What can be imagined more universal, stronger, more complete than Justice, in which the best

" L'*idie du droit social,* p. 373, note 3.

[10] Cf. to Langlois, October 27th, 1858 (speaking of those who upheld copyrights): " They do not see that the just, the beautiful and the true form the religion of the future; that this religion, just as much as the Christianity which it replaces, is *Sacred*[11]' (vol. viii, p. 239), etc.

[81] *Just.,* vol. iv, p. 493; pp. 462-4.

" *Prop.,* pp. 143-4:" Philosophers should be more learned (than the theologians): they have debated so much about what is just and unjust! Unfortunately investigation proves that their learning amounts to nothing, and that they are in the same state as those savages whose whole prayer to the sun consisted of * O ! etc.

[23] *Porn.,* Notes and Thoughts, p. 463.

[24] Third Note-book (quoted by Yves Simon, in *Nova et vetera,* July-September 1934).

implies contradiction?"[25] In truth, it is above any and every god: .

It has not occurred to anybody that Right is the greatest and the most powerful of all the gods, superior even to destiny. Justice is the daughter, at the very most the spouse, but the repudiated spouse, of Jupiter; a mere attribute of Jehovah. . . . (And yet, in reality) it is the greatest of the gods, its cult is the highest of all religions, its study the theology *par excellence,* . . ,[26]

Its greatness is measured by its demands, which take second place to none:

Justice is higher than the affection which unites us to father, mother, wife, children, companion. It does not prevent us from loving them; it makes us love them in a different manner, with Humanity in view. That is why Justice has been made God, and why he who has renounced God always adores Justice, although it is nothing other than his own commandment unto himself, the principle and the law of social dignity.2[7]

Addressing himself successively to those who thought themselves Atheists and to those who called themselves Christians, Proudhon tries to reconcile them by showing them that if they are what they should be in the light of their own conscience, then they are united with one another in the adoration of one same divinity, which is none other than Justice. First he wrote to " a citizen of the Charente-Interieure", who had declared his atheism to Proudhon: " You yourself," he said to him, " O Confessor and Martyr, how religious you are, whatever you may say ! a religious of the god Justice, which would certainly be the true one, if you recognized in it a personality, the supreme personality, without which my humble logic vainly seeks the efficient cause of your small personalities."[28] Then, turning to the Christians, he sets forth his belief and tries to show them that that belief is also, of necessity, theirs :

Justice is severe, and cannot bear any banter. Every knee bends before it, and every head is bowed. It alone gives permission, is tolerant, prevents or authorizes: it would cease to be, if it needed, from anybody whatsoever, permission, authorization or toleration. Every hindrance is an insult to it, and every man is bound to arm himself to overcome such hindrance. Very different is religion, which has been

" *Phil, populate,* chapter 10 *(Just.,* vol. i, p. 227). Cf. *Just.,* vol. iv, p. 438:" Let us apply to it the definition which Spinoza gave of his chimera, substance: *per causam sui intelligo id cuius essentia involvit existentiam."*

[24] .P.,pp. 128,129.

[27] *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 342.

[28] *Just.,* vol. i, p. 447.

able to prolong its life only by being tolerant, which no longer even exists save by toleration. It suffices to say that its role is finished. Justice, on the contrary, imposes itself upon us, and without conditions ; it will not suffer anything contrary to itself, it admits no rivalry, either in the conscience or in the mind; and whoever sacrifices it, were it even to an Idea, were it even to Love, excludes himself from mankind's communion. . . .

But, the last of the Christians will say to us, your Justice is the kingdom of God which the Gospel bids us seek above all things: *Quaerite primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus;* it is sacrifice which God prefers: *Sacrificate sacrificium justitiae.* Why then do you not rather hail our God, and why do you reject his religion ?

It is because you yourselves, O inconsistent adorers, you believe in Justice still more than in your God. You affirm its word, not because it is divine, but because your mind finds it true; you follow its commands, not because God is the author of them, but because they seem just to you. Theology may try to reverse this order, to give God the sovereignty and make Justice subordinate to him, the inward sense protests, and, in the common teaching, in prayer, it is Justice which serves as a witness to the Divinity and as a surety for religion. Justice is the supreme God, it is the living God, the almighty God, the only God who dares to show himself intolerant towards those who blaspheme him, and below him there are only pure idealities and hypotheses. Pray to your God, Christians, the law allows you to do so; but take care not to prefer him to Justice, otherwise you will be dealt with as conspirators and criminals.[29]

Make what allowances you will for oratorical enthusiasm and for verbal exaggerations, which are a fault throughout the whole of Proudhon's work, it is impossible not to recognize the religious accent in pages such as that. Proudhon was not only a " philosopher of abstract right '\[30] as he has been called, he was, as he himself said, a " missionary of right ".[81] He wanted to be one to make practical applications of right among men, but also, and first of all, to make the idea of it uppermost in their conscience.[88] In this twofold sense he professed that " the building up of Justice was the greatest business of mankind ".[38] It is not permissible that Justice should be a stranger anywhere, no realm of human activity must be closed to it. The two great heresies, the two great denials of modern times are those sym-

