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DISAGREEMENTS

A Polemic on Culture in the English Democracy

by

R. C. CHURCHILL

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TO MY BROTHER FRANK
AND FAMILY

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October, 1948. R.C.C.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO A COMPLEX SUBJECT

I.

IT is my belief that a book on such a complex subject as this—the relation between culture and democracy in England—should not proceed too strictly according to plan, but that my first, general thoughts should be put down in an introductory chapter, however much they may have to be modified in the more detailed chapters that follow.

At first glance, then, it seems to me that the present age is remarkable, at least in post-mediaeval times, for its lack of confidence in itself. We can barely conceive, it appears, of the state of mind of those spokesmen in the past who were fairly well content with the conditions of civilization under which they were living. Herbert Spencer, for example, looked back with some satisfaction on the immense achievements of the nineteenth century; John Dryden considered the culture of his own time, the Restoration period, to have been obviously superior to that of the preceding age; and even at the close of the disgruntled Middle Ages, when religious prophets were expecting, year by year, God's final judgment on a wicked world, we seem to see in the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer a great poet who accepted with ironic joy the institutions of fourteenth-century Europe.

By contrast, we present to-day a most unsatisfactory account of ourselves; a resolution of No Confidence has been proposed. This in itself is nothing new; similar resolutions were proposed by somebody or other—usually religious fanatics—in every era of the past. But to-day this resolution has not only been proposed: it has been carried unanimously by all those qualified to vote. We differ among ourselves to an extraordinary degree still, but on this subject we are one. Christopher Dawson shakes hands with Bertrand Russell;

even H. G. Wells, the apostle to the Gentiles of the late-nineteenth century Gospel of scientific progress, died solidly in agreement with the gloomy M. Maritain. There is scarcely a shade of difference in the unhappy view of contemporary culture taken by such dissimilar persons as T. S. Eliot and George Santayana, as F. R. Leavis and Wyndham Lewis, as George Orwell and Dom Basil Butler, as Olaf Stapledon and John Middleton Murry. The Vatican and the R.P.A. nod their heads solemnly in strict accord.

This is very disquieting; something is evidently wrong. "One thing is certain," writes Christopher Dawson: "the old order is dead." I differ from Mr. Dawson about some of the reasons, and shall put my own emphases elsewhere; but I think we can all accept, for the moment, his conclusion. The old order has disappeared; culture, it seems, has largely disappeared with it. What, then, *was* culture? "In the sense in which I understand it," observes Jacques Maritain, "a civilization is deserving of the name only if it is a culture, a truly human and therefore mainly intellectual, moral and spiritual development—taking the word 'spiritual' in its widest acceptation."

That, I think, covers everything. We see that culture is not simply music, literature, science, architecture, and so forth, but civilization itself: a form of life different from, and superior to, both the society of primitive peoples and the society of material progress. Man does not live by bread alone; and, so long as we do not use that argument as a pretext for cutting the bread ration of other people—"Bread for myself is a material question," observes Berdyaev: "bread for my neighbour is a spiritual question"—it is difficult to deny its truth. Man does not live, either, by the latest scientific appliances alone; a civilization cannot be called a culture if it is mainly preoccupied with the manufacture and use of these articles, though there is nothing to be said against them in themselves. "For the enjoyment of art," said Richard Jefferies, however (and his words are applicable to culture in general), "it is first of all necessary to have a full belly." Only after the belly has been filled, and other material

wants supplied, is man ready to use his mind, to create or pursue such enjoyments as offer themselves to his spirit. "What is the object of government?" asked Cobbett in *The Poor Man's Friend.* "To cause men to live happily. They cannot be happy without a sufficiency of food and raiment."

In spite of war and Fascism, this century is the century of a fairer distribution of bread and other necessary material things of life. It seems ironic, and even wicked, to say this at the present time, with the hungry 'forties repeating themselves over large sections of the earth; but it is a fact that the common man of the twentieth century is receiving more of the fruits of his labour than did common men in the past. This is true particularly of Europe and North America, and seems to be the result of political democracy, combined with scientific progress and a certain degree of economic state control. It has even penetrated to the minds of politicians that there is no reason why in the twentieth century anybody should go hungry or work so hard that he is too exhausted for creation or recreation.

Democracy was invented—according to the philosopher Bertrand Russell—as a device for reconciling government with liberty. "It is clear that government is necessary if anything worthy to be called civilization is to exist, but all history shows that any set of men entrusted with power over another set will abuse their power if they can do so with impunity. Democracy is intended to make men's tenure of power temporary and dependent upon popular approval. In so far as it achieves this it prevents the worst abuses of power." "Man is civilized," said Matthew Arnold, "when the whole body of society comes to live with a life worthy to be called *human,* and corresponding to man's true aspirations and powers. The means by which man is brought towards this goal of his endeavour are various . . . First and foremost . .. we must name *expansion* . . . The manifestation of it which we in England know best, and prize most, is the love of liberty"

II.

We are faced now, then, with this extremely curious situation:—(a) man cannot live by bread alone; (b) man needs that bread before he can create a high civilization, called culture; (c) never before in the history of Europe and North America has the average man had a greater share of the fruits of his labour than in the present half-century, as a result of the development through past ages of the twin doctrines of personal liberty and political democracy, combined with the development of science; and yet (d) the high civilization, called culture, if not actually dead, is certainly—or so it seems to us at this initial stage of our enquiry—disappearing.

Why is culture disappearing—or restricted to a minority of individuals—*just at the time* when the conditions for culture, a certain degree of material comfort and a certain amount of leisure time, have never before been so widely and wisely fulfilled? Surely culture is not dependent upon the slavery of others? Surely Shakespeare and Beethoven do not spring from the grind and the lash? Surely the view of Aristotle in his *Politics*, that slavery is justified because it sets the slave-owners free for higher things, is out of date now and monstrously insufficient? Surely culture and autocracy are not synonymous terms?

Most people would answer my last rhetorical question with an emphatic "no!"—and they would, of course, be right. What, then, is wrong with democracy that, in its comparative hey-day, it is failing to produce a cultured civilization? We rightly honour the men of past ages who struggled, often against heavy odds, for liberty of conscience, for the freedom of the press, for control over excessive liberty to control others. All this we mean by the short-hand term, "democracy." When men are free to express their own ideas without fear of civil or religious persecution, when men no longer are so worn out by heartbreaking toil as to have no zest for creation or recreation, when men are free to avail themselves of the best that can be procured in the way of music and literature, for

either no payment at all or for a very cheap amount, when these ideals are more nearly realized to-day than ever in the past, what is preventing a cultured democracy? There were many poor men in the mid-nineteenth century who were in the position of William Lovett, who had to cheat their stomachs with dinners of bread and cheese—as he tells us in his autobiography—in order to buy a few tattered second-hand books. There are similar cases to-day, but no longer is it the rule; there are free libraries in nearly every town in Britain and America, while cheap editions of all but the latest books can be bought, in normal times, for less price than fifty cigarettes. The art galleries and museums are open to the public, and the radio in both countries can bring the finest achievements of modern and classical music to the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants. Must we conclude, then, that men always require an incentive, that familiarity or availability has bred contempt?

"Contempt" is certainly the expression for the common reaction to culture to-day, and the actual word has become much weakened in recent times. Nobody would call our present society "cultured." Indeed, if anyone were so rash as to state this in print, what righteous howls of indignation would ensue from the leader-writers of the popular press! It is a libel on contemporary civilization to accuse it of being, in any way or form, "cultured." We—as a body—don't like the expression; we connect it, not altogether without cause, with "highbrows" and "intellectuals" living in unspotted seclusion from the world. We ourselves are practical persons: rough diamonds, in fact, though with hearts of gold. We don't mind there being intellectuals, for everyone to his taste's our democratic motto, but we regard them with some impatience, tempered by a kindly twinkle in our eye. We wonder when they will come down to earth from their Olympic heights; we wonder if they can possibly be true democrats, who so ignore the verdict of the common man . . .

This is enough, for those of us who may be on the other side of the argument, to assume that the expression, "gone west," which could be applied to culture—at least, in our moments

of irritation—has more than slang-symbolic meaning. Culture has, in fact, gone West in the geographical sense: it has ended up in Hollywood. "We have entered on a new phase of culture," writes Dawson, "—we may call it the Age of the Cinema—in which the most amazing perfection of scientific technique is being devoted to purely ephemeral objects, without any consideration of their ultimate justification."

Americans are not by nature, of course, any less civilized than other people; but, as Wyndham Lewis wittily put it, America was the first country in the world to suffer the misfortune of being "Americanized." In the U.S.A., culture has most completely disappeared; not through their people having come partly from rough pioneer stock—some of the pioneers had a most impressive culture—but because the U.S.A. this century has been the country where the greatest number of people have received the benefits and the disadvantages of the machine.

III.

I trust no reader will under-rate the benefits; this book is not an attempt to prove that culture is impossible in a democracy largely dependent upon machine-labour. But it is scarcely an original remark to add that people in America and elsewhere are becoming increasingly slaves of the machine which was intended to release them from slavery. It is not simply a question of the average agricultural worker of the past having had more pleasure out of his job, despite poor pay and poorer conditions, than the average industrial worker at the present time, who has, as a rule, some money to spare for recreation and a trade union jealous of his rights; nor is it simply a question of the past farm-labourer having been a jack of all trades and a master of most, while the industrial worker to-day has often to do a single, monotonous, soul-destroying job all the days of his life. Both these things are bad enough, and have resulted in "work" and "living" falling into two distinct compartments for millions of people, whereas in the

pre-industrial age—I quote Walter Shewring—" there was no divorce between useful and beautiful and no mystery about the status of the artist. Ordinary things were beautiful because they were well made; such beauty was not exciting because it was not exceptional. The cobbler's work was to make good shoes; but at every point of his life he was using things well made by others. His house and household things, the church he prayed in, the sculptures in it, the painted St. Christopher by the door; the chant in the church and the songs at home—all these things had been well made by those whose calling it was to make them; and there could be no quest for art because art was the tissue of common life."

Everything was not so happy, of course, as this propaganda makes it out to have been; I shall be making detailed qualifications myself when I come to consider the cultural opinions of Morris and Mr. Massingham. But for the moment, while we have Mr. Shewring's words to hand, it is worth while to consider—as he has mentioned the cobbler's " good shoes " and his house " well made " by others—Adriaen van Ostade's painting, " The Cobbler," in the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. " The Cobbler is shown working," comments R. H. Wilenski, " in a structure in front of his house—a structure that in size and character is exactly the modern kennel with two compartments; and the fact that a dog in this picture lies upon the roof suggests that the man and the dog share the same kennel upon equal terms. The same quality is observable in ' Peasants Eating ' in the Dresden Gallery, where the man, dog-like, is gnawing at a bone. Such pictures are profoundly depressing, because there is no revolt or protest in these people and no revolt or protest in the painter's attitude of mind . . . Van Ostade, it is clear, was happy in the normal gloom and grime of the poorest peasant's home."

This is the seventeenth century, and no doubt Mr. Shewring was thinking principally of the tenth to the fifteenth; but wars were common during those Catholic centuries, particularly in Italy, and must have affected the poorest peasants the most. It is true that, between the worst period of Norman barbarity in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries and the period of

misery in the fourteenth century so vividly depicted by Langland in *Piers Plowman*, there was a period of relative quiet and prosperity *in England*—chiefly owing to our island situation and the fact that we were last seriously invaded in 1066, whereas France, for instance, has been invaded three times in the past eighty years, not to mention the invasions by us during our period of island peace. We in England, it seems to me, are not so much the salt of the *earth*: it is to the twenty miles of salt *water* which separate Shakespeare's Cliff from the continent of Europe that we owe the relative peace and prosperity of our nation . . .

With such qualifications, then, the contrast between the skilled craftsman of the past and the skilled industrial worker of to-day is fairly presented by Mr. Shewring. The change-over from "life in work" to "life" and "work" in two distinct compartments may have been the inevitable consequence of machine democracy, and we could, I think, more or less shrug our shoulders over it were it not for the fact that "living" or leisure time, almost as much as work itself, has become dependent upon the machine. That is the problem that has to be faced.

The machine provides; the machine has taken away; praise be to the machine. Certainly the machine provides; not only bread, but "circuses" or entertainment. Hollywood is the capital of the world for millions of folk in America, Europe and elsewhere. The majority of people attend the cinema as regularly as their grandfathers attended church or chapel. There must be few who do not spend part of the day in listening to the wireless. People's minds are open as never before to ideas and suggestions from quarters far outside their range of personal experience.

The machine provides. No less certainly the machine has taken away. The overwhelming majority of civilized people, including to a large extent those who would prefer a more personal outlet, simply sit back and let their amusement be fed to them through a microphone. The machine has taken away the incentive to provide amusement for ourselves; and, as a natural consequence, the amusement provided for us is

synthetic, impersonal, standardized, and therefore not often art of any degree or form.

IV.

Experts tell us that the popular entertainment of the past, which was art as well as entertainment, was the expression of the people, by the people, and for the people. This, curiously enough, was in an autocratic age, in an age in which the creators of popular music, popular dances, popular ballads, were, compared with the present, under-privileged, under-fed, and generally under the heel of their " betters." To-day, in some countries and despite inevitable limitations, we have democracy—*government* of the people, by the people, and for the people. And yet entertainment has become divorced from culture, as work from art, and, although in the material sense we are governed democratically, by popular opinion, our minds are in the possession of the machine, and popular opinion in the mental or spiritual sense is dictated by outside influences, to a large extent by commerce.

The governance of our minds has passed from us ; the sons of men have been betrayed into the hands of sinners. Yet the sinners are no better off ; they are, in fact, as sinned against as sinners. It is a common fallacy among those who have given a little thought to this problem to say that the machine-entertainment which, from one point of view, is the only true " culture " of our time—because it shapes the form of our society—is owned by individuals who propagate certain beliefs to the world for their own material advantage. This seems to me true only in the narrowest sense. It is true, for example, that Mr. Blank, the great film or press owner, gets a large amount of profit by selling his wares ; it is true also that the ideas he spreads among his audience are ideas that urge, for instance, that wealth is a good thing in itself and that higher things are either contemptible or on a level with it, or just too romantic for words. But Mr. Blank is not necessarily a hypocrite ; I don't think he ever is. I should say that it was

as certain as anything in existence that the Blanks of this world are perfectly honest in the mental sense; the ideas they propagate are the ideas they hold themselves, and—this is the important point—the same ideas which they held when they were poor men or without influence, on the first rung of the commercial ladder. If it could be proved that they broadcast the sanctity of vulgar millionaires only when they themselves had become vulgar millionaires, or, alternatively, that they are secret drinkers of Shakespeare and Beethoven, Eliot and Sibelius, while doing everything in their power to prevent this culture from reaching their audience, then they are hypocrites whom Mr. Pecksniff himself would have been proud to call friends. But neither of these things can be proved; each is, in fact, completely absurd. Can we, then, in democratic justice, do anything else but acquit Mr. Blank without a stain on his mental character, adding a rider that he is, fundamentally, the lowest common denominator of his own mass-audience?

I should like to convict Mr. Blank; it would make the problem so much easier if it could be said that the only thing wrong with the machine-culture of our time was that the wrong sort of man had got hold of it. This book would then shrink to pamphlet size; the solution then would be obvious: turn the Blanks out, and let other men, or even the State, reign in their stead. But I fear that the change would make not the slightest difference. For it is not the man in charge of the machine that matters, it is the machine itself and the machine-mind it is producing. This is a modern problem, but scarcely a contemporary one only; for, as long ago as 1829, Carlyle, in "Signs of the Times" in the *Edinburgh Review*, was writing: "Men are grown mechanical in head and heart, as well as in hand."

Mr. Blank himself is a victim of this mass-produced intelligence; he is himself one of his own spare parts. Shall we, then, scrap the machine altogether? But that is a mere dream of Erewhon, and is equivalent to advocating the mass-slaughter of the majority of the world's inhabitants. Democracy has been built upon the machine; it could not function with-

out it. No decent person wants to return to the culture of the Ancient Greeks, for the Greek philosophers and poets were slave-owners. Another Aristotle or another Sophocles would be a sorry thing if he could only come about in company with a score of illiterate menials, no matter how well treated. Better five hundred years of Hollywood than a return to culture for the few, slavery for the many.

V.

Nor need we envy overmuch the Elizabethan-Jacobean period, the time when, according to the authorities on literature and music, culture in the true or Maritain sense was more strongly developed than ever before or since in the history of England. The courtly and gentlemanly culture, in most of its aspects, was an admirable thing; the middle classes were supplied with every variety of digested art; and there was a thriving, popular culture still existing among the illiterate. And these three cultures were not three cultures, but one culture; the public was homogeneous, the plays of Shakespeare being written in the popular idiom, raised by art to the "n"th degree. The Elizabethan-Jacobean theatre was patronized by all classes, and the extremely erudite sermons of such preachers as John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, were delivered to a mixed congregation, representative of all conditions of society, from the Court down. "Shakespeare's art was public," wrote Yeats, "because poetry was a part of the general life of a people who had been trained by the Church to listen to difficult words, and who sang, instead of the songs of the music-halls, many songs that are still beautiful."

And yet, if culture was of the people, by the people, and for the people, no less certainly was government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich. There was no liberty of conscience; few had any say in the way they were governed; a great nobleman was virtually—if not in theory—above the law; a poor man had few rights against his employer. I don't mention the lack of science, for what one has never heard of—

for example, skilled doctoring—one doesn't miss; but, quite apart from the prevalent diseases, and the consequent tears over children's graves, there can have been few of the lower classes under Elizabeth and James the First who were satisfied with their condition—despite the more hypocritical sermons which told them that the halter round their necks had been put there by the Almighty. There were living then cultured gentlemen who were gentlemen in every sense of the word, squires and nobles who conceived themselves as "fathers" to their tenants and labourers, and whose justice was as impartial as any justice since. But these men, if not the exception, were by no means the rule; and there was little to prevent a rich man from making himself a nuisance, sometimes a bloody nuisance, to his dependants. The most paltry crimes, committed often by people in dire distress, were punished savagely. Even technical offences were very rigorously dealt with; for instance, Act 16 of the reign of Elizabeth, Chapter V, Paragraph 5, pronounces that a non-authorized actor shall be severely whipped and have the lobe of his right ear pierced by a red-hot iron of the circumference of an inch; any recurrence of the offence involved the death penalty.

Torture of the most revolting kind, if not an everyday affair, was common enough. I never hear the exploding of a rocket on November the Fifth without shuddering over the appalling torture endured by that bigoted Catholic who tried to blow up the Mother of Parliaments. To have been simply destroyed by fire, as often since in effigy, would have been a merciful release to the real Guy Fawkes, as to many others more innocent who lived and died in that cultured age.

Shakespeare and savagery; Ben Jonson and the witchcraft trials; Byrd and bear-baiting; George Herbert and religious persecution: who would return? Our minds may be in the possession of Mr. Blank of Fleet Street, our spirit dictated by Mr. Blanker in Hollywood, but our bodies are comparatively safe and our democratic law comparatively just. We can ourselves change our minds and spirit, individually at least, but no slave or serf can change his bodily slavery by his own exertions. That change waits upon the change of mind of

persons who are not slaves themselves; it has sometimes waited upon the mere accident of politics . . .

Education cannot be expected to work miracles, and our machine-culture, which seems to have been gradually taking the place of true culture through the past hundred and fifty years or so, will take as long—probably much longer—to be transformed into something at once democratically and culturally respectable. It is our duty to be long-term optimists, and to face things as they are; the problem then is not how much evil to cast out, but, as Burke put it, "how much evil to tolerate." It is no longer possible, with the anti-educational elements of the machine-age all about us, for people to absorb culture from their environment—as they were often able to do in the past—without literacy or with no more formal training than a dame-school's. If we are to avoid Huxley's Brave New World in the democratic countries, people must be educated, to some extent at least, *against* their environment. The educationist can only make a little headway against the stream; but that, after all, was the modest effort of the democratic pioneers, faced by the current of autocracy. What a feeble effort was Magna Carta!—scarcely libelled by the parody in *1066 And All That.* But we do well to honour the barons who forced the king's signature, for the charter was a step in the right direction, and democratic liberties, undreamed of by the projectors in their wildest nightmares, have been founded upon it.