[f] *Phil, populaire,* chapter 9 *(Just.,* vol. i, pp. 224-5).
[°] Aug6-Larib6, Introduction to *Prop.,* p. iii.
[1] *Phil, populaire,* chapter 10, No. 7 *(Just.,* vol. i, p. 227).
** Proudhon replied to Soule" who had sent him from Toulon a letter expressing his cordial adhesion to Proudhon's ideas: " You can be sure that it will remain in my archives as proof of the progress pure and gratuitous ustice is making in our southern provinces." July 6th, 1864 (vol. xiii, p. 304).
"Just., vol i, p. 224.

bolized by the names of Machiavelli and Adam Smith, the former seeking to filch from Justice the sphere of politics, and the latter that of economics.[84] In both spheres it was important to re-establish it. Everywhere it was important that Justice should be installed as a queen.[86]

And just as one must devote oneself to her kingdom, so should one love her with a disinterested love: she had to " subsist by herself, free of charge and without any other hope ",[36] Moreover, the more justice was carried into effect, in oneself and in others, the happier would one be to live and the less afraid of dying.[87] It was in justice alone that man found cause for action, as it was in it alone that he found strength and refuge; and it was also in it, if he was faithful in his service to it, that he received enlightenment, so much so that at the end he could say: " Because I have sought Justice above all else, denying, contradicting, overthrowing all that was not Justice, a general understanding of things has been added unto me."[88]

It has been said that Proudhon's notion of justice was a legacy from Roman law. He himself, in fact, explicitly claimed connexion with the " Roman conception " and the " Latin conception "; he quoted Ulpian and Cicero; he noted that the latter established a relationship between the two ideas of justice and dignity; he had recourse to etymology to prove that it was not in *religio* but in *justitia* that the idea of a social bond was to be found.[89] Nevertheless, one might with more justification summon up here old Heraclitus, accord-

*[4] *Just.*, vol. ii, p. 186: " What Adam Smith and the physiocrats did for economics in the eighteenth century, carefully separating them from politics and Justice . . . Machiavelli had done for politics, two and a half centuries previously, separating them in like manner from Justice and economics. . . . "

•• Cf. to Madier-Montjau, October 2nd, 1862: " Yes, my dear fellow, the *religion of right* is being formed; soon it will spring up and nothing will be able to resist it. What it will need will be missionaries. There is an immense future for you there, and I beg you seriously to consider it. . . . " Justice was to be considered " no longer merely as an idea or notion of the understanding, but as a passion, as a religion " (vol. xii, p. 205).

***Just.*, vol. iv, p. 435. A similar sentiment is expressed by Michelet, *Coup d'atil sur Vensemble du slide et son de'clin rapide* (1873): " Justice, this God whom I invoked in the full vigour of my manhood, on the death of my father (in the preface to my *Rivolutlon),* is still my support. In it I have found a genuine happiness, a hope which cannot deceive me, in between the two sophistical schools—the one of nothingness, the other of arbitrariness—of the divine whim " (quoted by Daniel Halevy, *Jules Michelet,* p. 186).

[87] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 542.

[88] /. P., p. 316. Cf. *Just.*, vol. iii, pp. 67-8: " I affirm, as the supreme idea and the governing idea for all future ages, Relation, Equilibrium, Right. I consider as mere dialectical instruments, subordinated to this idea, the concepts of substance, cause, matter, soul, life; I profess gratuitous and unrewarded justice."

•• *Just.*, vol. i, pp. 352-6.

ing to whom " God's true name was Harmony, Justice ",[40] and who proposed as an ideal an equilibrium, the outcome of a struggle* between contraries. Proudhon was even more indebted to the Bible. His passion was that of the prophets of Israel, his hopes flowed from theirs :

Behold the days come, saith the Lord,
and I will raise up David a just branch.
And a king shall reign, and shall be wise,
and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth.

In those days shall Juda be saved
and Israel shall dwell confidently:
and this is the name that they shall call him:
The Lord, Our Just One.[1]

Mention has also been made, rightly, of a " Platonism " in Proudhon. Indeed, as we have seen, Proudhon believed in Ideas, in the Platonic sense of the word. He contemplated them in a motionless heaven, which eludes the grasp of all dialectics. He loved to write the word with a capital letter. " God forbid," he exclaimed, " that I should ever pretend to have invented an *Idea* ! "[4a] For his part, an " Idea, incorruptible seed, passes through all the ages, enlightening from time to time a man whose will is good, until the day when an intelligence which nothing can intimidate gathers it, broods over it, then casts it like a meteor upon the electrified masses ".[43] Now Justice is the highest and the first of all Ideas, something like the Idea itself of Good with Plato. Of it especially, of this " princess Idea ", it is true to say that it cannot be engendered. Georges Sorel complains that one cannot see ** very well the genesis of the idea of justice", so that " something is lacking in Proudhon's exposition '\[44] Not only can one not see ** very well " this genesis, but one cannot see it at all, and one ought not to see it since Proudhon declined to admit that there is any. Other commentators, less refined, avow that they " kick " against a conception of Justice in which they can see nothing but " clouds " :[45] they thereby show how ridiculous was their attempt to

[4P] Heraclitus, fragments 8, 10, 51, 54 (Harmony); fragments 80, 94 (Justice). One might also summon up " Themis ", as conceived by yEschylus, appearing ** at the end of a conflict and as the solution of a conflict": cf. F. Vian, *Zeus et la destitute dans Eschyle, Revue des itudes grecques*, December, 1942, pp. 211-12.