VI.

I shall not talk much of political theory in this book, for I make the simple assumption that democracy, improved to its logical conclusions, is the last word in national government, and that the problem facing politicians is to convert international anarchy into international democracy. Supposing this to have been reached by the year 3000, the problem of democratic culture may still await solution. This, too, may be said to be an international problem, but I have several

reasons for proposing in this book to concentrate on England. Some may say, with a deal of truth, that " England " scarcely exists—apart, that is, from Britain, Great Britain, the British Isles, the British Commonwealth of Nations, or the English-speaking peoples. That last instance is, indeed, my point; for it will not be denied that, as in the past culture was synonymous with craftsmanship, so in the modern world it is synonymous with literacy. This is not to elevate literature above the other arts, nor to despise the cultural achievements of the Celtic race; it is, I think, merely to face the facts. Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Cornish or Manx readers will not, I trust, accuse me of any Sassenach sauce; I am almost completely ignorant of Celtic culture, and I am perfectly well aware, I assure them, that when I refer, for example, to Burns—as I expect I shall do—I can only be referring to that part of the poet in contact with English culture. And I am aware, too, that some of the best " English " writers, even among those actually born in England, are of Celtic ancestry; examples in the past include George Eliot and Emily Brontë, and in the present Mr. T. F. Powys.

The above is my chief reason for concentrating on English culture, apart from the simple reason that—like H. G. Wells—I was born at Bromley, in the county of Kent. My chief reason for concentrating on English democracy—in so far, of course, as it can be separated from English culture—is that the history of democratic institutions in England and Great Britain has been rather different from that of continental countries. England is in many ways (as the great French historian, Elie Halévy, recognizes) a special case; the relation between culture and democracy in England, therefore, besides being a subject large enough in all conscience to satisfy the most ambitious writer, is also sufficiently particular for an insular treatment.

I want, too, to avoid as far as possible the dangers of abstraction; dealing with the things one knows best affords an excellent opportunity of escaping from the atmosphere of the British Museum. We have had perhaps too many works on Culture and Democracy which were content to stay in the region of the

abstract ; a comparative provinciality may not altogether be a disadvantage, providing it be accompanied by a relative concreteness.

The subject admittedly allows of varying treatments, and each present writer must owe a large debt to those who have gone before. It is a difficult subject, whether we consider it primarily as the relation between culture and democracy in English history or as the problem of culture in a modern democratic society. It is by no means easy to arrive at a diagnosis of what is wrong at present, let alone pronounce a cure. I have one advantage, however, over most of my predecessors : I have no clear-cut solution to offer. And therefore my main plan is to reconsider, as fairly as possible, the various diagnoses and solutions made by the more important of the writers, or groups of writers, who have considered the problem before me. We may be certain that each has made at least one point that cannot be overlooked, and it should be in my power to come to some tentative conclusions, after we have considered what previous opinion has had to say.

This, it seems to me, is not only a job worth doing, but the only job that may be possible for the thousands of people like myself who haven't yet discovered the elixir and have grave doubts whether the elixir even exists. The problem is obviously beyond the power of any single individual to estimate, let alone to solve ; and, even if I had in my possession a cure-all that could be instantly applied, I should have to spend quite half my book disposing of those quacks who have presumptuously concluded that their cure-all is superior. The pre-Marxist Laski once wrote of *The Wealth of Nations* that this answer of Adam Smith's to the vital question of his time " revealed, *like all good answers*, rather the difficulty of the problem than the prospect of its solution."

CHAPTER TWO

THE MARXIST DIAGNOSIS RECONSIDERED

I.

PERHAPS the most important of the diagnoses and solutions I have mentioned is the Marxist. Its importance for me does not lie in its truth, for it is my opinion that on nearly every point it is mistaken, and can be proved to be so; its importance for me and for this chapter lies rather in the extraordinary popularity which it enjoys or enjoyed in our time, particularly in the decade that preceded the war of 1939. My own reaction to Marxist theories of culture has always been astonishment at the ignorance, both literary and social, of the projectors.

This ignorance has not been noticed by most of their critics. There could hardly be a critic substantially more hostile to all that Marxism represents than the Catholic writer, Mr. Martin Turnell, for example; and yet he grants the Marxists most of their diagnosis and quarrels only with their solution. I quarrel with both; indeed, I think that, once you grant the Marxist premise, then their solution becomes almost inevitable. Mr. Turnell writes as follows, in his stimulating work *Poetry and Crisis* (1938):—"At the present time, as Marxists point out, the world is divided into two main groups: 'the bourgeois' and 'the proletariat.' Art and culture are practically the monopoly of the bourgeois and, as we all admit, the art which most clearly reflects the crisis through which we are passing has been produced by this class—while the proletariat has ceased to produce anything at all. The problem which faces not only Marxists, but also all who are concerned for the future of civilization, is the blending of these two opposites. Marxists believe that it can only be accomplished through social revolution and the creation of the classless society, and that all writers who are worthy of the name ought to devote

their energies to this work . . . For Marxists art is only important in as far as it helps or hinders the 'Struggle.' Whatever glorifies the 'Struggle' is 'good' and is encouraged, while whatever hinders it is 'bad' and is mercilessly suppressed."

That is a fair statement of the Marxist position, in regard to the problem of culture in the twentieth century; but I am surprised that Mr. Turnell accepts so complacently the Marxist division of the world into bourgeoisie and proletariat. The "world" is rather a large question, and I myself cannot speak so globally; and, as most of the Marxists Mr. Turnell quotes live in England, perhaps it would be better to restrict ourselves, in the main, to this country, about which we may be presumed to know something. It is my opinion that, once you divide England into bourgeoisie and proletariat, the doctrine of the Class War, and consequently the need for a violent revolution, becomes, if not inevitable, at least admissible. But fortunately England cannot be thus divided, and the fact that so many native Marxists have made the division in perfect sincerity is only explained—to my mind—by their having been mostly educated at exclusive prep-schools and Public Schools, cut off, to a large extent, from 95 per cent. of their fellow men. As the Fleming Report puts it: "The trend of social development is leaving the Public Schools out of alignment with the world"—meaning England—"in which they exist." I am convinced that this was the most remarkable thing about Marxism in this country in the nineteen-thirties, that while ex-public-schoolboys were shouting "The Hammer, the Sickle, the Blood!" with Mr. Rex Warner, or talking about "the blood-red dawn" with Mr. Day Lewis, the "proletariat," even the unemployed—who might have been thought to welcome violence—remained for the most part solidly in touch with the bourgeois English tradition.

This bourgeois character of the English lower classes is perfectly obvious to those of us who have been fortunate enough to come from this stock; but it has been observed by the more intelligent writers of the upper classes as well. Four distinguished writers of our time, none of whom comes from

the lower classes, have observed this fact, which goes against the Marxist theory and in my opinion—not theirs—overthrows it altogether. And these four writers—Christopher Dawson, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, John Middleton Murry—have nothing else very much in common, so their support of what seems to me a self-evident truth is all the more representative of contemporary English intelligence. "The English bourgeois, so-called," writes Dawson in *Religion and the Modern State*, "is not only an organic part of the national society, he is nothing more or less than the average Englishman. He is the typical citizen, and in so far as the upper and lower classes remain or become politically conscious and politically active they become themselves sharers in the same citizenship and the same national culture . . ." "Karl Marx's Proletariat," wrote Huxley in *Do What You Will*, "is becoming a branch of the bourgeoisie—a bourgeoisie that happens to work in factories and not in offices; a bourgeoisie with oily instead of inky fingers. Out of working hours the way of life of these two branches of the modern bourgeoisie is the same . . ." "In moral outlook," says Orwell in his essay on Dickens, "no one could be more 'bourgeois' than the English working classes . . . In his own age and ours Dickens has been popular chiefly because he was able to express in a comic, simplified and therefore memorable form the native decency of the common man. And it is important that from this point of view people of very different types can be described as 'common.' In a country like England, in spite of its class-structure, there does exist a certain cultural unity . . ." "We English *are* bourgeois; it is our achievement, not our failing," writes Murry in the *Adelphi*. "We have evolved a pattern of bourgeois life so radically tolerant that the proletariat can be absorbed into it. If the rest of Europe—Germany and France in particular—could have followed our example Europe might well have remained a political and cultural unity to-day."

II.

The Marxists have always denied the importance of this English bourgeois cultural tradition. What they describe as "bourgeois culture" is something from which the lower classes have been shamefully cut off, as if Langland, Marlowe, Bunyan, Law, Porson, Holcroft, Gifford, Cobbett, Hargreaves, Crome, Blake, Turner, Romney, Cox, Burns, Hogg, Whewell, Place, Carlyle, Clare, Stephenson, Dalton, Davy, Faraday, Hardy, Lawrence, Joyce, Rosenberg, Rubbra—and many others—had never been born. "Because of the struggle with nature," Mrs. Williams-Ellis informs us in *To Tell the Truth*, "the workers had no time to have culture. So works of art and science were made only by the bourgeoisie, and paid for so heavily by the workers that it made the more sensitive bourgeois doubt if they were worth having." The Marxists even take the credit for ending this pernicious state of affairs! John Lehmann claims in *New Writing in Europe* that in the nineteen-thirties "the culturally submerged classes began to speak for themselves." The classes Mr. Lehmann is apparently referring to have always spoken for themselves, from Langland onward; what was distinctive about the magazine *New Writing* in the 'thirties was that the "proletarian" writers therein, so far from speaking for themselves, simply aped the Marxism of their bank-balanced betters. Mr. Lehmann, for example, praises a "proletarian" writer for having learnt from those whom Mr. Orwell has described as "Auden, a sort of gutless Kipling, and the even feebler poets who are associated with him"; when the "proletarian" poet so praised, if he had cared for great poetry, could have found his model in the Jewish private Isaac Rosenberg, by far the best poet of the 1914 War, whom Mr. Lehmann, while discussing Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen in Chapter One of his interesting book, does not even mention.

The magazine, of course, was not intended to be a political organ at all. The Manifesto in the first number read:—"*New Writing* is first and foremost interested in literature,

and though it does not intend to open its pages to writers of reactionary or Fascist sentiments, it is independent of any political party." This must be one of the most confused sentences ever written. I wonder what Mr. Lehmann's reaction would have been to a magazine whose manifesto stated:—" *Old Bottles* is first and foremost interested in literature, and though it does not intend to open its pages to writers of progressive or Communist sentiments, it is independent of any political party." I expect Mr. Lehmann would have smiled shrewdly and murmured " Tell that to the horse marines." Magazines which are first and foremost interested in literature do not talk of "reactionary," "progressive," " Fascist " or " Communist " : these are political slogans.

It was sometimes valuable, *New Writing*, from the point of view of social reporting ; but often the Marxist propaganda was not only completely out of touch with reality, it was, strictly speaking, pernicious. For *New Writing*, and the Marxists generally, insisted upon the class war and the violent revolution, " the blood-red dawn " of Cecil Day Lewis. Were the lower classes themselves, even the unemployed, interested in this " blood-red dawn " ? Were they eager to become privates and N.C.O.'s to the public-school revolutionary " generals," as envisaged by *The Wild Goose Chase*, part of which first appeared in *New Writing* ? No one who has any intimate contact with the lower classes can ever have supposed so. The economic situation in the 'thirties was certainly scandalous : it was the time of the hunger-marchers ; in 1933 this country had nearly three million workers unemployed, which meant, including dependants, nearly nine million persons destitute of livelihood. The Marxists are entitled to our full respect for their protests against such a state of affairs. Indeed, the sneer of the Fascist rhymester (I quote from memory) :

> Here simple Spender, in a place apart,
> Bares on his sleeve his hæmophilic heart . . .

seems to me to be a sneer at precisely that aspect of the activity of Messrs. Spender, Day Lewis, *et hoc genus* which is worthy

of the esteem and the affection of all decent people. It was not their heart that was at fault, nor was it their sincerity nor their courage—John Cornford, Ralph Fox, Julian Bell, Christopher Caudwell, and other young English Marxists died for their faith in a foreign Franco field. It was not their heart that was at fault; what they chiefly lacked was knowledge and common-sense.

Instead of working constitutionally for the next Parliamentary election, and striving in conjunction with the Unions for full employment and reasonable wages—so that my aunt, for instance, would not have had to add to my uncle's meagre packet by going out cleaning for richer folks—the Marxists decided that constitutional procedure was "bourgeois" and therefore automatically "reactionary." "Far from being an assistance to the workers in their life-and-death struggle," wrote John Strachey in 1932, "the Trade Unions are to-day by far the most formidable obstacle in the way of an early victory." "No new order of society," he concludes, "can be born without violent conflict." In *Forward From Liberalism* (1937) Stephen Spender speaks of "the miserable reformist position" of the Liberal and Labour parties; he sneers at "the fake nonconformist piety" of the *Daily Herald* and pokes fun at "the old gentlemen of Transport House." His conclusion is the same as Mr. Strachey's: "A complete break with the past must be made."

So the Marxists—the upper-class Marxists—gave their full-hearted allegiance to a Communist revolution, presumably on the Russian model of 1917.

III.

The lower classes rejected this. The facts are plain: the bourgeois character of the English lower classes—the very thing that is our pride—was the despair of the undergraduate revolutionaries. Our long and venerable tradition of constitutional progress was the thing that got Mr. Spender's goat and the goat of Mr. John Strachey. For every convert to the

doctrine of Mr. Lewis's "blood-red dawn," there were a thousand among the "masses" who stuck to more constitutional methods. This would not have surprised the Marxists so much if they had been as well up in the history of the lower classes in England as they apparently were in the history of the Soviet Union. A reading of such books as *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett in his Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge and Freedom,* Samuel Bamford's *Early Days, The Life of Thomas Cooper, Written by Himself,* Alexander Somerville's *Autobiography of a Working Man,* Holyoake's *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*—and other social documents of the nineteenth century—would have convinced even a Left Book Club member that the "bourgeois culture" of England, which the "proletariat" have always shared (indeed, English culture would have been a poor one without their contribution), worked in the political field *for* constitutional reform and *against* revolutionary violence. And it should never be forgotten that the period, for instance, when Cobbett, Bamford and Place were urging the necessity of constitutional methods was a time when corruption, intrigue and violence were rife among the Government and their agents. It was the period, in fact—or rather in symbolism—when the lower classes of England met their Peterloo on the tennis-court of Versailles.

Some of the Marxists believed, or pretended to believe, that the lower classes had no traditions at all! "There is no real analogy between the historic development of the bourgeoisie and of the working-class," wrote Trotsky in *Literature and Revolution.* "Even when the bourgeoisie was a third estate, almost deprived of its rights, it played a great and continually growing part in all the fields of culture." "The proletariat," concluded Trotsky, "needs a continuity of creative tradition." "That class alone," agreed Mr. Spender, "is in a position to shake off a past which has elevated the two other classes." In other words, the lower classes have no cultural or spiritual traditions worth troubling about. "Unless one realizes this fact," continued Spender, "one's political philosophy is in the air."

The real facts are rather different. Halévy, for instance,

ends a section of his *History of the English People* as follows :— " If the materialistic interpretation of history is to be trusted, if economic facts explain the course taken by the human race in its progress, the England of the nineteenth century was surely, above all countries, destined to revolution, both political and religious. But it was not to be so. In no other country of Europe have social changes been accomplished with such a marked and gradual continuity. The source of such continuity and comparative stability is not to be found in the economic organization of the country. To find it we must pass on to another category of social phenomena—to beliefs, emotions and opinions, as well as to the institutions and sects in which these beliefs, emotions and opinions take a form suitable for scientific inquiry."

Before going on to consider the truth of that source wherein the great French historian found the relative stability of English life, it seems to me that Halévy emphasizes too strongly even the economic likelihood of revolution in the worst years of the nineteenth century That, I think, was the mistake of Engels, who took the appalling conditions of life in south Lancashire in the early 'forties to be typical of England as a whole, in the century as a whole. His pity and his indignation caused him to write these famous words :—" Prophecy is nowhere so easy as in England, where all the component elements of society are clearly defined and sharply separated. The revolution must come . . ."

So it must have seemed to anyone, who made the initial mistake of taking the worst years of the worst slum-region of England to be the final product of the Industrial Revolution—which would surely lead to the Communist revolution ?—in England as a whole. We can sympathize with his later bewilderment, when in 1858, ten years after the repeal of the Corn Laws, the Ten Hours Act and the start of sanitary improvements, he wrote to Marx about " the fact that the English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois."

But it wasn't simply a question of the improved conditions which followed hard upon the worst years of the hungry 'forties : Engels had taken as typical a part of England that

was not typical at all—the very part, in fact, which had suffered the worst degradation of the Irish invasion. "The Irish emigration into Britain," says an 1836 Report, "is an example of a less civilized population spreading themselves as a kind of substratum beneath a more civilized community." "Ireland so dangerously near to Lancashire," write the Hammonds in *The Age of the Chartists*, "was an uncomfortable neighbour. For the Irish peasant was the victim of unexampled misgovernment and neglect"– the fault, of course, of England. "Thousands of men and women," continue the Hammonds, "were now living in Manchester and Liverpool who had never minded the squalor they had shared with their pigs in the hovels of Tipperary... The dirtiness and disorder of the squalid English town were now increased by the presence of a large body of Irish people who lived normally under conditions repugnant to their English neighbours." The Hammonds sum up as follows:—"Here, then, were all the elements of a difficult social problem. The towns were the homes of workmen, once artisans with scope for their instinct to express and create, who had passed into the impersonal routine of the mill; of men and women, with peasant outlook and tradition, accustomed to the peace and beauty of nature, shut up in slum and alley."

The picture seems at first glance to be as gloomy as that painted by Engels, and perhaps to lead to the same conclusion. But the Hammonds mention the *traditions* of the slum-dwellers, those traditions mainly of peaceable independence which, combined with some alleviation of their wretched lot in the late 'forties, prevented the outbreak of revolution. "When all the great states of the Continent were shaken by revolution and disorder," says Christopher Dawson, "England alone stood firm and preserved an unbroken continuity with her past."

At a London meeting of the People's International League in the autumn of 1847, the Chartist poet and scholar, Thomas Cooper, had a slight controversy with Mazzini. The great Italian patriot had been appealing for subscriptions to furnish his countrymen with arms; Cooper rose and "ventured to

say " that he thought it inconsistent for those Englishmen who were lamenting the advocacy of physical force in their own land to supply other peoples with arms. Mazzini's reply is worth quoting in full. " Mr. Cooper," he said, " you are right about your own country. You have had your grand decisive struggle against Tyrannous Power. Your fathers brought it to the block ; and you have now a Representation, and you have Charters and Written Rights to appeal to. You need no physical force. Your countrymen only need a will and union to express it, and you can have all you need. But what are my countrymen to do, who are trodden down under the heel of a foreign tyranny ?—who are watched, seized, and imprisoned before anyone knows what has become of them ? What are my countrymen to do, I ask you ? They have no Representation—they have no Charters—they have no Written Rights. What must my countrymen do ? *They must fight* ! "

IV.

Halévy, then, seems to give a little too much credit to the Marxist diagnosis on the economic side, before proceeding to demolish it on other grounds. In what did he find the source of the comparative stability of England ? He found it in the Methodist revival. Perhaps it is slightly more accurate to say that it was found in the general culture of the English lower classes, to which the rise of Methodism contributed. But certainly Halévy has put his finger on the sober English pulse. Mr. Spender has a distaste for this sobriety : " As for nonconformity," he writes, " it has done great harm by introducing into liberalism a narrow, puritannical, abstentionist outlook. This heritage of nonconformity has now passed to Labour, which is as fertile with it as a caterpillar in which the ichneumon fly has laid its eggs."

But you cannot dismiss one of the main elements in English culture in this lofty, theoretical fashion. The words of Halévy are confirmed, not only by all non-Marxist historians, but by

the autobiographies of working-men to which I have referred. "During the eighteenth century," says the French historian, "England had been the scene of a great religious movement, unparalleled on the Continent—the last Protestant movement which has given birth to permanent institutions. This was the 'Methodist' or 'Evangelical' revival. We shall attempt to find here the key to the problem whose solution has hitherto escaped us; for we shall explain by this movement the extraordinary stability which English society was destined to enjoy throughout a period of revolutions and crises; what we may truly term the miracle of modern England, anarchist but orderly, practical and business-like, but religious, and even pietist."

It was not quite such a miracle, of course, as Halévy supposed; but it is good to get an unbiassed opinion, from one of the greatest of European historians, to confirm the impression we should naturally draw from a study of our general cultural tradition. Marxists often take the influence of Nonconformity to have been restricted to the "bourgeoisie"—in their sense of this rather ambiguous word; whereas the facts show how powerful was its hold upon the lower classes in general. The Primitive Methodists, for instance, who formed themselves into a separate sect in 1812, were first organized in 1806 by two Staffordshire local preachers—William Clowes, a potter, and Hugh Bourne, a carpenter. My grandmother's uncle published an interesting book—full of unconscious humour—about the fine work of the Methodists on Warminster Common, in those days (c.1830-40) one of the most turbulent and diseased areas in the south of England. (A visitor from Yorkshire remarked that he would as soon have thought of opening a chapel there as in Hell itself). "The Dissenters," says Halévy truly, "drew their members from the lower classes of the population; they were small shopkeepers, small farmers, artisans, agricultural labourers. The majority of the leaders of the great trade-union movement that would arise in England within a few years of 1815 will belong to the Nonconformist sects. They will often be local preachers, that is practically speaking ministers. Their spiritual ancestors were

the founders of Methodism. In the vast work of social organization which is one of the dominant characteristics of nineteenth-century England, it would be difficult to overestimate the part played by the Wesleyan revival."

The Commission on the Employment of Children in 1843 gave a glowing account of the work done by the Methodists in districts like the Forest of Dean and North Wales; the account closely resembles the descriptions of Wesley's work in Cornwall a century before. The colliers had been the terror of the surrounding countryside, "for gross ignorance, rudeness and irreligion, almost without parallel in any Christian community." A striking change had been produced by the work of the Dissenters.

The turbulent sections of the working classes—to put it briefly—had joined the cultural tradition of the majority of the English lower classes, the tradition that in the seventeenth century had produced the *Pilgrim's Progress* and in the fourteenth the *Vision of Piers Plowman*. The dogmatic details—the actual form of religion believed in—don't matter very much compared with the continuity of that sense of responsibility and that kind of pacific independence which are so characteristic of the English poor, our ancestors, across the centuries.

V.

Nor was religion—in the theological sense—of any importance in the history of the Chartist movement. But the moral impulse was pre-eminent. The Chartist leaders included men of every possible religious and agnostic persuasion. Attendance at religious meetings, in fact, had often led thoughtful workmen to attend political gatherings. "The habit I had acquired of frequenting chapels and missionary meetings," reports Holyoake, "led me to attend political assemblies." Holyoake himself, Watson, Hetherington and Carlile became propagandists against Christianity; but Wade and Spencer were Anglican clergymen. Stephens, expelled by the Methodists, remained a

Methodist, preaching in chapels of his own, provided by his workmen followers. Lovett was for a short time a Methodist Bible Christian—his Cornish mother and grandmother were Methodists—but he became interested in science and rationalist criticism, though continuing to describe himself as a Christian. When asked his religion, on his internment in Warwick Gaol, he replied that he was of that religion which Christ taught but which few in authority practised, if he could judge by their behaviour.

Cooper had various phases of belief and disbelief: he wavered between the different species of Methodism in his youth; "got religion" seriously once or twice; became a lost soul several times; and finally ended up as a Baptist preacher. His autobiography shows clearly how politics, culture and Christianity often went together: the "Shakespearean" group of Chartists at Leicester, for instance, published a "Shakespearean Chartist Hymn Book," to which Cooper himself contributed. "Truth is with us: God Himself is on our side," summed up one aspect of Chartist Christianity; "Persecuted, just as Jesus was . . ." summed up another. The Chartist Churches sprang up in the 'forties; the earliest were established in Scotland, but they soon spread southward.

The Charter itself was the product of the London Working Men's Association, a body of London radicals among whom Francis Place—"the radical tailor of Charing Cross"—and the Cornish born cabinet-maker William Lovett were the leading figures. The Charter contained the six points of manhood suffrage, ballot, annual parliaments, equal electorate districts, payment of members, and abolition of the property qualification for Parliament. "The principles of our Charter," said Lovett in a subsequent speech, "were the laws and customs of our ancestors, under which property was secure and the working people happy and contented . . . Political rights necessarily stimulate men to inquiry, give self-respect, lead them to know their duties as citizens, and, under a wise Government, would be made the best corrective of vicious and intemperate habits."

The appeal of the London Working Men's Association was to

public opinion; its instruments were argument and persuasion —"to publish their views and sentiments," said Lovett, "in such form and manner as shall best serve to create a moral, reflecting, yet energetic public opinion; so as eventually to lead to a gradual improvement in the condition of the working classes, without violence or commotion." The history of the Chartist movement is confused and perplexing, and for a perfectly comprehensible reason; because it embraced not merely divergent but mutually hostile schools of social reform—quite apart from the main divergence of the movement into "moral force humbugs" such as Lovett and "physical-force charlatans" like O'Connor. "Chartism," writes Tawney, "was taken up by veteran agitators like Benbow, who could look back to the days of the Hampden Clubs and Peterloo, and politicians in search of a platform like Beaumont and O'Connor . . . The agitations against factory slavery and the detested new Poor Law swelled the main movement and cast their own sombre colour upon it. But for the first three years of its existence the policy pursued by the London Working Men's Association had nothing in common with the orgy of mob oratory in which Chartism finally collapsed."

"We give the name of Chartist," confirm the Hammonds, "to the London artisan who shared Lovett's enthusiasm for education and a cheap press: to the Birmingham politician who supported Attwood's campaign for a reform of the currency: to the handloom weaver or the miner who flocked to the meetings where Oastler denounced the Poor Law, or Feargus O'Connor was spinning one project after another from his active and ill-regulated brain: to the South Wales miner who followed Frost with a pike to Newport and to prison."

Each of the main parties—the moralists and those who talked of an armed insurrection—suffered alike, so far as the prison sentences of their leaders were concerned. But "Frost's miserable rising in South Wales," as the Hammonds call it, was the only real outbreak of violence. Fourteen men were killed, and some fifty wounded. When we remember the slender provision for the maintenance of order, it seems extraordinary that more violence was not attempted. But the

Luddite outbreaks of 1812 provide us with a comparison. "The extraordinary horror aroused towards the end of April by the isolated assassination near Huddersfield of a manufacturer named Horsfall," writes Halévy, "proves how free from bloodshed the outbreaks of 1812 had on the whole been."

Disinclination for street-fighting—perhaps partly due to Alexander Somerville's expert *Letters to the People on the Economy of Revolution, with Warnings on Street Warfare*—did not mean that the Chartists were unready to run personal risks for their cause. There were not many clashes between Chartists and the military, but Chartists and Trade Unionists went to exile or to prison in large numbers. In the summer of 1842, when there were strikes and riots in the north and the midlands, the executive committee of the National Chartist Association issued a manifesto urging the strikers to avoid violence but to hold out till the Charter was won. This manifesto was treated by the Government as a treasonable proclamation, and after the riots had subsided Special Commissions were set up at Liverpool and at Stafford. The Liverpool Commission transported eleven men and imprisoned 115; the Stafford Commission transported 54 and imprisoned 154, including Thomas Cooper, who in his autobiography blames himself for "the rash and uncalculating" manner of his speeches in Staffordshire.

Cooper is particularly valuable as a Chartist witness because he stood half-way between "the moral-force humbugs" and "the physical-force tub-thumpers." Thus he can give an unbiassed opinion of each side, can say genuinely nice things of both Lovett and O'Connor, and, most important, can realize the temptation for a demagogue to appeal to violent methods which he himself understands afterwards are impossible of achievement. He records an interesting conversation with the aged poet Wordsworth in 1846. The poet surprised him, after the subject of his imprisonment had been touched on, by a generous remark about Chartism. "You were right," said Wordsworth: "I have always said the people were right in what they asked; but you went the wrong way to get it." Cooper almost doubted his ears—"being in the presence,"

as he says, " of the ' Tory ' Wordsworth." The poet read his inquiring look, and repeated what he had said. " You were quite right," he repeated: " there is nothing unreasonable in your Charter: it is the foolish attempt at physical force, for which many of you have been blameable."

This is a striking confirmation of Lovett's chief point against O'Connor. Lovett always held that the advocates of violent revolution were the chief cause of the failure of the Chartist movement. " He regarded violence as the last weapon of defence," writes Tawney, " not as part of his political offensive. Down to the end he believed that one principal cause of the defeat of Chartism was that the advocates of physical force had driven all waverers on to the side of reaction."

Nevertheless, Lovett's words, on behalf of the London Working Men's Association, in the second address to Ireland—" *We are of the opinion that whatever is gained in England by force, by force must be sustained, but whatever springs from knowledge and justice will sustain itself*"—these words found an echo in the 'fifties in one of the favourite songs of the striking operatives in the north of England:

We will not use a gun or pike,
For that's a thing we do dislike,
But we will fight and gain the strike
By moral agitation:
Ay, we will fight and gain the strike
By moral agitation.

VI.

The history of the Chartist movement, it is generally agreed, is difficult to grasp. Even Christopher Dawson, it seems to me, does not get all his facts correct when he writes in *Beyond Politics*: " In the nineteenth century there were indeed two Englands—the England of the fields and the England of the factories—and at the time of the Chartist movement it seemed as though this social dualism would find open expression in a

revolutionary movement that would have split England asunder. Actually, however, the conflict found a thoroughly bourgeois solution in the struggle for Free Trade, and the incipient class war of the 'thirties and 'forties, which made so deep an impression on Engels and Marx, disappeared before the success of the Victorian compromise."

This view ignores the genesis of the Chartist movement, by radical reformers like Place and Lovett, and places all the stress on demagogues such as O'Connor and Ernest Jones, who, themselves of the upper classes, didn't understand—till later on, when they were derided by Marx and Engels for being bourgeois—that long tradition of lower-class responsibility which found expression in the People's Charter. It ignores, also, the country tradition of the slum-dwellers mentioned by the Hammonds, which must qualify to a certain extent Dawson's statement about the two Englands—the England of the fields and the England of the factories.

But it is certainly true that one outcome of the Chartist movement was " the thoroughly bourgeois " struggle for Free Trade. This was not, however, the only child of Chartism. " The Chartist movement," write the Hammonds, " was imagination in action. And when Chartism flickered out this force was not lost. It went into different movements like the movement for education, the movement for public health, the Trade Union movements, the movement for temperance, and the later movements for the franchise. Long after the great project of 1848 had collapsed amid the relief and ridicule of London, the virtue of the Chartist movement was by these means building up the self-respect of the English workman. In this sense, as in some others, Chartism deserved the phrase Mill applied to it, the victory of the vanquished."

How do modern Marxist writers see the Chartist movement ? If we can judge by the useful " Narrative History of Chartism " by Reg Groves (1938), with the title *But We Shall Rise Again*—another " miserable rising " like Frost's ?—the modern Marxists view the movement exclusively through the concave lenses of Karl Marx, with his notorious tribute to the decent bourgeois characteristics of the English poor, " the reactionary

lusts and prejudices of the workers." Mr. Groves is to be congratulated on his honesty, for most of the facts are in his book, and it can be read, indeed, as one of the most scathing indictments of Marxism ever written. The author tries to be fair to the constitutional reformers like Lovett, but his party line keeps tripping him up. There is more than a touch of pathetic bewilderment about his efforts to distinguish the decent main body of the original Chartists through the dirty panes of Marxist thought. The italics in the following passage are his own (that Marxists share Queen Victoria's love of frequent emphasis will be apparent to all who have heard John Strachey speaking on the radio) :—" In all the propaganda of this group it will be found that it is basically for *moral* reasons that they denounce the ruling classes, for their *injustice* and *unfairness*: it is in the *moral* rightness of their claims that they believed their strength lay, and it was this blindness to all factors, save moral, which prevented them from ever seeing the *class* basis of their movement and propaganda and from drawing the correct policies and methods of action from its class character."

Not even the bombast of O'Connor—very like as it was to the modern Marxist bombast of Rex Warner and Cecil Day Lewis—can quite win Mr. Groves's approval, though his denigration is chiefly reserved for the Lovetts. Nor can he forgive the defection of Ernest Jones. " Jones's breach with revolutionary Socialism," he says, " was inexcusable because it strengthened the adhesion of the masses to the new Liberalism, and coming within a decade or so of great class battles from which was to spring the new Socialism, reduced the pace of this development, and greatly strengthened the reformist tendencies in the working class movement."

This is mere embroidery of the shocked pattern of Engels's letter to Marx, in 1858, about the returning to common sense of the mob orator Jones and the gloomy fact that " the English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois." That Engels was completely out of touch with the main body of the radical movement is shown clearly by his referring, as a *contrast* to that " bourgeois development " which so troubled him, to " the English proletarian movement in its old traditional

Chartist form " ! The original Chartists, as we have indicated, were not a " proletarian movement " at all, in the Marxist sense ; like Cobbett and Bamford, they were reformists, not revolutionaries. The revolutionary Chartist movement was a mere offshoot from the main radical body, an offshoot which nevertheless, to quote Tawney, " carried it forward on a wave of misery and violence to its ignominious collapse."

Even this is putting it much too strongly, for the fact remains that the only serious outburst of violence—apart from some half-hearted rioting during the strikes of 1842—was " Frost's miserable rising in South Wales." I wonder whether Mr. Groves has ever asked himself what exactly he means by " Jones's breach with *revolutionary Socialism.*" To be sure, there was much *talk* of revolution, mainly by upper-class mob orators like the Irish landowner O'Connor and the wealthy cosmopolitan Jones, who was born at Vienna and brought up in Germany. O'Connor was seriously alarmed when, on that solitary occasion, Frost took him at his swollen word ; but the fact that he was alarmed doesn't altogether remove the shame of his being responsible for the death of fourteen better men.

One miserable rising, a few riots, and a monstrous deal of sacrilegious talk : these don't, I think, add up to " revolutionary Socialism " or an " English proletarian movement "—however many revolutionary resolutions were carried unanimously by half-a-dozen foreign gentlemen in a back room near the British Museum.

VII.

It was perhaps natural that Karl Marx, a foreigner ignorant of the English bourgeois cultural tradition, should have seen nothing in the decency of the English poor—so strikingly exemplified by Dickens in *Hard Times*—but " the reactionary lusts and prejudices of the workers." It is true that Marx was sometimes informed by decent English radicals of the preposterous irrelevancy of the Communist case, as applied to England ; he came into collision, for instance, with John Weston—" the thinnest, wiriest, gentlest, yet most ardent,

prompt, and demonstrative of working-class politicians," as Holyoake calls him.

"There was nothing of him," records Holyoake, "save his voice and his ceaseless energy. He was a workman who owed everything to himself. He was a cow-boy and a page-boy in his youth, and at last hand-rail maker—a trade he learned himself. And no man knew it better, or so well, for he wrote a book upon it, which is an authority in the trade. He lived to be seventy-two, working ten to twelve hours a day at the bench, and making speeches when evening came. He stood none of the Imperialistic Communism and State Socialism of Karl Marx, but confronted that master of agitation, and carried resolutions against him. Whatever good movement was on foot anywhere in the metropolis, Weston was soon in it, if, indeed, he were not there first. He had the genuine passion of progress which brings good to others, but only gratitude and poverty to those who have it."

I am not suggesting that these occasional controversies with respectable English workmen did Karl Marx much good; a thousand Westons—even including Mr. Powys's—would not have been sufficient to penetrate the thick shell of theoretical completeness in which the German agitator was complacently encased. But it is rather different when we are considering modern Marxist writers of English birth. Mr. Groves should know, both from his native ancestry and from the traditions of the Liberal and Labour parties since Marx's time, how very slight was the influence of Ernest Jones on the fact—which he recognizes—that the main body of the English working class movements grew up saturated through and through with the philosophy, or rather the traditional commonsense, of the liberal spirit.

Not that one need be an Englishman to see the most important influence behind this continuing adhesion of the poorer classes of England—whether in trade-union activity, in the Co-operative movement, in the Liberal or the Labour party—to the spirit and methods of liberalism. The great French historian Halévy saw, in the early volumes of his *History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, the importance of

the Methodist and general Nonconformist influence. When he came to the *Epilogue* (*1895-1905*), he was still stressing this respectable, bourgeois, mainly Nonconformist character of the English lower classes, and contrasting it with, among others, the views taken by the Marxist " Social Democratic Federation " and the Fabian group.

He tells us, for instance, that " The local organization of the Liberal party had gradually come under the exclusive, or almost exclusive, control of artisans and labourers. The workmen who came forward as Liberal electioneering agents or candidates were the secretaries of the great trade unions whose membership grew every year " ; and I expect he would have agreed with Mr. W. Kenneth Richmond's statement in *Education in England* that a little later on there was " a direct connection between the rise in attendance at secondary schools and the rise in membership of the trade unions "—a fact which would also have pleased William Lovett and made him rest more contentedly in his grave.

Halévy gives this general picture of responsibility:— " Every year, since 1868, the parliament of the working class met in one or other of the large towns. The Anglican churches and Nonconformist chapels of the locality celebrated by religious services the opening of the Congress of British Trade Unions. The mayor of the city wearing the insignia of office gave a civic welcome to the members. The meetings were attended by members of Parliament and British or foreign economists, who were received with the utmost respect and courtesy. The speeches were usually dignified, the debates methodically conducted . . . The size of this army of workmen was perhaps the best security that the unions would pursue a prudent policy. In a highly-civilized country there are not a million or a million and a half revolutionaries . . . A bricklayer, Broadhurst by name, had been appointed in 1880 Under-Secretary of the Board of Trade. . . About a hundred working men had been appointed Justices of the Peace while the Liberals were in office between 1892 and 1895."

Trade Unionism being closely connected with the Chartist movement—even at the latter's beginning, for the Hammonds

note that " much of the energy and spirit that had been collected for the Grand National was now brought into the service of this cause "—and the Unions having developed strongly after Chartism's collapse, it is worth while inquiring to which variety of the movement, whether the moral-force or the physical, the satisfactory state of affairs described by Halévy owed more. There is no doubt about the answer: indeed, the dignified character of Trade Unionism, its freedom from revolutionary bombast, was—and largely still is—the complete justification of the policy pursued by the original Chartists, and the final discomfiture of the policy of O'Connor, who ended his life in a lunatic asylum.

The state of affairs described by Halévy was, in fact, identical in dignity and reason with the meetings of the original Chartists, before the mad Irishman came on the scene. His advent is recorded by Lovett, with not too much scorn in the light of subsequent happenings :— " The great Birmingham meeting on the 6th of August might be said to be the first Chartist meeting at which O'Connor introduced his physical force notions. His speech about ' fleshing swords to the hilt ' having furnished our opponents with a daily text, and a keen weapon with which to assail us, made us anxious to prevent if possible a like exhibition at our Palace Yard meeting."

These are the views of a confessed opponent, and, reading the more temperate opinion of a Cooper or a Holyoake, we can judge that O'Connor, besides Irish charm, must have had certain abilities to offset his " colossal incoherence," as Holyoake puts it. But where all opinions are agreed is in describing O'Connor as a *personal* leader, who called his audiences " my children," and to whom a vote of confidence in his personal leadership was the all-important thing. In this he resembled Stephens, as seen by Holyoake :— " Joseph Rayner Stephens, the greatest orator on the Chartist side . . . was a Tory, not of the baser sort who seek personal power for purposes of political supremacy, but of the nobler kind who desire to see power in the hands of the wise (which they take themselves to be) for the improvement of the condition and the better contentment of the people."