[41] Jeremias, xxiii, 5-6. Cf. xxxiii, 15-16.

[4,] /.G.A.,(1851),p. 112.

[*] *Op.cit.*,?. 139.

[44] *Essai sur la philosophic de Proudhon*, in the *Revue phUosophique*, 2, p. 44.

[48] Henri Bachelin, *Les Pricurseurs: P. J. Proudhon, soctaliste national* (1941), p. 48.

annex Proudhon. Except that we shall not pass judgement in the same sense, we can quite simply agree with Bakunin, who was vexed about it, that " despite all the efforts he made to shake off the traditions of classical Idealism, Proudhon remained, for all that, an incorrigible Idealist all his life through. . . ."[4e]

Does such Idealism constitute an avowal of transcendency? We should be, as we know, going against the explicit and very decided intention of Proudhon if we said so. The Justice which he heralded is " the essence of humanity ",[47] it is " the innateness of the soul ",[48] Therefore we must say, with M. G. Guy-Grand, that " the equilibrium must be realized *within* immanence itself, metaphysical transcendency being ruled out ".[49] " The world of ideas," M. Jean Lacroix also explains,[50] " is within humanity even *qua* social being", and consequently that we are in presence of a Platonism " from which transcendency is excluded". How indeed could we doubt it when Proudhon himself tells us that " Justice is human, quite human, nothing but human. . . . Justice has its seat in humanity, it is progressive and indefectible in humanity, because it belongs to humanity"?[51] A text such as that, however, does not suppress all the others in which Proudhon expressly refused to hold humanity as adorable, whereas he states that he adores Justice. Without making him say or think what he did not think or say, one cannot help noticing that his attitude towards Justice supposes in the latter, according to M. Gurwitch's expression,[52] " a trans-personalist character ", which itself implies a kind of transcendency. So, whatever may be said about the words or even the thesis, which we have tried to analyse in their exact tenor, the impression produced upon Herzen by the third volume of *Justice* can be understood. The man who had collaborated with Proudhon and who could believe that he was closely linked with him in thought read it with a growing irritation. He was no longer able to recognize " the great iconoclast" whom he had loved. He saw that he had *• fallen back into metaphysics ". It was not only the pages about woman and the family that grated on him. He accused him of setting up an idol again and of sacrificing afresh the human person to the god he had invented. What becomes of liberty, he asked, what becomes

*• Quoted by A. Cuvillier, *A la lumtire du marxisme,* vol. ii, p. 194.
[47] Quoted by Guy-Grand, Introduction to *Just.,* p. 125.
•• *Just.,* vol. iii, p. 438.
*• Introduction to *Just.,* p. 125.
[10] *Proudhon ou la souverainetd du Droit,* in *Itiniraire spirltuel,* p. 69. Cf. Charles Peiin, *Les doctrines iconomiques depuis un siicle* (1880), p. 159.
[11] *Just.,* vol. i, p. 324.
•• *Uidte du droit social,* p. 373.

of " the autonomy of action ", if the person must sacrifice himself to a Justice of which he is the instrument and which, in a way, empties him, so much so that " the person is no longer the person, and its sense, its substance, is outside the person " ?[53] " This Justice," comments Herzen's historian, M. Raoul Labry, " was then an entity which replaced, outside the world, the god of the theologians. It . . . substituted transcendency for immanence."[64]

Incorrect according to the letter, is this judgement equally incorrect according to the spirit ? Let us say rather that by his idea of Justice Proudhon wished to avoid both abstract Idealism and human Realism. He wanted also to transcend both of the poles into which he had first of all split up the traditional idea of God: Nature or Absolute, Humanity or Progress. That he failed is obvious. So some have been able to interpret him in the sense of a pure moralism, and others in the sense of a positive sociology. When he says that in reality " God is humanity's conscience",[55] the sentence remains ambiguous: does it mean that the divinity is not to be sought beyond what is human ? If so, that is a profession of Immanentism. Does it give a hint as well and especially, as it seems to do, that above humanity there is an exigence of justice which alone deserves the name of God ? Then it re-introduces, willy-nilly, a transcendency. But it can no longer be the real transcendency. Without the help of the theologians the " Humanists " cannot be effectively refuted. Proudhon reacted against the tendency of the human mind, a superstitious tendency, " to transform, under pressure of the absolute, its notion of justice into a divine essence, and then to give to that essence a phenomenal realization ",[58] He banished " all the substantial, causative, verbal, justifying and redeeming gods '\[57] He denounced in religion a " subordination of right to the ideal", which destroys Justice to the benefit of an " idolatry ".[58]—Alas ! Do not all these precautions go against the end in view ? " Every man," he also said, " over whom Justice does not rule supremely, is under the dominion of an idol."[59] In these endeavours to purify, we must be more exacting than he. Why did he not see it ? Justice itself is turned into an idol.

In the very year of Proudhon's death, poor Baudelaire was writing

" *By be y Dumy,* 41 (Labry's trans., *Herzen et Proudhon,* pp. 180-3).
5[4] Labry, *op. cit.,* pp. 171-2.
•• *Just.%* vol. iv, p. 445. " This formula," he said, " is a summary of my whole book."
[M]/i»f.,vol. iii,p. 176.
"Just., vol. iii, p. 67.
"Just., vol. iv, p. 310.
•• Cf. *Just.,* vol. iv, pp. 492-3.

" Trusting in God, in other words, in Justice itself".[80] Who does not feel the difference here, compared with Proudhon's cult ? Who does not. see that two opposite systems of metaphysics are implied in the impulses of the two souls ? In his adoration of Justice, Proudhon did not include that surging of the heart, that cry of confidence, which mark a return to the true God. Something essential is wanting in his Justice for it to be one with the *Justitia martens,* to which a St. Augustine invites us to turn.[61] Nevertheless, the fact remains that Proudhon was not far from loving Justice as a Person. We can say of him much the same as Peguy said of his youth when he asserted that the cult which then inspired him was " Christian in essence ". The Justice which the young Peguy had loved before coming to know its true countenance, to which he had " given everything ", was not a " conceptual justice "; it was " eternal and not only temporal"; it was " a living Justice ",[62] So was Proudhon's. And that no doubt is why there is less paradox than at first appeared in his way of looking upon the laws of Justice as ruling the physical world as well as the moral world. Is that not again one of Plato's views, which Christianity confirms ? With Plato, says M. Lachieze-Rey, the natural order and the moral order converge in the Idea of the Good as in their common source. Undoubtedly it is impossible to follow in detail the effective action of that Idea of the Good, and that is what gives apparent strength to the materialist hypotheses. It is none the less true that, if the principle of Nature must be intelligence and if the guarantee of moral truth demands that it be at the same time a value, at the origin of every essence as well as of every existence must be placed, as Plato intended, the Idea of the Good, or as Proudhon wished, Justice. That is an exigency which Christianity by no means contradicts, but, on the contrary, assumes when it teaches us that God is Love.[68]

•° **Baudelaire,** ***Mon cctur mis a nu,*** **chapter 95.**
[81] **St. Augustine,** ***Inpsalmum 61,*** **21.**
•* **Peguy,** ***Notre Jeunesse {Works),*** **p. 148.**
•* **P. Lachieze-Rey,** ***Les idees morales, sociales et politiques de Platon,*** **pp. 54-8.**
Cf. J. M. Le Blond, ***Dieu est Amour,*** **pp. 19-20.**

CHAPTER XV

PROUDHON'S TESTIMONY

IT WAS often remarked, in his last years, that Proudhon had come very close to some of the " Conservative " positions. That was true of politics in general. It was particularly true of religious politics. Towards 1860, to the astonishment of many of his friends, he was seen strongly to side against Italian unity and to oppose Mazzini by upholding the papacy. He readily laughed at those " people for whom traditions are nothing, who think you can change Churches as you change underpants, who reshape people's morals and beliefs as, in their own rooms, they reshape the map of Europe ". As for himself, he was going to take " a Catholic stand " and he was not afraid even to be taken for a " clerical". Considering " before all else matters of fact", he observed that " religion still held a great place in the soul of the nations ", that any attempt at persecution would certainly result in " reviving religious passions and in making the civil power odious ",. and that, in addition to that, when the established worship failed, so long as a deep-seated transformation had not taken place in consciences, " superstitions and mystical sects of every kind were immediately formed ", which were a plague to society. The traditional religion, in France notably, " is still, for the immense majority of mortals, the foundation of morality, the fortress of the consciences". So a statesman should be careful not to set it tottering.[1]

There is nothing in all that, it will be seen, which sound realism, strengthened by experience, cannot explain. Religion, properly so called, plays no part in it. All that then has very little interest for us, considering our outlook and object in this book. He may grow more and more impatient with " the crass stupidity " of a certain number of those whom he is still forced to " call his co-religionists and friends ",[a] but Proudhon had not waited until old age crept upon him before praising the wisdom included in traditions, and deploring the ravages of a " free-thought" which he did not want confused with his belief in Justice. That free-thought had "dissected everything, destroyed everything ", he had already said in his *Confessions;* it had spread

[1] *U.I.* (1862), pp. 20-2, 51-2, 98-9, etc. To Defontaine, August 22nd, 1862 (vol. xii, p. 169), etc.

[a] To Rolland, May 24th, 1860.