O'Connor, Ernest Jones, the Reverend Stephens: all three of the upper classes, all with their heart in the right place, but preaching armed resistance to poor wretches who had not the means to resist with any hope of success, even had their cultural traditions allowed it; all three noted mob orators, insisting on their personal leadership, quite sincerely convinced —as are our modern Marxists— that the people need only a leader or two of their own calibre, to overcome all obstacles. As a striking contrast, we have working men like Place, Lovett, Weston, Watson, Hetherington, Richard Moore, who believed in moral agitation for the gradual improvement of conditions, who neither spoke of Power nor wanted personal leadership: "We have not, neither do we desire, leaders, as we believe that the principles we advocate have been retarded, injured or betrayed by leadership, more than by the open hostility of opponents"; "We confess that our imagination sickens at any prospect of civil discord, even if oppressors only were to be the victims." These people had their reward in the dignity and the influence of the Trade Unions in the latter part of the century, as described by Halévy. Who succeeded the O'Connors in the belief that the "masses," like children, needed to be firmly led by others wiser than themselves?

VIII.

An obvious parallel is that afforded by the Social Democratic Federation, founded in 1884, the year following Marx's death, by his disciple Hyndman. Halévy notes that this group possessed a tiny staff of officers, in which the non-working-class members predominated. "The pedantic fanaticism of the Federation," he goes on, "produced very little effect on the general public. There is something pitiable in the history of a group whose members were never weary of uttering threats, proclaiming the imminence of revolution and declaring their readiness to take control of it, yet had never succeeded, in spite of persistent efforts, and never would succeed, in securing the election of a single candidate. Obviously neither their

doctrine nor their methods were adapted to the needs of the country."

I cannot see that either the Social Democratic Federation or the modern Communist Party had even the slender excuse of O'Connor; for O'Connor was an Irishman, and Holyoake notes justly that "Irish leaders of English political agitation were daring, eloquent, inspiring, impetuous, and dangerous —dangerous because they were impatient, and impatient here because, despairing in their own land, they naturally incited insurgency here which might lead to liberty in Ireland." It is hardly for a countryman of Oliver Cromwell to criticize O'Connor on this particular point (though John Doherty was content with striving for reform through the trade union movement); but why should English Marxists try to better the instruction? And in the late 'eighties and 'nineties, too, when a further Holyoake excuse for the physical-force advocates no longer held water. Disagreeing with the views of Lovett, Cooper and Mazzini, Holyoake wrote, rather inconsistently with the general tenor of his book, that "Moral force was before its time then [that is, in 1837]. Now [1900] the people have a free vote, a free platform, a free press, and the ballot-box—if they cannot get what they want without physical force, they do not understand their business."

It is certainly a criticism of Marxism that its theories paid no attention to the progress of democratic institutions. The Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884, and the Ballot Act of 1872: these measures—though, as Tawney says, not quite according to the principles of the People's Charter—were a definite advance. But they did not affect the rigid policy of the Social Democratic Federation. Nor apparently did the Local Government Act of 1894, which made the local electorate much more democratic: at an election of parish councils held in Durham in 1895, for instance, of the 615 members returned, 370 were miners. Probably the S.D.F. would have been better pleased had the 370 been Marxist historians and the rest lecturers in Communist economics.

Halévy is not content to make a contrast of the traditional liberal outlook of the English lower classes only with the

foreign revolutionary pedantry of the S.D.F. He also contrasts this liberal tradition with the ideas of the Fabian Society; and here he seems to me to be on more debatable ground—at any rate, I would recommend a reading of his opinions in conjunction with Beatrice Webb's own diaries of the period, recently collected under the title of *Our Partnership*; particularly is this necessary in relation to the Fabians' rather complicated attitude to the Boer War.

Halévy writes as follows:—"There were in the socialist ranks thinkers who advocated an alliance between the socialists and the more progressive section of imperialists against the Gladstonian Liberals . . . Early in 1900 the faithful ally of the Webbs, the dramatist Bernard Shaw, heralded their imperialist propaganda by a speech in which he declared war on the doctrine that small nations had the right to determine their own government . . . Eighteen months later Sidney Webb maintained the same thesis in an article which attracted considerable attention. He congratulated Lord Rosebery on having freed himself from the slavery of the traditional Liberal formulas and urged him to place himself at the head of a reconstituted Opposition which should take for its programme National Efficiency. But this was no more than the dream of a handful of theorists who addressed their propaganda to the middle-class intelligentsia . . . Among the secretaries of the Unions, who were often devout Nonconformists, sometimes lay preachers, the vast majority . . . remained loyal to the traditional humanitarianism of the Gladstonians."

No group seems to have emerged with credit from the commercial-militarist adventure which was truly the end of the nineteenth century; but, among individuals at least, it was chiefly the Nonconformists of the lower and lower-middle classes who kept closest to the traditional liberal (not exclusively Liberal) policy of peace. Lloyd George, John Burns, Ramsay MacDonald, were not the only men of humble origin who protested against the Boer War. Most villages and small towns contained at least one "pro-Boer," not to mention the thousands of Nonconformists whose conscience merely pricked them into silence.

Even Joseph Chamberlain, the leader of the "Limps," may have had certain misgivings, if this example of mixed-metaphorical oratory—in a speech at Birmingham on the eve of the war—indicates an inner feeling of doubt:—"Will he [President Kruger] speak the necessary words? The sands are running down the glass. The situation is too fraught with danger, it is too strained for any indefinite postponement. The knot must be loosened..."

IX.

The Webbs "were obviously fascinated by the success of the Bismarckian State-Socialism," says Halévy; as later they were fascinated by the success of Stalinist State-Communism. "We have seen them already during the Boer War uniting with the imperialists to deride the anti-militarist principles of the Radical party. We shall see them look to Chamberlain to copy the Prussian model in England... Long since, many years before the foundation of the Empire, Prussia had decided that the State must take possession of every child at its birth and follow him to the elementary school, the secondary school and the University to form the fully developed man, the perfect servant of society; and her present supremacy"—Halévy is apparently paraphrasing the Webbs here—"was only the reward merited by her excellent system of education. What steps had England taken to raise her educational standard to the Prussian level?"

Although, as I have suggested, Halévy is rather hard on the Webbs, not recognizing that there was much more to their general policy than mere inhuman "efficiency," some such attitude of subservience to Prussian ideas of education—as English Marxists to continental ideas of revolution—was certainly theirs. It is interesting to contrast the attitude of the London Working Men's Association, as drafted by William Lovett, writing fifty years before:—"While we want a uniform and just system of education, we must guard against the influence of irresponsible power... We perceive the

results of this concentration of power and uniformity of system lamentably exemplified in Prussia and other parts of the continent, where the lynx-eyed satellites of power carefully watch over the first indications of intelligence, to turn it to their advantage, and to crush in embryo the buddings of freedom."

It is rather too much to say, with the French historian, that being "convinced imperialists and looking to a national and militarist state to realize their programme of moderate collectivism," the Webbs "had never felt anything but contempt for every formula of Liberalism"; but they were undoubtedly less alive to the dangers of state uniformity than were working-class Radicals like William Lovett. They approached, too, the attitude of the O'Connors and the Social Democratic Federation, in so far as they believed that the "masses," like children, needed to be firmly led by others wiser than themselves. "At the meetings of the Labour Representation Committee," says Halévy, "instead of collaborating on the same footing as the other members, the Fabians adopted the attitude of slightly supercilious and rather stand-offish advisers. Their leaders, Sidney and Beatrice Webb and Bernard Shaw, did everything in their power to discredit the Committee." At that time, they thought that the future belonged to a Conservative party regenerated by Chamberlain; they didn't believe that the new Labour Party could survive.

George Orwell has a fling at these ideas in *The Road to Wigan Pier*: "The underlying motive of many Socialists," he says, "is simply a hypertrophied sense of order. The present state of affairs offends them not because it causes misery, still less because it makes freedom impossible, but because it is untidy; what they desire, basically, is to reduce the world to something resembling a chess-board. Take the plays of a lifelong Socialist like Shaw... At best his attitude to the working class is the sniggering *Punch* attitude, in more serious moments . . . he finds them merely contemptible and disgusting. You get the same thing in a more mealy-mouthed form in Mrs. Sidney Webb's autobiography, which gives,

unconsciously, a most revealing picture of the high-minded Socialist slum-visitor. The truth is that to many people, calling themselves Socialists, revolution does not mean a movement of the masses with which they hope to associate themselves; it means a set of reforms which 'we,' the clever ones, are going to impose upon 'them,' the Lower Orders."

This is the vigorous view of an extreme, though non-Marxist Socialist; to a radical Liberal like myself, the actual word *revolution*—though it can mean several things—is extremely distasteful; it seems to go clean contrary to our cultural traditions. *Reforms*—radical perhaps—are good enough for the likes of us; we should leave revolutions to those members of the upper classes whose hearts may be in the right place but whose heads are often filled with left luggage from abroad. Even Halévy, though he brings plenty of evidence to support this nettling point, doesn't seem able quite to grasp it. For instance, he writes of MacDonald: "Everything about his past, his obscure origin, the life of destitution he had lived for ten years in London, destined him, one might have imagined, to become a revolutionary."

But why should one be supposed to imagine anything of the sort? Most of the constitutional reformers and anti-revolutionaries, men like Doherty, Place, Lovett, Cooper, Weston, Watson, Hetherington, Somerville . . . , had "obscure origins" and had lived lives of poverty for a number of years. Will Crooks was born in a workhouse. Indeed, when we think of Shelley, O'Connor, Stephens, Ernest Jones, Engels, Marx, Lenin—to say nothing of Messrs. Strachey, Spender, Madge, Warner, Auden, Day Lewis, Isherwood—a truer picture would be given if we could substitute the phrase: "Everything about his past, his comfortable origin, the life of ease and luxury he had lived for many years, destined him, one might have imagined, to become a revolutionary." I an glad to see that Mr. Dawson agrees with me here, at any rate with regard to Russia: "It was not from the peasants or the industrial proletariat," he writes, "but from the ranks of the lesser nobility and the bourgeois intelligentsia that the leaders of the revolutionary and terrorist movement arose, from

the time of Herzen and Bakunin to that of Lenin himself."

Communism, of course, is a religion. "The proletariat that the Communists serve," says Dawson, "is a mystical entity—the universal church of the Marxian believer—and the actual populace is an unregenerate mass which it is their duty to guide and organize according to the principles of the true faith. The communist is not a representative of the people: he is the priest of an idea." "There is no mistaking the note of sombre religious enthusiasm that characterizes, for example, Lenin's attitude to the metaphysical side of the Marxian creed. When he attacks Mach for having 'betrayed materialism with a kiss,' he is not speaking in jest. He is condemning what he regards as an act of spiritual apostasy."

Now, it is plain that much of this is native to the Russian peoples, that it has no connection with Western traditions. But, for my immediate points, some comparisons with, not only English Marxists, but with the Chartist "physical-force" men and with the Fabian group, can be made. In the first place, it is easy to understand how the idea of a Marxist priesthood, guiding and organizing the unregenerate populace —with their "reactionary lusts and prejudices"—towards the universal church of the Proletarian Dictatorship, makes an especial appeal to those of the English public-school class who have their hearts in the right place, and who have been trained from birth to look upon themselves as the natural leaders of the Lower Orders. At a recent Eton and Harrow cricket match, the *Daily Graphic* reported that a boy from Harrow, taking no interest in the game, was observed to be deeply immersed in a Life of Lenin; he was no doubt picturing himself as the "general" of the revolutionary army, in the spirit of *The Wild Goose Chase*, as his father at the same age was picturing himself as the gallant officer leading his faithful men into battle, and as his grandfather pictured himself leading the unregenerate villagers into a true knowledge of the Christian faith. That tiny minority of the lower classes in the 'thirties who had heard of Marxism must have regarded it in much the same way as the cottagers in the mid-nineteenth century—according to George Bourne's *Change in the Village*

—regarded the Anglican religion, as " a tiresome hobby, reserved to the well-to-do."

X.

Their mystical love of blood and of the Marxist Inquisition is another point to be borne in mind. " Mr. Auden's poem on Spain," wrote Edwin Muir once in the *Criterion*, " and a good few of the poems in Mr. Warner's book are also militant and catastrophic . . ." The critic had noticed the same kind of thing in Louis MacNeice's verse play *Out of the Picture*, and he went on to quote that notorious line of Auden's—" the conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder "—which was later criticized by George Orwell, in *Inside the Whale*, as being an *academic* view of murder, written by someone who had not seen the actual thing.

Mr. Muir then turned to the consideration of Rex Warner, whose " revolutionary verse," he wrote, " is so drenched in the mysticism of violence and so remote from political realities that one does not know what to make of it." The critic quoted this example :—

> Come, then, companions. This is the spring of blood,
> heart's heyday, movement of masses. beginning of good.
> Come away then,
> you fat man.
> You don't want your watch chain.
> But don't interfere with us, because we know you too well.
> If you do, then you will lose your top hat
> and be knocked on the head until you are dead . . .

and commented: " The necessary murder, again, the fat man bumped off without regret."

But it wasn't only the absence of regret that was so remarkable. There was another aspect that Mr. Muir, himself of " proletarian " origin, should have noticed; and that is Mr. Warner's assumption that " the masses," when they are not engaged in petty theft, are fond of knocking other people on the head. This is all in line with the author's novel, *The*

Wild Goose Chase. I will do Mr. Warner the slight injustice of stringing together his " mysticism of violence " in a few quotations :—" ' Charge them and club them down,' said George quickly. ' You ought to have done so already ' . . Even had they wished it, they knew that they could do nothing to stop the slaughter of policemen which was now taking place . . . ' I shouldn't hesitate,' said George, ' to get rid of anyone who seemed likely to split the army '. . . "

Some of this violence—as I suggested in the *Nineteenth Century*—may have had its origin in Marxist memories of debagging the police on boat-race nights ; but our sense of its absurdity should not blind us to its obvious connection with the blood-stained theology of the Marxist revelation. It is significant that Mr. Warner's hero George is not a member of the working class ; he is, in fact, an ex-public-school undergraduate of comfortable means who has read the sacred books and " thrown in his lot with the workers." This gives him the right to be appointed the " general " of the revolutionary army, who addresses the ranks with the amazing prelude, " We are workers . . . ," though he himself has never done a day's work in his life, apart from making love promiscuously to a number of women comrades. One should not read too much into such a piece of absurdity as *The Wild Goose Chase*, but if Mr. Warner's prophecies bore any relation to what would have occurred in an actual Communist revolution, then it is clear that the Marxist New Order in Britain would have been an absolute negation of democracy. All power would have been in the hands of the Marxist priesthood ; the Trade Unions would have been compelled to remodel themselves on lines drawn up by Mr. John Strachey ; and all books would have been submitted to a rigid censorship, before being published by the central and only publishing firm of Messrs. Gollancz and Lehmann.

We can see a faint foreshadowing of such censorship in the case of Orwell's finest book, *The Road to Wigan Pier*. This was one of the few good books sponsored by the Left Book Club, and I am grateful to Mr. Gollancz for publishing it. But one's gratitude is severely lessened by the fact that Messrs. Strachey,

Laski and Gollancz decided unanimously that Mr. Orwell was not to be allowed to speak his own mind, but that there would have to be a preface by one of the directors of the Left Book Club. This preface had the effect intended, a member quoted in *Left Book News* saying: "When we have finished reading Palme Dutt's brilliant historical analysis, or Strachey's splendid, crystal-clear outline of the theory and practice of Socialism, all we can do is to nod our heads and say, 'Yes, comrades, you are right.' But when Orwell shows us in the second part of his book what is going on in his mind, he enrages the most pacific among us, and then we sit up and sharpen our brains so as to refute his erroneous notions."

"His erroneous notions," notice; they were not according to the Marxist scriptures. But that is not the most important point to observe. What is chiefly interesting is the fact that this Left Book Club member, like a good party man, had swallowed whole the pretence of the preface that it was the *second* part of *The Road to Wigan Pier* which had worried Messrs. Strachey, Laski and Gollancz; whereas what must really have made them see redder was the *first*.

For consider: the main "classic" of the Left Book Club was Strachey's *Coming Struggle for Power*; another book that the directors thought highly of was Spender's *Forward from Liberalism*, published in the same year as the Orwell. Both these other books were entirely orthodox, that is they contained passages urging the people to overthrow the state. It was commonly accepted by Left Book Club members that Marxism was making great strides among the unregenerate populace, particularly in the distressed areas. Then this inconvenient person Orwell went to see for himself, and reported that, so far from Marxism having made great strides along the road to Wigan pier, the unemployed in the very worst areas of all "have neither turned revolutionary nor lost their self-respect." *That* was "the erroneous notion" which Messrs. Strachey, Laski and Gollancz desired—perhaps unconsciously—to see refuted in a preface, not any frivolous observations as to whether or not the lower classes smell. But the actual preface by Mr. Gollancz—who was certainly more right than Mr.

Orwell over several points—killed two parts with the same urbanity, and *The Coming Struggle for Power* and *Forward from Liberalism*, instead of being considered absolutely contradicted by the facts, continued to be widely acclaimed.

If England had been blessed with a Left Book Club in the nineteenth century, it would have reprinted the Dickensian answer to the Communist Manifesto, *Hard Times*—with a long introduction by Karl Marx.

XI.

The connection of the Chartist "physical-force men" with Marxist theology is naturally somewhat slighter than that of the modern English Marxists. Where O'Connor and others come into line with the sacred books is in their treatment of "traitors" and "heretics." When Lovett and Collins came out of Warwick Gaol, after serving their two years imprisonment for protesting against the unconstitutional action of the Government in sending London police to break up a peaceful meeting of men and women, with children, in the Birmingham Bull Ring, they found themselves attacked by O'Connor and his associates for being "traitors." "Among the most prominent of our assailants in London," wrote Lovett, "was a Mr. J. Watkins, a person of some talent and, I believe, of some property, who preached and published a sermon to show the justice of assassinating us." Lovett, Collins and other "moral-force humbugs" were denounced by the revolutionary theorists as persons who "if a guillotine existed in England would be its just victims." Their part in the National Association of the United Kingdom for promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People (1841) was denounced by O'Connor as "treachery to the Chartist cause," notwithstanding that the Association had the support of most of the original sponsors of the People's Charter, including Hetherington, Cleave, Vincent, Watson, Moore and Collett. O'Connor's real grouse was evidently, as always, that the Association might damage his personal supremacy.

We are bound to be reminded, not only of the French, but of the Russian revolution. There is something peculiarly nauseating, something irredeemably Marxist, about the spectacle of an Irish landowner like O'Connor taking advantage of his working-class opponents being in gaol, by smearing them with charges of treachery and pegging them out in the heated columns of the *Northern Star* to attract the attention of insects such as the bloodthirsty Watkins. And we are bound to pay a heart-felt tribute to the men and women in the distressed areas in the past decade for refusing, consciously or unconsciously, to follow our modern O'Connors of the Left Book Club, the *Left Review* and *New Writing* to a repetition of the paltry incidents of 1848.

The connection of the Fabian group with Marxist theology is superficially of the slightest, but certain comparisons can be made if we look beneath the surface a little. It is not only that the Webbs' early attraction to Bismarckian State-Socialism was followed, late in their mainly admirable career, by an attraction to Stalinist State-Communism, while Bernard Shaw has held for some time the opinion that Stalin is the arch-Fabian. It is not simply that: it is rather the adhesion of some Fabians to the idea of a body of advisers, a "desire to see power in the hands of the wise (which they take themselves to be) for the improvement of the condition and the better contentment of the people," which brings them into line with the nobler part of the Marxist theology. It is significant in this connection that Beatrice Webb was a very pious woman, who, though an Agnostic, hankered all her life after a Church. "I am perpetually brooding," she once wrote in her diary, "over my inability to make clear even to myself, let alone to others,why I believe in religious mysticism, why I hanker after a Church—with its communion of the faithful, with its religious rites, and its religious discipline, and above all with its definite code of conduct . . ." We must notice that it was after some kind of *Catholic* Church, not any of the Protestant varieties, that Beatrice Webb's soul yearned. And, according to Halévy, Sidney bore her company at least part of the way: "The Webbs have always regarded the

Catholic type of Christianity as more in harmony with the Socialist ideal than Protestant individualism." After giving a detailed picture of Soviet authority, the methods of dealing with heretics, etc., " It must be added, with sadness," says Berdyaev, " that all this is a horrid caricature of Christianity." Of the finer side of Christianity, no doubt ; but not so much a caricature, as a pale reflection, of some of the aspects of mediaeval theology.