" chaos " everywhere; it had jumbled together just and unjust, and the liberty it preached, " being without ballast or compass was a liberty for all crimes ".[3] Such language does not surprise us either, it is in keeping with all we know of the author's doctrine and of his solicitude for moral austerity. Some of his other complaints may perhaps be more significant because they reveal a nostalgia. Proudhon often criticized the Church's mysticism. When, in Brussels, he was preparing some notes for another edition of *Justice*, he still would not see in contemplation anything but a disease, and he blamed it for all the defects of Quietism. He wanted the Church, " if it was possible for her to be logical against herself ", to forbid all mental prayer and to replace it with work and study.[4] In this we can recognize a distrust, signs of which he continually showed, and which once again seemed to blind him to the true value of the spiritual life. In spite of all that, he felt an attraction to a kind of contemplative state. He distinguished it more and more from intellectual musings and from the outward practice of the virtues. He understood that, even within the pale of orthodoxy itself, when fervour becomes entirely " speculation ", when one no longer knows " what praying " really " means ", in a word, when one becomes " incapable of contemplation ", then religion is stricken in its source.[6] How much more arid is the atmosphere created by Rationalism ! Morality is not sufficient, " It is not enough to lay down principles, to indicate the rules, to define rights and duties." The modern soul is withered. " The practice of recollection " must be rediscovered. It will be necessary to learn again how to live within one's own self, so as to find again therein the depths, the calm, the unity, the intimate delight which are the prerogative of the believer communing with his God. Hence one of the tasks essential for " decent folk in the future " will be " seriously to see about replacing . . . the practices of Christian spirituality ".[8]

Up to that point, it is still only a question of looking for a substitute. Proudhon's testimony, however, goes further still. Moreover, that testimony is not so much the outcome of a belated evolution of his

* *Con.*, pp. 100-1. Cf. *C. D.*, p. 96: " For my part, I have not placed my confidence in anything which is new under the sun; I have faith in ideas as old as mankind. . . . "

[3] *Just.*, notes, vol. iii, pp. 283-9. There are two reasons which partly explain the excessive nature of these criticisms, so unfair at times as to be ridiculous: a sensitive solicitude for the integrity of morals, and his preconceived notion that all spiritual activity not immediately directed to the social sphere is ineffective. Cf. *supra*, Part Four, chap. x.

[6] *Just.*, vol. iii, p. 442.

• *Porn.*, p. 463. To Rolland, May 24th, 1860. " Everything that gives me merit in the eyes of the world, is, to my way of thinking, mere printer's bagatelles."

thought as of an incessant " revolution " in keeping with the fundamental rhythm of his dialectic. If he never lets us rest in the forms of our Theism, he also gives us the right not to let him rest either in his criticisms or in his Atheism. Not by going back in a way which would amount to retreating, but by a spiral movement, in virtue of the very dynamism of his thought, he himself never ceases, as it were, in spite of himself, to bring them back into question. Thus the problem of God is always recurring, or rather God himself commands his attention afresh: " God is inexhaustible, and our contest eternal . . ."[7]

Edouard Droz has said that his religion was an enigma. He also quotes, with approval, a phrase from Diehl, which assures us that " the man was more religious than he was a Socialist philosopher ", and he reminds us that towards the end of his life he used to repeat with emphasis " We must get back to the sources, seek the divine ".[8] The Russian Armenkov, whom he knew in Paris, spoke of his " religious fluctuations " hidden, but not suppressed, by a certain tone of assurance:[9] now what struck an observer in 1846 appears to have remained true until the end. If he could say of himself that he was " the least mystical man in the world ", it is more especially because by that he meant " the most realist, the one farthest removed from all freakish notions and from all enthusiasm ".[10] At the moment when he lost his childhood faith he knew " a laceration of conscience ",[11] but the way in which he speaks of it afterwards shows quite clearly that he never found a haven in any firm negation. It is not only in humanity, as he said on several occasions, that the idea of God reappears, impervious to all criticism: it also reappears in the conscience of this thinker, in himself. Better than Auguste Comte, though in a different way, he is proof that man cannot say farewell for ever to metaphysics and theology.

At the outset of his work on property he had proclaimed that his name was " seeker of truth ". Later, answering a correspondent who announced a forthcoming work on his thought, and fearing lest his

[1] *P.* Af., vol. ii, p. 253. Cf. Note-book for 1846: " God necessary to reason, but rejected by reason.'*

[8] Droz, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-9.

• Letter of November 8th-20th, 1846, to the Russian newspaper, *Le Contemporain.* Quoted by Raoul Labry, *Herzen et Proudhon,* pp. 34-5. Cf. Proudhon's letter to M. Gabriel X., July 22nd, 1855: " You share, you say, my opinion on religion. It would reflect great credit upon me, and I should be proud of it, if you knew my opinion on religion. Now, in spite of all my criticisms upon it, whether in details or on broad lines, you cannot know what my definitive opinion is in matters of religion, and if you had read me, you would know that I have rather raised difficulties and set forth problems than published an opinion " (vol. vi, p. 216).

[10] To Michelet, April 11th, 1851 (vol. xiv, p. 162).