England has a long tradition of Protestant and agnostic culture, and this is one of the reasons why we are never likely to have a Marxist revolution. It can't altogether be an accident that Communism has taken deepest root in those countries—Russia, Mexico, formerly Spain—which have a long tradition of religious authority ; and we must notice, too, in this connection, the significance of the career of such a man as André Malraux : a fervent Communist before the war, now (1948) one of the staunchest followers of the Catholic authoritarian right-wing party of General de Gaulle.

That the lower classes of England, in the distressed areas of the 'thirties, did remember, consciously or unconsciously, our cultural tradition, while some of their social superiors—often with the best of intentions—were doing their utmost to destroy it, this fact may appear strange to some people, but it is by no means the first time in English history that such a thing has occurred. At the turn of the century, for example, the mainly upper-class disciples of Karl Marx, with their few dozen lower-class retainers, were proclaiming the imminence of revolution and declaring their readiness to take control of it ; but when a self-styled Social Democrat, at a conference of Trade Unionists held in London in 1900, proposed the foundation of a party on the principle of the class war and with a programme of unqualified Socialism—perhaps in more than one sense of " unqualified "—his motion was heavily defeated. At the Cardiff Congress of Trade Unions in 1895, the miners had adopted an attitude of contemptuous hostility to a similar motion ; they had refused to vote on it, disdaining to support or oppose a proposition which they declared to be meaningless. " Continental Socialists," said

the secretary of the Dockers' Union, Ben Tillett, "are no better than stupid windbags, parrots repeating meaningless phrases."

We have seen, also, how in the Chartist movement the English constitutional tradition was respected by working-class Radicals like Place, Lovett, Weston, Watson; and how the movement was snatched out of their hands by preachers of violence, such as the Irish barrister and landowner O'Connor, the Tory clergyman Stephens, the Byronic cosmopolitan Ernest Jones. I wonder whether modern Marxist historians have ever asked themselves what good these "physical force men" ever did to the people whose cause some of them had most sincerely at heart? What *good* did they do? It is easy to see what harm they did: they were ultimately responsible for the death of about twenty men and probably for the harsh sentences on hundreds more; and they were responsible, as both Lovett and Wordsworth held, for the reactionary tendencies of many waverers. It is easy to excuse a fiery speech delivered in the heat of the moment and in a passion of honest indignation. Perhaps the only good these mob orators did was to encourage a brief moment of letting off steam among their hungry, shivering audiences. But an occasional fiery speech is one thing, a deliberate policy of violence is another. What George Orwell wrote in *The Road to Wigan Pier* is applicable also to the hungry 'forties of the nineteenth century: after recording that the people "have neither turned revolutionary nor lost their self-respect; merely they have kept their tempers and settled down to make the best of things on a fish-and-chip standard," Orwell says that "the alternative would be God knows what continued agonies of despair; or it might be attempted insurrections which, in a strongly governed country like England, could only lead to futile massacres and a regime of savage repression."

That is the common-sense view, and if it be retorted that, bad as things were in the past decade, they were infinitely worse in the hungry 'forties, and that England was in those days seriously under-policed, I would remind the reader of the presence of the military and of the heart-searching of those

who, like Private Alexander Somerville of the Scots Greys, would have been forced to carry out the futile massacres mentioned.

XII.

Let me anticipate a few criticisms. I have said that the lower classes of England, most strikingly in the distressed areas, remembered in the last decade our cultural tradition, while some of their social superiors—an extremely vocal minority—did their best to destroy it. With the help of some professional historians—Halévy, Dr. and Mrs. Hammond, Professor Tawney, Mr. Dawson—and of those nineteenth-century working-class autobiographies which our modern Marxists appear never to have heard of, I have described the main features of this cultural tradition as exemplified, in the course of the last two centuries, in the political field. And I have suggested, with a certain amount of vigour, that this tradition was chiefly responsible for the fact that the vast majority of the English lower classes turned a deaf ear to the alien propaganda of Messrs. Strachey, Spender, Warner, and the rest of the Marxist priesthood.

It might be countered, in the first place, that the long, mainly Nonconformist religious tradition I have insisted on, as the chief instrument working for class peace and constitutional methods, has almost totally disappeared. I certainly wouldn't care to deny the evident fact that the average miner of the 'thirties was more interested in the *News of the World* than in that Bible-Bunyan tradition which formed a great part of the mental background of even free-thinking reformers in the hungry eighteen-forties. But traditions—"felt in the blood, and felt along the heart"—have a way of surviving the obsolescence of the institutions in which they were first embodied. The fact that the chapels in the 'thirties were almost as sparsely occupied as the Anglican churches did not mean that the children and grandchildren of those who had formerly worshipped there twice every

Sunday were willing to listen to any talk of alien authority or discipline; whether of the Marxist or Catholic brand. "That moral and religious constitution," said Halévy in 1926, "persists in its main lines unchanged." In 1932 Mr. Strachey published his *Coming Struggle for Power*, in which he stated: "Nor is there anything in the geographical, industrial, cultural, or economic position of Great Britain which forbids the British workers from taking a decisive part in the establishment of world communism." So either the late M. Halévy, a professional historian who had given most of his life to a study of English history and whose *History of the English People* is considered by English historians to be the best of its kind, either Halévy was completely wrong, or the situation had completely altered in five or six years. I submit that either of these alternatives is invalid.

George Orwell, of course, in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, was inclined to stress the availability of cheap luxuries—such as "a nice cup of tea"—as the chief reason for that good temper of the unemployed in the distressed areas to which both he himself and Mr. Gollancz handsomely pay tribute. "The post-war development of cheap luxuries," wrote Orwell, "has been a very fortunate thing for our rulers. It is quite likely that fish and chips, art-silk stockings, tinned salmon, cut-price chocolate (five two-ounce bars for sixpence), the movies, the radio, strong tea and the Football Pools have between them averted revolution."

This is a very human view, and I don't doubt for a moment the importance of the cup of tea, the aspirin, the "four aways." But, by the same argument, you could prove that, before the lower classes had these cheap luxuries, and when they were often living in conditions which make the conditions of the worst slums in the past decade—appalling as they were (and in some cases still are)—seem like heaven, there was one revolution after another. It is the view, of course, of most Marxists that that is what actually occurred: that in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century there was naked class war. But, according to the historians, there wasn't. We have seen the Hammonds' opinion, supported by my other

evidence, that in the very worst period of all, the hungry 'forties, Frost's rising, resulting in the death of fourteen men, " was the only outbreak of violence." That was in the very worst period of all. What happened in the 'fifties and 'sixties ? Plenty of strikes, but strikes accompanied by a favourite song, which I have quoted.

Whatever the opinion of Mr. Bounderby, strikes are not the weapons of revolutionaries : they were accepted by the London Working Men's Association and other " moral-force humbugs." Mr. Groves talks wildly of " great class battles " at the end of the century ; the phrase is perhaps ambiguous, but it certainly gives the impression—reinforced by the title of his useful book, *But We Shall Rise Again*—of violent conflicts between the " proletariat " and the " bourgeoisie," with thousands killed on either side. What really happened ? According to Halévy, in the great strike in the South Wales coalfields in 1897, for example, " not a single act of violence was committed by the miners." And the details of the schemes for uniting the Unions are interesting, too, from the " class-war " angle : " At first sight," says Halévy, " the scheme might seem a copy of French syndicalism ; it was in 1895 that the *Confédération Général du Travail* had been formed. In reality, nothing could be farther from the truth than this comparison. It was the American Federation of Labour which had provided British labour with a model. Far from preparing a general strike to expropriate capital, the object of the proposed federation, as expressed in their own manifesto, was to promote industrial peace."

I may be reminded of " Bloody Sunday "—that sickening occasion on the 13th November, 1887, when the police in great force and two squadrons of the Life Guards were used to quell an intended demonstration of the unemployed in Trafalgar Square. There is no doubt at all that the police, as on that earlier occasion at the Birmingham Bull Ring, behaved with the utmost brutality. We have the word of William Morris for their cowardly demonstration of brute force, though personally I put the greater share of blame on the Government and on the revolutionary agitators. " The forces

of authority," writes Mrs. Meynell in a recent biography of Morris, "were so well handled, and those of the unemployed and the socialists so badly—Morris was marching among them—that the whole thing ended in a humiliating collapse. Of bloodshed there was actually very little, in spite of the name given to the day. One young man, Alfred Linnell, died in hospital as the result of injuries received in the struggle with the police."

Truly this was an episode which the most conservative-minded of men would wish to forget; nothing can excuse the brutality of the police. Yet, for my present argument, I put my finger on another point. Surely even the staunchest Marxist would have to admit the un-Marxian significance of the fact that this day, when *one man* was murdered by the guardians of the law, has become famous in socialist annals as "Bloody Sunday." One death is one too many, I agree; but if Marxist propaganda bore any relation to the truth, sordid episodes in which one or a few were killed would be totally forgotten, and we should be asked to concentrate on Bloody Wednesdays, "great class battles" in which thousands of lives were lost.

So Mr. Orwell's emphasis on cheap luxuries becomes rather strained. There must have been something more important, something more traditional, something closely connected with the beliefs of their ancestors, which averted revolution among the unemployed in the past decade.

XIII.

I don't see how this "something more important" can be described otherwise than in extremely vague terms. It was something so obvious that it was often overlooked, simply that ordinary decent common-sense which naturally went unrecognized by those Marxists who connected the "masses" with violence. The impulse which led the cabinet-maker Lovett, the bookseller Watson and the ex-sailor Cleave to insist to the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, that "so far

from advocating violence, we were readily disposed to aid the authorities in preserving the peace and had, in fact, offered to be enrolled as special constables," this impulse of working-class Radicals in the hungry 'forties was also the impulse of the average unemployed person in the past decade: to act without provocation, even if some of your political opponents so abused the title of National or Conservative as to act otherwise. Particularly was this impulse noticeable among the women, the wives and daughters of the unemployed in the distressed areas. " Life is still fairly normal," reported Mr. Orwell, " more normal than one really has the right to expect. Families are impoverished, but the family-system has not broken up." Who would care to deny that this family-system played a considerable part in that " something more important " which defies an easy definition, and that the maintenance of the family under such vile conditions was an act of culture which puts the " cheap luxury " in its proper perspective ?

It is true that Mr. Gollancz handsomely recognized this: Orwell's book, he wrote in the foreword, is " a tribute to courage and patience," but he had to add—perhaps Mr. Strachey or the ghost of Karl Marx was looking over his shoulder—he had to add : "—patience far too great." I don't see myself that patience can ever be far too great, in human affairs. But Marxism doesn't deal with human affairs : it deals with cold abstractions like " the proletariat," " the bourgeoisie," " the class-war." As Mr. Gollancz himself puts it, shaking his head in amiable reproof over Mr. Orwell's old-fashioned nonsense, " *emotional* Socialism must become scientific Socialism." I wonder whether he could have informed us in precisely what way the slum-dwellers could have improved their condition by becoming scientifically *im*patient ? Were they to have lowered themselves to the level of Marxist undergraduates and paraded the streets with red flags, shouting slogans ? And, if so, what slogans ? " Workers of the world, unite " ? But what did the average mean-tested would-be worker care about " the world," or even Europe ? " I happened to be in Yorkshire," wrote Orwell, " when Hitler re-occupied

the Rhineland. Hitler, Locarno, Fascism and the threat of war aroused hardly a flicker of interest locally, but the decision of the Football Association to stop publishing their fixtures in advance (this was an attempt to quell the Football Pools) flung all Yorkshire into a storm of fury."

Orwell writes without comment, and it is clear from the context that he thinks this attitude, seemingly selfish, was justified in the circumstances. But it seems to me that he writes with just that touch of hyperbole which is liable to give a wrong impression. I don't think any person, in any class, was undisturbed by Hitler and the threat of war ; the apparent lack of interest, in Yorkshire and elsewhere, was partly due to the methods of the popular press—those constant screaming headlines which suck the mind asleep—but mainly due to a feeling of utter helplessness. What on earth could the average citizen of Britain, let alone the unemployed who had more than enough troubles of their own, what on earth could we do to affect matters on the Continent ? The Government could possibly have prevented or postponed war (perhaps by joining the Franco-Soviet pact in 1936, as the Marxists rightly asked), but that wouldn't have lessened the sufferings of Jews and political prisoners inside Germany ; the crimes of the Nazis began with their rise to power in their native land, and only an armed international government could have prevented them—or can prevent similar undemocratic cancers in the future. Until that day arrives, that day of international democracy, " foreign affairs " will continue to be the province of national governments and their advisers, and most of the rest of us will continue to get more heated over trivial matters like betting, football, bridge, book-collecting, chess, or philately. I gather from Lovett, Cooper and Holyoake that, though mid-century Radicals signed almost as many messages to foreign democrats as Marxists in the past decade to foreign socialists, and helped Mazzini, for instance, with money to buy arms, their efforts were not a prime factor in the overthrow of European despotism.

It is no doubt a valid criticism of what I have so far written in this chapter, that I have only just mentioned Hitler. I

wouldn't care to deny that this bloody fool dominated the political scene in the 'thirties and that the attitude towards him of Messrs. Strachey, Gollancz, etc., was correct. In general, it is perfectly true that the lower classes of England are inclined to be insular, and that we have the corresponding defects of our national qualities; while some of the upper classes are able to think more internationally, with the qualities and defects of that outlook. But in certain ways the English lower classes seem to have been shrewder than many of their more internationally-minded social superiors, in regard to the European scene in the past decade.

It is not simply that our high-class journals in 1948 are beginning to be seriously worried over that Imperialistic Communism which the hand-rail maker John Weston noticed the danger of nearly a hundred years ago, or that many of us have learnt by experience those perils of state uniformity which were pointed out by the London Working Men's Association in 1839. We can come nearer home than that. Consider, for instance, the changed attitude of our Marxists to the U.S.S.R. "To travel from the capitalist world into Soviet territory," wrote John Strachey in 1932, "is to pass from death to birth." That was the prevalent attitude of our Marxists throughout the 'thirties; we were constantly being informed that post-revolutionary Russia was vastly superior to Britain or America in democracy, science and culture. Cecil Day Lewis introduced the symposium *The Mind in Chains* (1937) as follows: "*The Mind in Chains* could never have been written were it not for the widespread belief of intellectual workers that the mind is really in chains to-day, that these chains have been forged by a dying social system, that they can and must be broken—and in the Soviet Union have been broken." "In Russia already," wrote one of the contributors, Edward Upward, "writers are better off than anywhere else in the world." "In the new civilization of the Soviet Union," wrote another contributor, Edgell Rickword (editor of the *Left Review*), "'government by the people for the people,' that ghost which haunts the capitalist democracies with the reminder of their youthful promises, becomes a living reality based on the right of all to work and

leisure." Even the solitary contributor of "proletarian" origin, Mr. T. A. Jackson (author of *Dickens the Radical*, a very interesting study), even he sings the same tune: "Marxism can be adapted less than any philosophy to the ends of dogmatism and persecution." "The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat," according to this veteran Marxist, is "the highest form of democracy."

Altogether, George Orwell was not so far wrong when he gave the following list of equations in *Inside the Whale*: "Heaven—the U.S.S.R.; Hell—the capitalist countries; God—Stalin"; and when he wrote in the essay *Raffles and Miss Blandish*: "People worship power in the form in which they are able to understand it. A twelve-year old boy worships Jack Dempsey. An adolescent in a Glasgow slum worships Al Capone. An aspiring pupil at a business college worships Lord Nuffield. A *New Statesman* reader worships Stalin."

He doesn't, of course, to-day, not even in provocative hyperbole; and that is precisely my point: our two most distinguished Socialist weeklies, the *Statesman* and *Tribune*, have for some time now been full of information about Soviet censorship, Soviet labour-camps, Soviet purges, Soviet repression, Soviet secret police, Soviet crimes of every description, and above all the terrible life led by Soviet writers, artists and scientists. All this is apparently the work of the last few years; in the 'thirties, the U.S.S.R. was immensely superior to Britain and America in nearly every way, particularly in the free life led by writers, artists, musicians, scientists, architects, etc. *Tribune* has even gone so far as to state in a leading article that the Communist technique of force and repression "is not Marxism at all" but "a parody of the kind of thinking which Marx sought to instil," when a glance at the Communist Manifesto of February, 1848, could have informed them that Marx and Engels wrote as follows: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions." Or as Mr. Strachey put it in 1932: "No new order of society can be born without violent conflict."

XIV.

It was precisely this violent, impatient, undemocratic feature of Imperialistic Communism and State Socialism which repelled the hand-rail maker Weston in 1850, the Cardiff Congress of Trade Unions in 1895, and the London conference of Trade Unionists in 1900. Did the lower-classes maintain this attitude in the past decade? According to their opponents, they did. We have seen that Mr. Strachey in 1932 regarded the Unions as "by far the most formidable obstacle in the way of an early [Marxist] victory." And Mr. Spender, in *Forward from Liberalism*, censured the *Daily Herald* for "publishing a series of articles by Walter Citrine [General Secretary of the T.U.C.] violently attacking the U.S.S.R., and an equally strong leader advising Labour on no account to accept the affiliation of the British Communist Party, giving for its reasons the undemocratic nature of the Russian state; this in spite of the fact that the reformed Soviet parliamentary constitution had just been published."

I haven't verified Mr. Spender's statement, but I can take his word that there was a certain amount of violence in Citrine's article. I believe the general attitude of the "proletariat" was rather one of healthy scepticism; though I expect Spender would now agree that Citrine was right in stating that the Soviet order was and is undemocratic—for a dictatorial regime, particularly if it continues under the same man, is not likely to change to any great extent in ten years.

Why, then, didn't the upper-class Marxists take heed of the wisdom of Mr. (now Lord) Citrine, which represented, I believe, the common opinion of the T.U.C. and of the lower classes in general? I can discover no reason except that these people *were* Marxists, committed to the creed that the Lower Orders, with their "reactionary lusts and prejudices," are never to be consulted on affairs of any importance, only led, like children, by those wiser than themselves. Ah, "the political ignorance of the exploited majority," says Mr. Upward; it really makes one shudder! Fortunately, they have teachers like oneself to inform them (a) that the Soviet Union is as near Paradise as makes no matter; (b) that the Soviet Union is hell on earth.

It is not primarily a question of who was right or who was wrong; these matters, it will be agreed, are too complicated for any such dogmatism. It is rather a question of responsibility. Who can deny that the fervent adulation of the Soviet Union, mostly by members of the public-school class, showed a degree of irresponsibility which no sensible person should have been guilty of? Compare that attitude with the responsible behaviour of the General Secretary of the T.U.C. in 1937, or of John Weston and William Lovett a hundred years ago, and who can fail to find culture and love of democracy in the latter and a lack of both in the former?

I may be reminded that, since the irresponsible adulation complained of, the U.S.S.R. has signed a treaty with the Nazi regime, has invaded Finland and Poland, and more recently has set up Communist dictatorships in most of the small countries of eastern Europe. (She also has lost more men than the rest of the Allies combined in *fighting* the Nazi regime). Some of these events may certainly have come as a surprise to nearly everybody, including the Russians themselves, on earth. But, while I personally don't go so far as some of our ex-Communist poetasters and publicists, in claiming that there is not a scrap of difference between the Nazis and the Kremlin, the argument I have applied to Hitler also applies to Stalin. The crimes of the Bolsheviks began with their rise to power in their native land, and most of the features of Kremlin dictatorship about which our ex-Communist publicists are so worried to-day are not only in strict accordance with the Marxist creed but were there in Russia throughout the 'thirties. Indeed, the first notorious set of purges were completed before Mr. Strachey wrote that " to travel from the capitalist world into Soviet territory is to pass from death to birth " ; and the secret police were long established before Mr. Jackson gave it as his considered opinion that " Marxism can be adapted less than any philosophy to the ends of dogmatism and persecution." The notorious purges and the secret police were part of what the Secretary of the T.U.C. had in mind, when he criticized the U.S.S.R. for being Marxist or undemocratic. Why should even the presence of Hitler have made Mr. Spender object so strongly

to such an obvious criticism? Mr. Citrine wasn't proposing to lead the Trade Unions into war with Stalin; he was simply objecting to Communist methods in this country.