[11] To Tilloy, September 22nd, 1856 (vol. vii, pp. 134-5).

intellectual positions should be too sharply defined therein, he made haste to say " the world of ideas is infinite "; if the author of the work intended to confine him within " fixed formulas ", he was asked to keep it unpublished.[12] Later still, he made known to Abbe X. his desire to study more thoroughly and " unceasingly these questions which seemingly must eternally fill the thoughts of mankind and ever divide them ".[13] Meanwhile, one day, July 10th, 1851, he thought he had lived through " a solemn date . . . in [his] moral and intellectual life". He believed then that in passing his *Idee gentrale de la Revolution* for the press he had " definitely broken with the theological idea"; which gave him, as he wrote in his Note-book, "something of a heartbreak and a remorse of conscience stronger than any he had felt in his life '\[14] Hitherto, he thought, he had been concerned only with controversies about God, now his decision was finally taken, " irrevocably ": against the eternal Being and the absolute of religions and metaphysics, he had decided in favour of the idea of Progress, and it only remained for him henceforward to draw the inferences contained in it. This " psychological phenomenon " is, as he remarks, " one of the most interesting to notice ", but, as we can now take in the whole of his existence at a glance, we are better able to interpret it than he was under the emotion of the moment. So, the first " wrenches " which accompanied his loss of faith, the savage resolutions which he had taken to fight against the Church, his declaration of war against God himself, none of these was an " irrevocable " agreement ? No,—but neither was the " solemn " day in 1851. Never was he entirely to hitch himself on to the chariot of the god Progress, and possibly his devotion to that god was more fervent before that date than afterwards. Proudhon had just written his *Lettres sur la philosophie du progres,* which he published in the following year. He was still suffering from the effect of a strong impression, which gave him a wrong idea as to the full significance of his gesture. As a matter of fact, he still carried on his inward dialogue just the same as before. His thought was not a " closed thought". From time to time the curtains were drawn aside.

" To Paul Robert, April 15th, 1850 (vol. iii, pp. 206-7).

[19] January 22nd, 1855 (vol. vi, p. 167). Cf. p. 116: We have enough to agree upon and to fight about *ad infinitum."*

[14] Note-books. " It is quite true, as Jouffroy has so eloquently related, that these conversions, these moments in which the soul regains self-possession, are not effected without a great deal of effort and much pain. This psychological phenomenon is one of the most interesting to watch. To use a comparison from Christian mythology, seemingly the good angel and the bad angel are pulling away at man's conscience and they share the pieces between them. The next moment is calm and peaceful, as must be the moment after a woman's delivery and after the carrying out of every sacrifice."

With him, "the Euclidean mind", to use Dostoievsky's language, never knew a definitive triumph.

Never having given up what he called " the lofty metaphysical speculations ",[15] he always retained the feeling that the foundation of being eluded one in a persistent obscurity. Notwithstanding certain phrases in the *Creation de l'ordre,* it would never have entered his head that science was capable of driving all mystery out of the universe ! He was " less inclined to wonder-seeking than many an Atheist", but that did not prevent him from being on his guard against " free thinkers, just as much as superstitious ones "; he was annoyed at the impertinence shown by scholars " on the strength of such little knowledge ", and, in opposition to " our vulgar Rationalism ", he considered the universe to be " but a hall of magic where one must not be surprised at anything ". The " distress " of which he wrote the philosophy, is equally that of our knowledge: " We differ from the ancients ", he said, " only in the richness of the language with which we adorn the obscurity which surrounds us on all sides ", and, refusing to follow those who flattered themselves that they had solved the riddle of the Sphinx, he made this admission, so humanly pathetic:

Ignorant as I am of all that concerns God, the world, the soul, destiny; . . . not knowing whether my formulas, theological in spite of myself, should be taken in a proper or a figurative sense; in this perpetual contemplation of God, of man and of things. . . . We are full of the Divinity . . . everything is infected with this indelible superstition, outside of which we are not allowed to speak or to act, and without which we do not even think.[16]

" Man," he says again, " vainly extends the circle of his ideas, his light is always but a spark flitting about in the immense night which folds us in."

These texts are so many professions of agnosticism. You feel very well, however, that Proudhon was not an agnostic either in his method or in his system—and least of all through indifference. He no more gives up seeking than humanity itself gives it up: " God, soul, religion, eternal subjects of our ceaseless musings and of our most fatal straying, terrible problems, the solution to which, ever attempted, remains ever incomplete . . ."[17] The ignorance which he admits is not something purely

[15] To Micaud, June 29th, 1844: "the lofty philosophical speculations which, at times, are a real passion with me " (vol. vi, p. 340).
[16] *P. M,* vol. i, pp. 55-6; p. 45, etc.
[17] *Prop.,* p. 141.

negative. It takes on a positive value when it becomes acknowledgement of mystery. That mystery, Proudhon acknowledges everywhere: in human history, which he considered " all . . . figurative ";[18] in society in general, of which the knowledge appears " infinite " to him, so much so that " no man possesses it ";[19] in the family, where he discerns " something mysterious, divine, which in no way contradicts reason, but yet always outdistances it ".[20] That is why mysticism seems to him to be " an indestructible element of the soul ".[21] That is why, deep down, while he detests false sublimities, he is annoyed with " the bad tendency " which " our French mind " has to " belittle ", and to make commonplaces of, everything under the pretext of making things clear and simple.[22]