Russia before 1917 was an inept and corrupt tsarist bureaucracy, bearing not the slightest relation to any situation in England since the fourteenth century; the Russian aristocracy, well into the nineteenth century, disdained even to speak their native language, except when giving orders to their bailiffs. To get the nearest English parallel, we have to go back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when the Norman barons spoke a sort of French, while the English serfs spoke Anglo-Saxon. Serfdom in England was extinct by the end of the sixteenth century; it came to an end in Russia between the years 1858 and 1863. It is mere debating talk to claim that the industrial slavery of the English nineteenth century was even worse than feudal serfdom; it may well have been so, in some districts, for a number of years, but to get a fair picture we have to reckon with the social achievements, as well as the social misery, of the Victorian age. The worst abuses were checked by Parliament, and the Trade Unions saw to it that such evils would never again recur.

"There is nothing in Marxism," says Kingsley Martin, "to justify British Marxists behaving as Soviet Nationalists." On the contrary, there is everything in Marxism to justify that attitude. According to the scriptures—unless the Communist Manifesto is now conveniently regarded as apocryphal—the Soviet Union has the right, as the first country in the world to have achieved the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, to command the allegiance of Marxists in other countries. How on earth does Mr. Martin expect Marxism to become triumphant in the West save by the shrewd policy of the entirely orthodox Marxist church in the Kremlin? It is no more illogical for English Communists to look to Moscow for their instructions than for the English Church in the early thirteenth century to have looked to Rome.

English Communists are not, and never have been, illogical in that respect; their illogicality has a much more primitive

birth—it springs, in fact, from their being Marxists at all, *in England*. Those of post-war vintage are fond of saying that, in one of the sacred books, Marx wrote that the Communist revolution might come about in different countries in somewhat different ways. I don't dispute the accuracy of that remark, but why did English Marxists of pre-war vintage so seldom appear to have heard of it, why did they take it as a Marxist axiom that, being Marxists, they should vaunt the Soviet Union, and why, instead of wearing the new look of Marxist Western Democracy, did they talk about "the blood-red dawn" and "the Hammer, the Sickle, the Blood"?

What Mr. Martin should have written was this:—"There is nothing in Marxism to justify British Marxists." It is an entirely alien creed, as John Weston recognized in 1850, Ben Tillett and the Cardiff T.U.C. in 1895, the London conference of Trade Unionists in 1900, Elie Halévy in 1906-26, Ramsay MacDonald in 1932, Walter Citrine in 1937, and the vast majority of the English lower classes in the century that has elapsed since the Communist Manifesto was published in 1848. "Mr. MacDonald tells us," wrote John Strachey scornfully in 1932, "that British Socialism derives from Godwin rather than from Marx. So far as his own views are concerned he is no doubt quite right." But the Chartist pioneer Lovett also held that English Socialism, which he detested, came from Godwin. Lovett and MacDonald were, of course, only stating part of the truth: a greater influence than Godwin was Robert Owen. "Lovett himself," writes Professor Tawney, "though in later life he repudiated the ambiguous name of socialist, was in his youth a disciple of Owen." Let us admit the ambiguity of the title and the fact that certain views of Godwin and Shelley were repugnant to decent men like Lovett, but why should our modern so-called socialists seek to deny the achievements of native socialists, native radicals, the Co-operative movement, the trade unions, etc., all in favour of a foreign creed which at no period in English history has had more than a few thousand disciples? Halévy tells us that in 1895 the supporters of the Marxist S.D.F. barely exceeded five thousand; in the same year the total membership of the

trade unions was estimated at one and a half millions, and the Cardiff Congress declared heavily in favour of a non-Marxist policy. In the past decade the comparative figures were even more striking: the trade unions had passed the five million mark, most of the members being non-Marxist and agreeing with the policy of the *Herald* and Walter Citrine, while—according to Mr. Orwell's *Lion and the Unicorn*—" By 1940, after working for twenty years and spending a great deal of money, the British Communists had barely 20,000 members, actually a smaller number than they had started out with in 1920." Add a few thousand illogical persons, who turned to the east when the Marxist creed was recited but who wanted to remain independent of Moscow, and you have something like 25,000—the average attendance every Saturday of an average football team in the Second Division. Such a tiny sect cannot be of much importance in English political life, however many red ties were worn at fashionable literary cocktail parties in the past decade.

XV.

Can we, then, write off Marxism and all its works as being of no importance for the subject of this book? Clearly we cannot, for to say what is wrong with a theory is not to dismiss it altogether from inquiry, and, as literary critics are indebted to their predecessors no less for the ideas they chew over and discard than for the ideas they whole-heartedly accept, so a critic of culture, writing in 1948, must be in the very great debt of the Marxist critics who wrote in the 'thirties, whether he himself happens to agree with them or not. The important thing is the chewing-over process, whether we spit the idea out or swallow it after mastication.

The most obvious thing about Marxist ideas of culture was their popularity in literary circles a decade ago, but the most admirable feature was the Marxists' thoroughness, the way in which they followed up the precepts to their logical conclusion. Thus Mrs. Mitchison, in *We Have Been Warned*,

and Mrs. Williams-Ellis, in *To Tell The Truth*, both see machinery and machine-tending as good in themselves, both tend to despise the "typical petty bourgeois life" of the family—thereby agreeing with a once notorious speech by Mme. Kollontai, the Soviet Ambassador to Norway. That this disregard for spiritual traditions and love of some of the worst aspects of modern civilization are not peculiar among our Marxists to the two novels mentioned is proved, I think, by Mr. Warner's *Wild Goose Chase*, Mr. Madge's opinion in *The Mind in Chains* that "the mass-produced character of the modern newspaper is its supreme virtue," and Christopher Caudwell's view in *Illusion and Reality* that the modern thriller, jazz music, Hollywood film, etc., are valuable "proletarian" art. Whether Marx would have been surprised at this development is a difficult question to answer, but certainly when he divided the world into bourgeoisie and proletariat, and when his followers quite logically condemned all the features of this bourgeoisie, including the stress laid by it on family life, the way was open to a glorification of the machine, not because it was useful, but because it clearly scorned the traditions of the hated past.

Fortunately for us, the "proletariat" in this country is so closely bound up with the bourgeois tradition that "the coming struggle for power" on the cultural front will be between, not the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, but the bourgeois tradition and the machine. An average person gives his allegiance to machine-culture at one moment, to bourgeois culture at the next; for all is confused, and "we are ourselves," says Dawson, "part of that which we are attempting to criticize." The only thing we can do is to hang on to those aspects of bourgeois culture which seem to us, not only familiar, but good—as the average unemployed family did in the 'thirties when they rejected the Marxist doctrine of revolution and those "few leading questions" put to them by Bloomsbohemian slum-visitors of the type held up for our admiration in *We Have Been Warned*. And it is in their hasty rejection of bourgeois culture, and the consequent reaction of other people to this rejection, that the

Marxist movement has proved so valuable to all concerned—just as British and American democracy, despite their imperfections, looked good to many people for the first time, when they found themselves living in a police state. "I feel convinced, since I have been to Russia," wrote Edmund Wilson, for example, "that American republican institutions, disastrously as they are always being abused, have some permanent and absolute value."

"For all its refinement," Mr. Turnell has said, in that passage of criticism, part of which I quoted earlier in this chapter, "this art [of the bourgeoisie] has become exceedingly precarious, an art of disillusion and despair. It is clear that this state cannot continue indefinitely. The middle classes have been living on their intellectual capital for some time and there are unmistakeable signs that it is nearing exhaustion." This introduces the doctrine of "the Ivory Tower which has now become the Leaning Tower"—a doctrine which received discussion in two of the most interesting numbers of *New Writing* and which also formed the main theme of Mr. Lehmann's own book *New Writing in Europe* (1940). To quote the opening words of Lehmann's book is to give the whole situation with that author's admirable brevity:—"My aim in this book is to review what has been one of the most interesting developments in our literature for many years: the growth, during the early nineteen-thirties, of a group of poets and prose-writers who were conscious of great social, political and moral changes going on around them, and who became increasingly convinced that it was their business to communicate their vision of this process, not merely to the so-called highbrow intellectual public to which their predecessors had addressed themselves but to the widest possible circles of ordinary people engaged in the daily struggle for existence."

Now I give Mr. Lehmann and the writers he discusses their due of being entirely sincere in the object pithily described above. But I am at a loss to understand why some non-Marxist critic didn't point out to Mr. Lehmann at the time that, in the first place, most writers before 1930 of any im-

portance at all had been "conscious of great social, political and moral changes going on around them"; that, in the second place, most writers before 1930 had addressed themselves to "the widest possible circles of ordinary people engaged in the daily struggle for existence"; that, in the third place, the most characteristic feature of the Marxist writers was their esoteric quality (Mr. Lehmann himself candidly admits the private nature of many of Auden's and Isherwood's works); and that, in the fourth place, no group of writers has ever been so unpopular with the general reading public as the Marxist movement was.

Let me substantiate these heretical statements. In the first place, I cannot think of an important writer in the whole history of English literature who has not been conscious of great social, political and moral changes going on around him. Jane Austen is the stock example of a writer unaffected by political changes—but surely not by social and moral changes (the main argument of *Mansfield Park*)? What Mr. Lehmann could have said with truth is that no other group of writers before the Marxists were so concerned with politics and political propaganda, to the exclusion or subordination of more important matters, so that some of their works became—as Lehmann honestly admits—a kind of extended *reportage*, possibly a first step towards creation.

In the second place, surely it wasn't a new thing for writers to address themselves "to the widest possible circles of ordinary people engaged in the daily struggle for existence"? The old popular culture speaks for itself in this connection; Shakespeare and Jonson played to an audience, Donne preached to a congregation, made up of all social classes; the Bible and the *Pilgrim's Progress* were found in every cottage till quite recent times; Milton and Burns were very popular in the nineteenth century, Scott and Dickens and George Eliot even more so; and, though the twentieth century has witnessed a decline in the level of popular reading, in all social groups, such very good novels as Wells's *Tono-Bungay*, Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale*, Conrad's *Typhoon*, and many of the novels of Hardy written just previously, have reached

an audience many, many times as wide as that reached by *The Wild Goose Chase, The Ascent of F6, Journey to the Border*, or *We Have Been Warned.*

My Grandfather, who was—like William Lovett—a cabinet-maker, a radical and a temperance reformer, and who went out to work at 12, could quote Burns by the yard ; also Cowper, Goldsmith and Scott. He knew Dickens thoroughly, was well read in Shakespeare, and had in general a sound knowledge of English literature. One of his favourite books was Boswell's *Life of Johnson.* Among his near-contemporaries, he was particularly fond of Hardy. I have heard another man, of the same generation and self-education, quote large chunks out of the first and second books of *Paradise Lost.*

Consider, too, *The Autobiography of a Working Man* by Alexander Somerville, published in 1848. I make no apology for citing a Scotsman—in a work that is dealing mainly with England—because, so far as education is concerned, the Scots have been first for centuries. The book was written for the later benefit of the author's infant son, and the description of the " house " inhabited by father, mother and eight children (three of the original eleven having died early) is worth quoting nearly in full for the benefit of those modern " infants " who lay so much stress upon the glamour of the past and those Marxists who imagine " culture " to be inseparably connected with aristocracy.

" Should you ever be in Scotland, and see Springfield," writes Somerville, " you will find a row of shabby-looking tiled sheds, the centre one of which is about twelve feet by fourteen, and not so high in the walls as will allow a man to get in without stooping. That place without ceiling, or anything beneath the bare tiles of the roof ; without a floor save the common clay ; without a cupboard or recess of any kind ; with no partition save what the beds made ; with no window save four small panes on one side—it was this house, still (in 1848) a hind's house at Springfield, for which, to obtain leave to live in, my mother sheared the harvest and carried the stacks."

" How eight children and father and mother were huddled

in that place," continues Somerville, "is not easily told." Yet, by his own account, the size of the family had its compensations, both spiritual and material. The most moving thing about the early part of the book is the description of the way in which every member of the family worked for the comfort of the rest. This way of co-operation, so often described in these Victorian autobiographies, reminds us that the comparable scenes in Dickens's novels were drawn, not from the author's sentimental imagination, but from the facts of life.

The other impressive thing—and my immediate point—is their cultural background. Though the Somerville family and friends were in some ways narrowly "religious," the poems of Burns, in particular, were popular, despite the unfamiliarity of the west-Scotland dialect and the jibes of the poet against Presbyterian orthodoxy. "The genius of Burns subdued him," says Somerville of his father. "He took that old volume from me, and read it again and again, his grave countenance relaxing, and the muscles of his face curling into a smile, and the smile widening to a broad laugh at certain passages, which having read to himself, he would read aloud, that we might all laugh."

He himself, however, was fond of more "serious" stuff. He sent all the way to Edinburgh, and paid half a week's wages, for a copy of Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets*, which he thought would act as an antidote to Burns in his son's mind. "The *Gospel Sonnets* were received and read," reports Alexander, "but there was something wanting either in me or in them. We stood, the book and I, in positions of respectable friendship, but I rushed not into it to live in it, with it in me, to hold companionship with it in the lonely woods . . . drinking from the book of poetry always, as in Burns . . . for, great as Ralph Erskine was in preaching . . . he was but a small poet."

In the lean years 1816-17 the father was working two miles distant at the Skateraw lime kilns, having to leave home every morning before light, taking a piece of oatmeal bread and a bottle of milk for the day's sustenance. "Yet upon such

fare as that," the son tells us, "he had the reputation of being one of the best borers in the limestone quarry; and he was certainly by far the best skilled in books of divinity and general reading, which was of some importance even as regarded the working of the quarry. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, a favourite book with him, might not be in all respects a substitute for a marrow bone, but he was strong in conversation or controversy, and kept his spirits up for hard work on that strength. Another reader in the quarry was Robert Wallace, whose wife taught him to read after marriage, and who at the time when my father was in the quarry had read eighteen different authors on astronomy, besides many others on other subjects."

It was James Watson, a fellow harvest-worker, who introduced Somerville to Burns's poems, and he got hold of Anson's *Voyage Round the World* from John Watt, the smith. Later on he bought George Miller's *Cheap Magazine*, published monthly at Dunbar for fourpence, and from the same shop Hutton's *Mensuration* for four shillings—many months' savings. When he was eighteen, working as a sawyer, he became intimate with a family of five brothers, fellow workmen, "all of them above the average rate of intelligence. Many pleasant hours I had with them, conversing about books, sometimes buying books together, and frequently borrowing and lending them to read."

XVI.

I take my last example from *The Life of Thomas Cooper Written by Himself*, published in 1871. He was born at Leicester in 1805, son of a dyer of Yorkshire Quaker descent. His mother became a widow when he was four years old, and she settled down in her native county at Gainsborough and carried on with her late husband's trade.

Cooper's education was first at a dame's school, "kept by aged Gertrude Aram"; then at the Methodist Sunday School for a short time, before the new Free School was opened in 1813.

He seems to have got the start of his literary education at home. "' The happiest hours of all I had in early years were spent alone, and with books. When childhood was past, and I ceased to feel so much absorbed in the Fables [of Aesop, which his father had given him], and little story books [which his mother used to buy for him at a penny each], the immortal *Pilgrim's Progress* was my book of books. What hours of wonder and rapture I passed with Bunyan when a boy! He was always new; and though a 'number-man,' or travelling-bookseller, kindly left me his curiosities, now and then, because my eagerness interested him, I returned with increased relish to Christian and Faithful, Great Heart and Giant Despair, after reading odd numbers of Baines's *History of the War*, and *Pamela*, and *The Earl of Moreland*."

When he was a little older he attended a day-school for boys, chiefly patronised by tradesmen and better-paid workmen. He had grown weary of the monotonous teaching at the Free School, and he was enabled to receive this superior education at the neighbouring day-school by being accepted without fees in return for his services as teacher to the youngest children. "The chief advantage I derived," he says, "was in being introduced to the companionship of lads of better culture than I had known before, and in obtaining the loan of their books to read—their Enfield's *Speaker*, and Mavor's *British Plutarch*, and the abridgement of Goldsmith's Histories of England, Greece, and Rome. And then, in addition to their school books, one boy had a *Robinson Crusoe*, and another possessed *Philip Quarll*, and another had Salmon's *Geography*.. The number-man began also to intimate that the bookselling firm he represented were printing an improved order of books. So I soon had the reading of Barclay's quarto *Dictionary*—or such parts of it as were readable; of Kelly's quarto *Geography*; and my mother took in, in numbers, *Dialogues between a Pilgrim, Adam, Noah, and Cleophas*. Soon I found, too, in going to buy my pencils and water-colours at Mrs. Trevor's, that she kept a circulating library; and from her shelves I drew the enchanting *Arabian Nights*, and odd plays of Shakespeare, Dryden, and Otway, and Cook's *Voyages*,

and the *Old English Baron*; and the *Castle of Otranto*.. and a heap of other romances and novels that would require pages even to name."

In 1820, when he was just fifteen, he became a shoemaker. Culture followed him there, too, or rather he found it there. "Joseph Clark, with whom Aram and I sat in the garret, to be taught shoemaking . . . was useful to me in other directions than in teaching me the use of the awl. He had read some of the poetry of Byron, spoke of it passionately, and lent me the poems of Burns . . . He also rehearsed to me [having spent part of his apprenticeship in London] what he had seen and heard of London actors, and repeated the criticisms of the Londoners on the personations of Shakespeare's characters by Kemble and Young and Mrs. Siddons, and later performers. All this directed me to a more intelligent reading of Shakespeare, for myself; though I did not yet feel the due impression of his greatness."

About this time, soon after the age of fifteen, he composed his first poem, *A Morning in Spring*; and "formed the valuable friendship of Christopher Macdonald . . . [who] lent me Robertson's Histories of Scotland, America and Charles the Fifth, and Neale's *History of the Puritans*, and urged me to get a better acquaintance with theology; while he did not discourage my enthusiasm for the great poet of his fatherland, or for the Waverley Novels, with which I began now to get acquainted."

His friendship with Henry Whillock is also worth recording: "grocer's apprentice in the town . . . remarkable for his refined and gentlemanly manners . . . I soon found, to my delight, that he was a lover of poetry, and possessed *The Corsair*, *Lara* and *The Bride of Abydos*, and the very canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I had formerly read; with *The West Indies*, *Greenland*, and other poems of James Montgomery." The shoemaker's assistant and the grocer's apprentice read together "forty volumes of the English Essayists, Langhorne's *Plutarch* . . . Palmer's *Principles of Nature*, and a translation of Volney's *Ruins of Empires*, and also a so-called translation of Voltaire's *Philosophical Diction-*

ary." A little later he got hold of Hooker, Bacon, Locke and other philosophers and historians from the library which "Nathaniel Robinson, mercer" had left for the use of his fellow-townsmen; and some of the neighbouring gentry having started a "Book Society" at Mrs. Trevor's shop, the old lady lent Cooper the new books and magazines *sub rosa* in the evenings, for ten shillings a year.

By 1826 he was able to read Latin with ease; later, when he had turned from shoemaking to teaching, he worked hard at Greek and French, for the benefit of his pupils; he mastered a little of German and Italian for his own use; had the habit of learning whole plays of Shakespeare by heart (once acting Hamlet at Leicester); had a great love of music, helping in choral societies at Lincoln and elsewhere; and he was always interested in science, particularly—as so often in these men's lives—in astronomy. When he joined the Leicester Chartists in 1841, part of his time was given over to the formation of an adult Sunday School "for men and boys who were at work on the week-days." The teachers named their classes, not first, second, etc., but the John Milton class, the John Hampden class, the Andrew Marvell, the George Washington, the William Cobbett classes.

It is not a question of these men themselves so much; it is the general background of their lives, the many friends and relatives whom each mentions, the common reading of the largely self-taught, the influence on self-instruction of the Protestant "religion of the Book" . . . it is things like these which go against the general Marxist theory of "culturally-submerged classes" and force us to at least a qualification of Mr. Lehmann's thesis that it was quite a new thing for writers to make an appeal "to the widest possible circles of ordinary people engaged in the daily struggle for existence."

XVII.

I don't see, in the third place, what such works as *The Wild Goose Chase, The Ascent of F6* or *Journey to the Border*

had to offer to these "ordinary people." Artistically, these works are third-rate; but that would not be so very important in this connection did they offer "the proletariat" something to bite on, as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* offered "the bourgeoisie" in the past. But these works were esoteric, not only in their Marxist jargon and psycho-analytic pretentiousness, but in their symbols of the Public School, the rugger game, the mountaineering expedition, and so forth. And this leads directly to my fourth observation, namely the unpopularity of the Marxist movement with the public at large.

I have often wondered what is the point of the last lines of one of Auden's most admired poems, *Our Hunting Fathers*. It begins with a suggestion—surely not intentional—of *Hiawatha*:—

> Our hunting fathers told the story
> Of the sadness of the creatures . . .

but it ends like this:—

> And make it his mature ambition
> To think no thought but ours,
> To hunger, work illegally,
> And be anonymous?

The poem is needlessly obscure, but the last lines would appear to mean that that is what Auden sees in the public-schoolboy Communist: hunger, dread of the police, and obscurity. I see in him, on the contrary, a full stomach (arguing stridently about the class war in an exclusive restaurant), a helmet-touching policeman, and violent assertiveness. "And be anonymous"!—when every publishing season throughout the 'thirties saw a veritable cascade of poems, pamphlets, novels, plays, written by the Comrades under their own names and favourably reviewed in nearly all the papers. A good many writers would welcome such anonymity. When I think of the struggle for recognition of many a greater writer—Gissing, Edward Thomas, Joyce, Isaac Rosenberg—indignation and amusement combine to make

me wonder at the conception of themselves which was current among the Marxist group.

This self-conception affected some outside critics. "Are we to believe then," asked Francis Scarfe indignantly in *Auden and After* (1942), "that Auden and his friends deliberately isolated themselves from their own class for the fun of the thing, and for ten years packed their verse with revolutionary ideas in which they did not believe?" Mr. Scarfe is refuting another critic, whose work I haven't read; but his defence is comic. Certainly these Marxist writers were mostly sincere, but—"isolated themselves from their own class"! Mr. Scarfe should have remembered that Communism in England throughout the 'thirties, and particularly during the years 1935-8, was intensely fashionable among the upper classes (and almost unknown among the lower). How could these writers have got published, straight from the university, if they had deliberately cut themselves off? Not to mention Auden receiving the King's Medal, Isherwood's photo in the *Bystander*, Day Lewis on the committee of the Book Society, MacNeice writing features for the B.B.C., and the Marxists in general running the most fashionable part of the London literary world.

It isn't a question of personalities. The important point to observe is the astonishing popularity of Marxist ideas in the upper classes a decade ago. They don't, of course, call themselves "upper-class"; we have seen Mr. Turnell, for example, refer to "the middle classes," and even George Orwell tells us in one breath that he is "a typical member of the middle class" and in the next that he was educated at Eton! If typical members of the middle classes go to Eton (or Harrow, Rugby, Winchester . . .), where the devil do the upper classes go? It becomes clear to me that this class-consciousness of the Marxists is some sixty or seventy years out of date: by calling themselves "middle-class" they mean that not many of their relations are to be found in the pages of Debrett. But the upper classes of to-day are not the nobility! They are the classes in general who go to exclusive prep-schools and Public Schools, who are accustomed to

travelling in first-class compartments, and who regard Swiss mountaineering as a normal pursuit for leisure hours. It is ridiculous to split this 5 per cent. of the nation into those with "noble blood" and those with "bourgeois." To divide England up into classes these days is an extremely difficult business, and one cannot really do it; but certainly most of the noted Marxists are of the upper class and most of the rest of us, who went to elementary schools, of the lower. I don't doubt for a moment that each class—they overlap, of course—has its traditional virtues and corresponding defects. I tried to point this out in my discussion of the mainly national virtues of the lower classes, and the more international outlook of many of the upper.

I don't think it can be denied, then, that Marxism and the Marxist writers whom Mr. Lehmann discusses in his informative survey, *New Writing in Europe*, made an appeal chiefly to the five per cent. of the nation and of the reading public, and that they had little to say to the odd 95. The Left Book Club appealed to the same minority, as was proved beyond a doubt by Mr. Orwell. "Is it ever possible to be really intimate with the working class?" he asks his readers in *The Road to Wigan Pier*: "I do not think it is possible." And again: "Nothing is easier than to be bosom pals with a pickpocket, if you know where to look for him; but it is very difficult to be bosom pals with a bricklayer." As the majority of the reading public are bricklayers (etc.) themselves or have relatives or friends among bricklayers (etc.), it becomes clear that the L.B.C. was intended for the remaining minority. A good deal of the nonsense about "bourgeois" and "proletariat" could have been avoided if an ordinary citizen of this country had put, in 1930, two simple questions to the Marxist public-school:—(a) that he lived in a road (as I do) that contained schoolteachers, engine-drivers, mechanics, typists, clerks, accountants, shop-assistants, policemen, postmen, soldiers, airmen, bus-conductors, printers, journalists, insurance-agents, car-painters, carpenters, garage-hands, butchers, scientists, guards, etc., etc., etc., and was his road a bourgeois road or a proletarian road? (*b*) that his family contained (as mine does) accountants, clerks, soldiers, porters,

typists, airmen, journalists, mechanics, business-men, cabinet-makers, insurance-agents, schoolteachers, solicitors, shop-assistants, engineers, railwaymen, servants, civil-servants, etc., and was his family bourgeois or working-class? *Upon which side of the barricade were they required to fight?*

The Marxists couldn't answer these questions, because their conceptions of class were and are as out of date as the world of Mr. P. G. Wodehouse. Their view of English society was rather similar to the view of South African society held by Sarah Gertrude Millin: "A middle-class country—excluding poor whites and natives."

According to both the Marxist group and Mr. Turnell, this upper-class *soi-disant* "middle class" is responsible for most of the art of the twentieth century, which has become "an art of disillusion and despair." Admittedly, Turnell backs up his argument, on another page of his stimulating book, by a skilful comparison of the opening of Chaucer's *Prologue* with the opening of *The Waste Land*—a very astute comparison indeed and obviously valid in some respects. But it needs to be remembered that Eliot himself has denied in print the common notion of "disillusion and despair" in that great poem: "When I wrote a poem called *The Waste Land*," he said in *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931), "some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed the 'disillusionment of a generation,' which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of my intention."

"Disillusion and despair" became the natural reaction of artists to some of the features of our civilization, but this reaction, being common to writers and other artists of every social class, had nothing to do with a Leaning Ivory Tower. There is nothing in English literature to support the contention that intelligent writers of the upper classes were disillusioned about some aspects of modern machine democracy, while intelligent writers of the lower classes were not. Nor anything in English society to support the notion that the "proletariat" in general, who are quite as eager as any Eton lad to bow down to the machine, are all the custodians of the old tradition,

that (to quote Edward Upward) " all that is gentle, generous, lovely, innocent, free, the workers will fight to save." '

These virtues are, of course, the bourgeois virtues and are common to the nation as a whole, in the better moments of us all. This is part of that " cultural unity " of which Dawson, Orwell and Murry have spoken. But we cannot rest there; for if Upward was so foolish as to contrast these virtues with the bourgeois life, that is no excuse for our being so foolish as to say that these virtues are all that is necessary for modern civilization. This gentleness, this generosity, this freedom, will not completely survive the machine age without another factor — intelligence. We should not forget the definition of culture which we have accepted and which, I think, is true: " A civilization is deserving of the name only if it is a culture, a truly human and therefore mainly intellectual, moral and spiritual development." It is the easiest thing in the world for the machine to convert these moral and spiritual virtues into their opposites, unless they are accompanied by intelligence. The process is going on before our eyes. . . .

The " precariousness " of culture, then, which Turnell and the Marxists rightly deplore, does not seem to me to be bound up with any notion of a Leaning Ivory Tower. Bourgeois culture being simply, as we have seen, another name for English culture, we should not be surprised to hear it has a monopoly of it. Nor is there anything to fall back upon, the English " proletariat " being part of the bourgeoisie, if we seek, with the Marxists, to destroy this culture; and before we accept Mr. Turnell's slightly different view of its " disillusion and despair," we should ask ourselves whether a culture that is not disillusioned about some of the aspects of its machine democracy is worthy of the long English tradition of Protestant responsibility.

The Marxists may have been right to a certain extent in putting more stress on economic conditions than did historians of any former school: a matter which will concern more my next chapter. But they were wrong in dividing up England into two distinct groups, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and in stressing the need for a violent revolution. England

having a cultural unity which itself is bourgeois, to destroy the bourgeoisie meant destroying culture and helping on the process of machine-age scorn of it. In despising bourgeois culture, the Marxists performed a valuable service by the natural reaction of other people to this slight, and so paved the way for a revaluation. It became clear that the Marxist theory of culture was itself a symptom of that uncultured democracy which they dimly recognized and thought they could cure by violent political means. We who follow them are in their debt for the thoroughness with which they tackled the problem and for the supremacy of that logic by which they stand condemned. We know now, as we shouldn't have known so clearly had they not written, that the continuity of bourgeois culture is the high window of our prison cell, not the chain which binds us to the wall.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONSERVATIVE AND THE COUNTRY HOUSE

I.

ONE important aspect of the Marxist analysis, that relating to the cultural past, I am leaving to this chapter for fuller consideration, because it involves the *raison d'être* of all Conservative cultural diagnoses—the Country House. That Marxists and Conservatives should be in essential agreement over the Old Order is not really surprising if we remember that, to justify the Communist revolution, the Marxist has to postulate a culture of the past that was exclusively in the possession of the upper classes, and this is solidly in agreement with Conservative writers such as the late Miss Edith Olivier, who in *Four Victorian Ladies of Wiltshire* (1945) lamented the passing of culture with the end of the great English country houses.

Both these views evidently contradict the "national culture" of Dawson, the "cultural unity" of Orwell and Murry; but both have a certain amount of reason on their side. The Marxist insistence on the importance of the economic structure of society was, in part, a welcome change from the methods of some of the older historians; but it introduced a subject of such overwhelming complexity, nothing less than the relation of cultural conditions to this economic structure, that it is not surprising that most Marxists were content to issue a simple statement, without bothering themselves over substantiation—such simple statements, for example, as the original one by Marx himself: "The methods of production in material life determine the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life"; or that by a modern disciple, R. D. Charques: "It is necessary to bear in mind the simple truth that a people's culture takes form and colour from the economic ordering of society."

Most of us will agree with L. C. Knights's opinion, in his important book *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (1938), that such " simple truths " are exasperatingly hazy. " Methods of production and cultural superstructure may be related in the realm of abstract dialectic," observes Professor Knights shrewdly, " but no one (anthropologists dealing with primitive peoples apart) has yet established the relation in terms of fact and experience." " No one " seems to be correct, for Knights quotes, among others, a passage from the Liberal economist Keynes's *Treatise on Money*—" I offer it as a thesis for examination by those who like rash generalizations, that by far the larger proportion of the world's great writers and artists have flourished in the atmosphere of buoyancy, exhilaration and the freedom from economic cares felt by the governing class, which is engendered by profit inflations "—and asks pertinently why the profit inflation of " modern days in the United States," to which Keynes compares the Elizabethan " bull " movement, did not produce a culture comparable with the Elizabethan ? There is an answer other than that given by the late Lord Keynes himself, that his thesis was a " rash generalization " ; the real answer is that the relation between economics and culture remains an unwritten book—though perhaps Professor Knights has given us the introduction to it.

I say " remains," because there were many attempts in the Marxist' thirties to settle the details of " the simple truth " once and for all. Philip Henderson, for example, wasn't afraid of any complexity, and didn't even arm himself with the apology of a " rash generalization," when he confidently wrote in *Literature and a Changing Civilization* (1935) : " A tasteless welter of conflicting styles was in the very nature of industrialism. Keats begins his career by re-writing the myth of *Endymion* after a prolonged study of Spenser, and ends it by writing *Hyperion* after a prolonged study of Milton." These statements are not even correct in literary detail, for if we talk of stages in Keats's poetical career then there were at least three stages, the last of which was the reaction against Milton, resulting in the revised *Hyperion*. Can Mr. Henderson (can

anybody?) tell us how Keats's remarks to his brother—"I have but lately stood on my guard against Milton Life to him would be death to me . . ." etc.—are related to the industrial conditions of 1819? They are evidently not related, any more than was *Ash Wednesday* related to "the 1922-29 period of capitalist recovery." (I am referring to the statement in Strachey's *Coming Struggle for Power*: "Since writing *The Waste Land* Mr. Eliot, encouraged no doubt by the 1922-29 period of capitalist recovery, has left the despair of the Waste Land behind him and taken up the typical position of a highly intellectual reactionary.") To talk of "a tasteless welter of conflicting styles" in regard to Keats is simply nonsense, for Keats is one of the best examples in English literature of an entirely logical poetic career, and if "tasteless" applies to his having learnt something from former poets—Spenser and Milton in his case, not to mention Wordsworth and Shakespeare—and to his having used his knowledge for his own purposes, then the adjective applies to every great poet who has ever lived.

Not that I don't see what Mr. Henderson is vaguely getting at; the Industrial Revolution must have affected the arts, particularly architecture, in some way or other, if not in the direct manner that the Marxist critic has indicated. It might even be said, with a certain amount of truth, that the Industrial Revolution (which will concern more my next chapter) was and is responsible for the present cultural situation. But that view lends no real authority to the Marxist thesis, for the Marxists have never been Lovers of the Simple Life and their philosophy is quite distinct from Gandhi's or Mr. Murry's. The Marxist view is that Keats's "tasteless welter of conflicting styles" was owing to "the very nature of *capitalist* industrialism," and that if he had been lucky enough to have been born in Russia after 1917 or in England after Day Lewis's blood-red dawn, his poetry would automatically have gained in quality, his sonnet *On First Looking into Lenin's Marx* entitling him to extra-proletarian privileges . . .

It is not simply that Marx's followers have been taken in by an abstract theory: that theory was unsound, to start with

Christopher Dawson puts the matter well in *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*: he points out that Marx identifies "economic production" with "existence," "and this illegitimate substitution," Mr. Dawson continues, "reveals the fundamental weakness of the Marxian theory. Because economic production explains *some* social phenomena, therefore it is supposed to explain them all and the creative spiritual element in culture drops out through the hole in the argument."

It is true that Engels issued a warning, but equally true that modern Marxists have disregarded it. "Marx and I," wrote Engels, "are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasize this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to allow the other events involved in the interaction to come into their rights."

Even this seems to me dangerously abstract: the writing of *Lear*, for instance, was an "event," and certainly the mad King upon the heath refers to "scurvy politicians"; but the reference is so wide that it might serve to indicate the Kremlin or Washington, D.C., not simply the scene at the court of James the First where the Duke of Lennox was struggling with Lord Harington for a share in the monopoly of brass farthings.

There is a widespread delusion, not only among Marxists, that material prosperity and high cultural achievement necessarily go together. Sometimes they do, as in the *Grand Siècle*, but "The Golden Age of Buddhist art and religion," records Dawson, "was an age of political anarchy and material ruin." And there is the contrary case, noted by Knights, of a period of material prosperity, like that enjoyed by the United States in recent times, that was unaccompanied by any similar development in spiritual life. Such un-Marxist complications are not recognized by Trotsky: he commits himself to the following "rash generalization":—"Bourgeois culture, if one were to count only from the time of its open and turbulent manifestation, that is from the period of the Renaissance, has existed five centuries, but it did not reach its greatest flowering

until the nineteenth century, or, more correctly, the second half of it. History shows that the formation of a new culture which centres around a ruling class demands considerable time and reaches completion only at the period preceding the political decadence of that class."

By the context, Trotsky was writing, not of Russia alone, but of Europe in general, including England; and—quite apart from any qualification or rejection of the statement that English culture since the Renaissance has centred round a particular social class—how can any person of sense and sensibility claim that the late Victorian period, despite some obvious merits, represented the flowering of that cultural tradition which put out its first undeveloped buds in the England of Byrd and Shakespeare? Trotsky was a man of some intelligence, and he might not have committed himself to such generalizations had he not been previously committed to an abstract economic theory. He was plainly in the same predicament as Mr. Louis MacNeice. *Literature and Revolution* and MacNeice's *Modern Poetry* are, in fact, concerned with the self-same Marxist argument; and MacNeice's notions about "play" and the coming crisis are an echo of Trotsky's idea that "No matter how important and vitally necessary our culture-building may be, it is entirely dominated by the approach of European and world revolution." Mr. MacNeice went on to say that "The younger poets are less conditioned by culture and more concerned with *life as they live it.*" The italics are the author's and only emphasize the narrow notion of "culture" he must have: for culture *is* "life as you live it." Trotsky makes the same mistake when he claims that "The historic significance and the moral grandeur of the proletarian revolution consist in the fact that it is laying the foundations of a culture which is above classes and which will be the first culture that is truly human." The very definition of culture is that it is truly human and that it has nothing whatever to do with social classes. And Trotsky was proposing something absolutely impossible when he wrote: "We must, first of all, take possession, *politically* [my italics], of the most important elements of the old culture."

II.

Professor Knights, it seems to me, makes a useful distinction. He can admit that " the materialist hypothesis was not merely a welcome change from Whig teleology, it equipped the historian with some important new methods of diagnosis which have not yet been exploited to the full . . ." ; Knights can admit the importance of this principle which Engels said Marx and he " had to emphasize " because their opponents denied it altogether, while still insisting that, in the cultural field, " the Marxian formulation . . . is not ' wrong,' in the sense of its opposite being ' right ' ; it is an over-simplification which, accepted, blinds the social historian to what should be the focus of his investigation, namely the quality of living in a particular period." And this " quality of living " is only another name for " culture "—in the definition of Maritain which we have accepted.

I think we should also accept the distinction which Professor Knights makes, particularly as ex-Marxists such as Mr. Spender have since accepted it, or a similar distinction, themselves. Knights goes further along the road to meet the Marxists than I would personally go, but to get some slight measure of agreement is a definite achievement and may account for my personal experience of being strongly recommended to Knights's book—which I had already read and admired—by a Communist friend. It is certainly no great loss to the Marxist theory to be freed from extravagant embroideries like the remarks quoted. Remembering Engels's apology, and particularly the reason he gives for that over-stress on economics, we can, I think, even if we be Marxists ourselves, make the distinction which Knights makes and admit that Mr. Charques's " simple truth " bristles with difficulties.

So, in my opinion, does the " simple truth " of the late Miss Edith Olivier, that English culture largely came to an end with the passing of the great country houses. I first became aware—unconsciously—of the difficulties inherent in such simplifications before ever I had heard the name of

Karl Marx, Edith Olivier, Christopher Dawson or L. C. Knights; in fact, when I was reading and re-reading Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopaedia* at the age of twelve or thirteen. Anyone who knows these excellent volumes, or has access to a small compendium, will be aware of the fact that at no period of English history has culture been in the possession of any one social class. English literature has been produced by men and women who came, and come, from every rank in society. The achievement of " the lower orders " is impressive in painting; and also in science and invention. Faraday was the son of a blacksmith, Dalton the son of a Westmoreland peasant, Davy a Cornish Methodist of humble origin, Stephenson a miner's son and a miner himself. In literary journalism, too, we find the respected names of Paine, Cobbett, Carlyle, Holyoake: all of " proletarian " stock.

So Edith Olivier and the Marxists can't be meaning actual cultural works when they tell us that English culture up to recent times was dependent upon the upper classes and the Country House. And we know from the definition of Maritain that more than literature, music, painting, science . . . is meant by " culture." So it is perhaps the general way of life, the *conditions* for culture, that Edith Olivier and the Marxists are really intending. Certainly this view is not disposed of by citing names of cultural worth from every rank in society, for it might be held that the upper classes, the Court and Country House, set the cultural tone and provided patronage, that English culture could not have existed without them.

I believe this is perfectly true, at any rate of several centuries; but I add the rider that English culture could not have existed without the popular culture of the illiterate, it could not have existed without the contribution of the large middle class between rich and poor; a flourishing culture, under political and economic autocracy, needed all three contributions, and it had them in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, partly in the eighteenth and decreasingly since.