This sense of mystery is also a feeling of tragedy. Proudhon meant to guard himself against " optimism "[28] as much as against" commonplaces ". He guarded himself against it more and more, never giving up what he thought was the fight against evil, but discovering that evil, like mystery, is always reviving. In this moral sphere, his dialectic is still a translation of his experience. Listen to him, for instance, in one of these dialectical reversions. He bursts into a line of thought contrary to the thesis he has spent all his passion in maintaining. He does not become wedded to it, but by the ringing tone of his language you can tell, without a shadow of a doubt, that it is not merely for him a case of dramatizing an opponent's objection or of academic balance. He had wanted to eliminate the mystery of original sin; he had wanted to replace every idea of grace with the sole idea of justice. Now here was a case which had ended in Justice being revealed as " insufficient and ineffective "; it had had to " call on other strength, a higher grace ". The institutions and the laws could not be taxed with this check; it would seem that it is the soul itself which labours under some innate disorder:

Thus the horrible nightmare always pursues me. A score of times in these Researches we have floored the Hydra, and, when we think

[18] *R. S.*, p. 263.
[19] To Gauthier, May 2nd, 1841.
[20] *Porn.*, p. 463.
[21] *Just.*, vol. iv, p. 441.
" To X., June 5th, 1861 (vol. xi, p. 114); cf. to Gouvernet, June 17th (p. 117). One can easily see what he would have thought of Berthelot's celebrated saying: " The world today is without mystery." Berthelot, *Les origines de Valchimie* (1884), p. 1.
" To Trouessart, September 16th, 1853 (vol. v, pp. 247, 249). " It is known," M. Yves Simon writes, " that, in a general way, the writings of his last years considerably modified the rationalistic and scientist optimism of his youthful years." *Notes sur le fddiralisme proudhonien, Esprit,* April, 1937, p. 56.

we are freed from it, we meet it again more menacing, challenging us to a final encounter. What witchery besets us, and makes us continually find, on analysis, evil and death where the instincts of our heart told us life and virtue should be?[24]

Nevertheless through reflection a progress is accomplished, although not in a direct line, and we are not brought back to our starting-point. Proudhon begins to have another opinion in proportion as his dialectic develops: that of a universe and of thought, extended indefinitely. The mystery is not abolished, but a larger one is discovered: " We know it today: this old intellectual world, which for so many centuries has exhausted human speculation, is only a facet of the one which it is given to us to traverse."[25] Now, inside this new intellectual world will be found all the problems which were debated inside the old one. It is like a new flood rushing over us, larger and more powerful than the first:

The most advanced and the best established conclusions of reason, those which appear to have settled the theological question for ever, bring us back to primordial mysticism and present the new data of an inevitable philosophy. Criticism of religious opinions makes us laugh today both at ourselves and at the religions; and yet *the summary of that criticism is only a reproduction of the problem.* Mankind, at this moment when I am writing, is on the eve of acknowledging and asserting something which will amount for it to the old notion of the Divinity; and that, no longer as of old by a spontaneous movement, but with reflection and in virtue of an invincible dialectic. . , .[u]

It will always be the same, no matter what progress may have been made, or how far thought may have leapt beyond the positions it held. The idea that one can just " overstep the borders " is an illusory one: " At each step we make in the knowledge of nature and of causes the idea of God grows larger and reaches a higher plane: the more we advance in knowledge, the more God seems to grow and to recede."[27] And once when he was trying to take his bearings, Proudhon again observed, thinking of the various doctrines which he had rejected in succession: "When I had driven out all the mysticisms I found myself contending again with a greater mysticism, justice, the mystery of mysteries. . . . "

Then, once more the sole question crops up, in its simplest terms, in its incisive, inevitable terms:

[24] *Just.*, vol. Hi, p. 516.

[25] *G. R.*, pp. 335-8.

[26] *P. Af.*, vol. i, p. 44. Cf. p. 49: " So philosophy at its last hour knows no more than it did at its birth. . . ."

[27] *Prop.*, pp. 140-1.

They tell me not to worry about the height of heaven. But that question does worry me, and it is worse still when I find that within that question lies the question of knowing whether there is a God or not.[28]

We certainly have no intention of presenting Proudhon as a mystic perpetually worried. Such thoughts do not always fill his closest horizon. Other troubles, more immediate, take up his time. Other dreams haunt him. Other contests harry him. Nevertheless, he asserts far too often that the mystery supposed to have been eliminated by reflection is coming back on the offensive, and that the religion which analysis was supposed to have dissolved is springing up again,[29] for us not to attach the highest importance to his statements. They tally so aptly with the rhythmic movement of his most intimate and, as it were, his most organic thought that we have a right to suppose that they held a greater place in his personal musings than in his written and published work. Do not the most remarkable texts come from his Note-books ? We must be careful, however, not to exaggerate their significance. These, so to speak, resumptions of, or returns to, old positions, do not mean that Proudhon ever withdrew his negations or gave up the stand he had taken. They must not make us forget any of the aspects of his thought which have been analysed in this work. In their very tenor, even supposing he had intended to abide by them, more often than not they are no indication of a return to the traditional faith, neither do they re-establish transcendency. It would even seem that in proportion as the reflections of his more mature years inclined him to attribute to the mystery surrounding all things a larger share, Proudhon anchored himself more resolutely on a deliberately chosen immanentism. That does not, however, deprive us of the right to call upon him to give testimony, even against himself. The dialogue which he first started with himself, we can carry on between ourselves and him.

" The universal assent of the races," he said, " manifested by the establishment of so many various cults, and the for ever insoluble contradiction which afflicts humanity in its ideas, its manifestations and its tendencies, indicate a secret connexion between our soul—and through it the whole of Nature—and the infinite; the determination of that connexion would at one and the same time show the meaning of the universe and the reason of our existence."[80] That he should acknowledge this secret connexion between our soul and the infinite

[28] Note-books, 1845 (Cf. Hatevy, *be cit.*, p. 30). [29] Cf. P. M., p. 45.
[30] P.Af., vol.ii.p. 398.

is already a great deal, though he had no desire to acknowledger its real nature. It is a great deal that he should not have systematically falsified it. That he did not cease to take seriously the idea of God which emerged from it is also a great deal. " A gigantic, enigmatical idea, which our dialectical instruments can no more penetrate than the telescope can penetrate the depths of the firmament." It was a great deal, it was even more, that he always refused to allow it to be enclosed in man. His criticism of the " Humanists " or of the " new Atheists " is no doubt one of the chief spiritual events of the nineteenth century, and one of the most fruitful for the present century. After having granted to all Feuerbach's disciples or rivals that " every affirmation or hypothesis of the Divinity proceeds from anthropomorphism, and that God is at first only man's ideal or, to put it better, man's phantom ", Proudhon does not consider that the terminus of reflection has been reached. "Ambiguous prophet",[31] he pointed out that "this phenomenon of humanity mistaking itself for God cannot be explained in terms of Humanism, and demands an ulterior interpretation ". He did not pretend to give the last word of that interpretation, but endeavoured to show to all those who thought that they had discovered the supreme secret by transferring God's attributes to man " that the divine hypothesis would come to life again from its own resolution into human reality, and that the phenomenon of a complete, harmonic and absolute existence, always dismissed, is always recurring *\[82] Once he even wondered whether, instead of an elimination which would enable it to take Divinity's place, " humanity's end " would not be, on the contrary, " its definitive reconciliation with God, and its passing from time to eternity ".[33] At all events, every " ending of the story ", every " definitive state " of " ideal perfection ", which would turn us strictly into gods, seemed a pure Utopia to him, and if he had given up religious hope, it was not so that he might dream of a paradise in some future in time. Though its first and more explicit target was the heaven of all the religions, his criticism also struck a blow at all earthly Messianism.[34]

[81] **Louis Veuillot, *Du nouveau livre de M. Proudhon {La revolution sociale), VUnivers,* August 29th, 1852.**

" *P.* A/., vol. ii, pp. 388-9.

"Note-books, 1847.

[84] **Cf. *Just.*, vol. i, pp. 231-2 *{Phil, populaire,* 9). " We are carried along," he concludes, " together with the universe in an incessant metamorphosis.. . . *Progress* then remains the law of our soul, not in this sense only that, by the perfecting of ourselves, we must be drawing continually nearer to absolute Justice and to the ideal; but in the sense that, as Humanity is endlessly being renewed and developed, like the creation itself, the ideal of Justice and beauty which we have to realize is always changing and growing bigger."**

Proudhon then was opposed to Marx and on more than one ground threw back at him the reproach of Utopia.[36] If he did not believe that humanity will one day be able to settle itself in a definitive harmony, it is because, first of all, he did not believe that human intelligence will fathom the mystery which attracts it. Whereas, for Marx, " humanity lays down for itself only problems that it can resolve ", Proudhon, on the contrary, was of opinion that" our thoughts go further than it is given us to reach ". Therein he saw the greatness as well as the destitution of our intelligence, in that powerlessne^s which kept it ever open and prevented it from being satisfied with any solution in which it would be imprisoned. If our intelligence is seemingly weak, it is because in it, as on some high ground swept by all the winds, " eternal forces throng and clash and sway one another this way and that ".[38] Let others fancy they have reached the goal. Let the Positivists think they have banished metaphysics for evermore. Let the Humanists think that they have rid themselves of the great Phantom for evermore. Proudhon, who was their victim, shared in their negations, but he shows them that the pendulum has swung the other way. No, " the antinomy cannot be resolved." " The fight against God is never-ending."

[85] If, for instance, the mark of a Utopian spirit, for Marx, is the placing of one's confidence in moral forces, for Proudhon, on the other hand, Utopia consists in trying to recast society without" stirring up anew consciousness of Justice[M] *(Just.*, conclusion). He could have said what P6guy afterwards said: " The Revolution will be a moral one or else there will be no Revolution."

"/>.A/.,vol.ii,p. 389;cf. p.413.

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