So the Marxists and Edith Olivier are making an unnatural separation when they focus attention on the Court and Country House. Admittedly the culture of Shakespeare's time could

not have existed without some of the noblemen and gentlemen of the period who, to paraphrase Falstaff, were not only themselves artistic but the cause that artistry was in others. We know from modern biographers like Logan Pearsall Smith and Virginia Woolf that some great houses considered it a duty to maintain scholars, composers, men of letters, painters, architects, scientists, for long periods. The Elizabethan-Jacobean drama was largely dependent on the court and the nobility for protection against the rising Puritanism in the middle classes, which would have closed the theatres altogether—as it did, of course, during the Commonwealth. But if we grant the Marxist-Conservative case so far as to admit that the culture of Shakespeare's time could not have existed without the nobility, we need to remember also that the culture of Shakespeare's time could not have existed without Shakespeare. The Elizabethan-Jacobean culture would have been a poor one if it had been entirely dependent upon the genius of the upper classes. The three great dramatic poets of the time —Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson—came from humble stock; their genius was closely in touch with the popular culture of the illiterate, with (to quote Yeats) " the speech of the people that delighted in rhythmical animation, in idiom, in images."

III.

We can easily see what the drama of the time would have been like, if it had been restricted to the Country House, if we look at the few dull plays produced by the gentry themselves, or their close followers, under the patronage of Lady Pembroke. Daniel and Greville are the chief names ; and this speech from Daniel's *Cleopatra* (quoted by T. S. Eliot in his essay, " Seneca in Elizabethan Translation ") can be compared with a similar speech from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Here is Daniel, Cleopatra speaking :—

What, hath my face yet power to win a Lover ?
Can this torn remnant serve to grace me so,

That it can Cæsar's secret plans discover,
What he intends with me and mine to do?
Why, then, poor beauty, thou hast done thy last
And best good service thou could'st do unto me;
For now the time of death reveal'd thou hast,
Which in my life did'st serve but to undo me.

And here Shakespeare, Cleopatra speaking at the very same climax of the play:—

My desolation does begin to make
A better life. 'Tis paltry to be Cæsar;
Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave,
A minister of her will; and it is great
To do that thing that ends all other deeds;
Which shackles accidents, and bolts up change;
Which sleeps, and never palates more the dung,
The beggar's nurse and Cæsar's.

"The whole thing is in excellent taste": that is Eliot's comment on the Daniel passage. Such a remark would not occur to him, or to anybody, when confronted with the Shakespeare. The difference is plainly one between a tasteful exercise (gaining, perhaps, nine out of ten marks at Wilton) and a passage of intense, human experience. The word "dung" (some editors of the play read "dug") would not have immediately presented itself to the dramatists of Lady Pembroke's circle, nor would the "common," vivid phrase: "'Tis *paltry* to be Cæsar." The intensely realized metaphors —"*shackles* accidents . . . *bolts up* change"—were only possible to a poet in close touch with the popular images of the common people. It can't be an accident that no aristocrat is among the chief names in either English drama and particularly poetic drama or English fiction—unless we are Baconians, think with Wilson Knight that Byron's boring plays are great drama, or put Bulwer Lytton on a level with Dickens and George Eliot. The drama and the novel are essentially arts which require a wide range of social experience, and they have been produced in England by all classes except the aristocracy. Court and Country House culture have produced poems, sermons, philosophical works, among the best in English;

but their contribution to the drama, and to a lesser extent the novel, has been one of patronage only, not active participation on a high level. In *Literature and Revolution* Trotsky speaks of "the 'golden age' of literature, that is, the classic literature of the noblemen." This Golden Age seems to me to be mythical: the Golden Age of English literature was the age of the actors Shakespeare and Jonson; and even the Golden Age of French literature, when the nobility played a greater part, was in its finest achievement the age of the actor Molière.

Full details as to the character of the audiences in the Elizabethan-Jacobean theatres are not available, but there is sufficient evidence to assure us that they were generally composed of a cross-section of the whole community, apart from the Puritans. And it is agreed that the average Elizabethan citizen, whether he could read or not, had in his possession a fund of racy, idiomatic speech, still predominantly agricultural in expression and imagery, without which the poetry of Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson—who didn't invent the language they used—could never have existed.

"Whether he could read or not . . ." How large, we must ask, was the actual reading public under Elizabeth and James the First? We don't know exactly, of course; but we do know that books and pamphlets were produced in great quantity, and this argues a considerable number of readers in a total population of some five millions only. In the preface to his *Discourse of English Poetry* (1586) William Webbe refers irritably to "the innumerable sorts of English books, and infinite fardles of printed pamphlets, wherewith this country is pestered, all shops stuffed, and every study furnished." "In the century that followed the accession of Elizabeth," says Louis B. Wright in his book, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, "the habit of reading became so widespread that by the outbreak of the Puritan revolution, the printing press was perhaps the most powerful single medium of influencing public opinion." "The ephemeral journalism of Shakespeare's time was nearly as varied, and almost as abundant in proportion to the number of readers, as similar journalism is to-day."

This middle-class reading public may be said to have been the third contributor to the Elizabethan-Jacobean national culture; largely Puritan in tendency, and roughly half-way in the social scale between the gentry and the illiterate, it absorbed vast quantities of books—romances, sermons, verse anthologies, "the wonders of travel," etc. And when all has been said against the Puritan mentality, when we have pondered Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, shaken our heads over the closing of the theatres, considered the dark spots of the Calvinist tradition in England and New England, we are faced still with the achievement of Bunyan, whose *Pilgrim's Progress* presupposes a popular, as well as a middle-class, Puritan culture in the seventeenth century which not only bore a resemblance, in its earthy vigour and humorous turns of speech, to the Catholic world of Chaucer, but which can actually be traced back to the fourteenth century through the influence of the popular preachers. Bunyan's language and ideas were largely those of the 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible and the 1575 translation of Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. But popular Puritan culture had its classic books somewhat earlier than these. Writing on "Religion" in the authoritative Oxford symposium, *Shakespeare's England*: *An Account of the Life and Manners of his Age*, the Rev. Ronald Bayne refers to Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, published in 1563: "It is impossible to exaggerate its influence upon English feeling and opinion," he says. "The Catholics angrily nicknamed it 'Foxe's Golden Legend,' but the nickname defines very accurately the place taken by the book in the minds of the common people of England. It superseded the mediaeval acts of saints and martyrs from which the Reformation cut them off."

A Catholic historian, Christopher Dawson, recognizes the cultural influence of Puritanism in sixteenth and seventeenth century England when he writes in *The Judgement of the Nations* (1943) of "the new liberal humanitarian culture which represents an intermediate stage between the religious unity of Christendom and a totally secularized world." "On the continent," he continues, "it was at first the culture of an

international élite, superimposed on the traditional culture of the people ; and in Catholic countries, at least, its permeation of society was accompanied by a violent revolutionary crisis. Only in England and North America did it proceed in the other direction—from below upwards—for there it found its inspiration not only in the rational idealism of the humanist tradition, but even more in the religious idealism of Puritanism with its conception of the Holy Community and of Christ and Liberty." This Puritan idealism arose in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and found its *Divina Commedia* in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and its *Piers Plowman* in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The first part of Bunyan's masterpiece was published in 1678, the second part in 1685. By 1692, no less than 100,000 copies had been sold in England and it had been translated into several foreign languages. The idealism of a small Elizabethan sect had become, by the end of the seventeenth century, one of the chief cultural influences in England and the cultural basis of North America.

That this influence is not dead—in spite of Mr. Dawson's Catholic view of " a totally secularized world "—is proved, I think, by the nonconformist, un-Marxist elements in our political life which were the concern of my last chapter ; proved, too, in the more consciously cultural field, in the work of our chief composer, Vaughan Williams, whose Fifth Symphony is founded on material from a projected opera on *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

IV.

It is very easy to make too much of the connection between the rise of Puritanism and the growth of capitalism. The connection undoubtedly exists, but the word " capitalism " is vague and its evil qualities cannot be imputed to circles of modest profit quite removed from Mr. Bounderby. According to George Unwin, writing on " Commerce and Coinage " in *Shakespeare's England*, the typical Elizabethan working-man

was a small capitalist. At that time, of course, the Puritans were a small, but growing, minority; and small bodies are inclined to fanaticism. What happened to the Puritan ideal when it became popular in the seventeenth century? In part, it seems to have been a case of genuine conversion on the part of the people to the Puritan spirit. The most recent book on the Civil War—*The Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution*, by W. Schenk, 1948—stresses the interest taken by the people in religious matters, thereby agreeing with Mark Rutherford's useful little study of John Bunyan. "The common people, our evidence leads us to believe, were passionately interested in religious matters, and this at a time when a thorough knowledge of the Bible could be taken for granted. Many of them had probably never read any other book, or, being unable to read themselves, had only heard it read out by others, but this was sufficient to release an intense religious inquiry. The great Protestant touchstone was used to test the Church of England and the outcome could not be uncertain."

There was a good deal of fanaticism about even popular Puritanism, but, generally speaking, as the Puritan ideal became more popular, it became more liberal. It seems that Puritanism gave something to the people, and received something else in return; the connection between the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Piers Plowman*—Langland's poem representing the finer side of the Catholic faith—could not have been so close had there been nothing in Puritanism but the gloomy picture painted by Elizabethan dramatists. We know little of Shakespeare's religious opinions, but the several references to Puritans in his plays—as in other plays of the period—express good-humoured contempt. The Puritan was, in fact, a stock figure of fun on the boards, partly because of his attitude towards the theatre. But if we seek the writer, at the end of the seventeenth century, who is nearest to Shakespeare, we find him, I believe, not in Dryden, or Congreve, but in the Puritan Bunyan.

"Sharp definitions and contrasts of different religions," says Rutherford, with his eye on popular Puritanism, "are

untrue and misleading, but nevertheless we may say that Christianity is distinguished by its protest against the natural tendency to idolize strength and success." Including *business* success, if Bunyan speaks for the popular Puritanism of his time in this respect, as he evidently does in others. For those to-day who are inclined to associate Puritanism *necessarily* with capitalism—pointing to the canon law of the middle ages which condemned usury, etc.—forget the passages in Bunyan's second masterpiece, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680), where the author treats not only usury, but extortion (which, as Rutherford points out, seems to mean, by his examples, any profit) as sins which totally exclude from the Kingdom of God. Mr. Attentive asks why " it is not lawful for a man to make the best of his own ? " Mr. Wiseman answers that if a man sells as dear as he can, he takes advantage of his neighbour's ignorance, necessity or folly. He propounds the doctrine that " a man in dealing should really design his neighbour's good, profit and advantage as his own " and that if God has given him more understanding than his fellows, it should be used for their protection. Mr. Attentive replies that " were some men to hear you they would laugh you to scorn," and points out that there " is no settled price set by God upon any commodity." Mr. Wiseman does not choose to discuss this matter, but prays Mr. Attentive that, if he has a stock of corn, not to rejoice if corn should rise, but to grieve for it, and " let the poor have a pennyworth."

Bunyan's attitude may not have been that of the majority, even if we allow for the necessary exaggeration of art in *Mr. Badman* ; for what we generally lump together under the one heading of " Puritanism " had, in the seventeenth century, many aspects. But his general position, in regard to business and honesty, was certainly that of the Levellers, who, like the early Quakers, Dr. Schenk tells us, were disillusioned by the outcome of the Civil War : " What had once seemed a struggle between Right and Wrong revealed itself as a mere replacement of one evil authority by another." Some of the Levellers, notably Richard Overton, demanded that all the common lands which had been enclosed should be opened again, that

" all ancient charitable donations towards the constant relief of the poor," and all hospitals which had been " vitiated from their primitive constitution," should be restored. Overton also suggested the restoration and development of free schools. William Walwyn, another leading Leveller, thought usury " contrary to all example of the Apostles and first Christians," equivalent to a denial of God ; and, in regard to enclosure, he is reported to have said that " he could wish with all his heart that there was neither pale, hedge nor ditch in the whole nation." As Lilburne tells us that many of his Leveller adherents were to be found among " the hobnails, clouted shoes, the private soldiers, the leather and woollen aprons, and the laborious and industrious people in England " ; and as we know, from the *Epistle to the Reader* prefixed to Bunyan's *Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, that " I never went to school, to Aristotle and Plato, but was brought up at my father's house, in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen " ; it seems plain that this more liberal, more charitable, more English-traditional version of Puritanism—though it remained narrow enough in some respects—was chiefly popular among the lower classes and that it worked its way upwards. For the typical Elizabethan Puritan, with his pilgrim's progress from the meeting-house to the counting-house, was substituted Bunyan's Mr. Honest, " a cock of the right kind."

There remained, of course, a good deal of fanaticism about seventeenth-century Puritanism, but chiefly, I believe, in the smaller sects. Dr. Schenk's book on the Puritan Revolution is mainly concerned to deny the Marxist interpretation of the Diggers and the Levellers, pointing out that they had much more in common with Langland than with modern revolutionaries and reformers. Nevertheless, there may be a relation between the more fanatical of the Puritan Radicals and the Marxists. Some of the Puritan Radicals shared noble ideas with the conviction that they themselves had been marked out by God to be prophets and leaders ; Marx himself and modern Marxists share a genuine feeling for the poor with the conviction that they themselves have been marked out by

historical necessity to be the leaders of the " proletariat." There is, I think, true relationship between the more intolerant Puritans' contempt for those " without God " and the notorious opinion of Marx about " the reactionary lusts and prejudices of the workers."

To Aspinwall, the most fanatical of the Fifth Monarchy pamphleteers, mankind was divided between the chosen few and the sinful multitude. The Saints were " to exercise and manage . . . supremacy of power " ; they were to be, as he put it, " the Lamb's Military Officers "—a phrase almost as ludicrous as " the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," and meaning much the same thing : dictatorship by the few in the supposed interests of the many. It is indeed " ominous," as Dr. Schenk says (but surely also Marxist ?), that Aspinwall's criminal code, which prescribed capital punishment for twelve offences, included under this heading " cursing the rulers of the people."

The pride, narrowness and lack of imagination of these more fanatical Puritans are the main reason for the contempt of posterity towards Puritanism as a whole. But Bunyan probably represented the more popular, as well as the more lasting side ; and if he can sometimes be accused of bigotry, he can never be accused of lack of imagination. " Religion is dead when the imagination deserts it," wrote Rutherford. " When it is alive abstractions become visible and walk about on the roads." Bunyan held narrow Calvinist opinions, as Dante held barbarous Thomist views ; but in both cases the imagination triumphed over the theory, the poetry over the creed. No one who has read Rutherford's novels will charge him with being blind to the defects of Puritanism, but his conclusion to his study of Bunyan is this :—" Reformations do not create ; they do but re-establish that which is nearly effaced. Puritanism accomplished its task with as much success as is usually granted to any great inspiration. Whatever sweetness there may be in England . . . is largely due to it. Adulterers, drunkards and liars came to the top in the reign of Charles the Second . . . but the soul of Puritanism survived."

V.

A popular culture, closely bound up by religion with a middle-class culture, and a middle-class culture—politics aside—closely bound up, through patronage, with the Court and Country House: that may be said, without too much inaccuracy, to have been the over-all picture in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But can we leave politics aside? Can we make any clear distinction between politics and religion? Did not the religio-political struggles of the seventeenth century—the Civil War, the Commonwealth, the Restoration—result in a separation of upper-class culture from the rest? Certainly English culture, from the Restoration onwards for about thirty or forty years, was upper-class to a degree it had never been before—as we can see, very easily, if we glance through the *Everyman* edition of Dryden's *Dramatic Essays*. The chief point we are bound to notice is that Dryden—a representative figure as well as a great satiric poet and literary critic—is very much concerned to point out the cultural deficiencies of the Elizabethan-Jacobean period as compared with his own time. "The times were ignorant in which they lived," he writes. "Poetry was then, if not in its infancy among us, at least not arrived to its vigour and maturity . . . I have always acknowledged the wit of our predecessors, with all the veneration that becomes me; but, I am sure, their wit was not that of gentlemen; there was ever somewhat that was ill-bred and clownish in it, and which confessed the conversation of the authors."

"It must be allowed to the present age," he writes in another place, "that the tongue in general is so much refined since Shakespeare's time that many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand, some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole style is so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure." Dryden puts down this refinement in language and customs to the influence of the restored Court of Charles the Second. "If they ask me," Dryden writes,

" whence it is that our conversation is so much refined? I must freely, and without flattery, ascribe it to the court; and, in it, particularly to the King, whose example gives a law to it . . . At his return, he found a nation lost as much in barbarism as in rebellion; and, as the excellency of his nature forgave the one, so the excellency of his manners reformed the other."

Charles having spent his exile " in the most polished courts of Europe " (to quote Dryden again) and the most polished court of all having been that of Louis Quatorze, it is not surprising that Restoration culture owed an enormous debt to France. Indeed, the cultural élite in the Restoration period were almost as modishly Gallophil as the *New Statesman* and *Horizon* are to-day; and it was left to the Puritan lower classes to keep up the literary tradition of England and Shakespeare.

But we need to make several distinctions. The influence of French culture was certainly very great, and its influence was undoubtedly directed to make English culture more upper-class, more dependent upon the court, than it had ever been before. The Court and the Country House sincerely considered themselves to be the custodians of the English cultural tradition—duly refined. But not only was Bunyan Dryden's contemporary; the blind Milton, one time Cromwell's Latin secretary, was living in rustic exile and producing poems which were much admired by Dryden and the court. It is very interesting to observe, too, Dryden's natural English taste struggling against his consciously Gallican refinement. Dryden's preference was for " regular plays," having the Three Unities of the French stage; but he had too much natural English taste not to see that *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the only play of Shakespeare's which is " regular," is vastly inferior to *Henry the Fourth*, *Hamlet* or *King Lear*, which are most " irregular." And Dryden's English taste seems to have been shared by others of the Restoration élite, for he tells us that the Earl of Leicester so valued Chaucer in the original that he dissuaded his friend from attempting to modernize him in a refined version—which, however, Dryden did after the Earl's death.

So we see that, even in the " Restoration period," that is the years between the Restoration of 1660 till about 1690 or 1700, even in that short period—in which the complicated religio-political moves ushered in the comparative tranquillity of the eighteenth century—English culture was not quite the upper-class monopoly that Marxists and Conservatives might think. The influence of Puritanism was considerable in those years, even if it worked its modest way beneath the superficial brilliance of the court culture. There is also the curious case of Andrew Marvell, whose best poems, it is generally agreed, owe much to the courtly tradition of the Caroline poets, but who was a supporter of Cromwell and M.P. for Hull.

Events are always hard on those who can see both sides of a question. Matthew Arnold's essay on Falkland—Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, born in 1610, killed at Newbury in 1643—describes the uneasy situation of a Royalist who realized the complexity of the issues. Another Moderate was the mild Puritan of Eton, John Hales, friend of both Falkland and Marvell, who—like Bunyan's Mr. Wiseman—rejected usury and deplored what he considered to be Calvin's departure from Christian tradition in declaring it to be lawful. The Moderates, whether mildly Royalist or mildly Puritan, were overwhelmed by the fanatics on either side. But let us not forget the popular, liberal Puritanism which lasted two centuries after the extravagant intolerance had died away. Puritans of Bunyan's stamp—and there were evidently very many of them —combined an absolute devotion to their creed with loyalty to Crown and government. It is true that this was not wholly a new thing, for there is the famous story of the Puritan John Stubbs in Elizabethan times. He was sentenced to have his right hand cut off for writing a book protesting against the proposed French marriage of Elizabeth in 1579. After his right hand had been duly amputated, he removed his hat with his left, and cried in a loud voice, " God save the Queen ! "

This attitude, tried by the intolerance of Charles the First, turned to disaffection. But it either weathered the storm and bigotry of the Civil War or learned by the defects of the Commonwealth that loyalty to the civil power—whatever

its nature (and certainly between 1640 and 1715 there was enough variety to sober anybody save the Vicar of Bray)—was not incompatible with demand for religious freedom. Bunyan, on his first imprisonment in 1661, argued that the statute of Elizabeth, under which he was convicted, did not apply to persons like himself, who did not design the overthrow of the State, but merely to teach the religious doctrines which they believed to be true. In the even more difficult times for Dissenters around 1685, he thought the persecution ought to be met by following the gospel exactly. His friends were to beware of men, and if they were persecuted in one city they were to flee into another. In a tract called *Antichrist and his Ruin*, published after his death and probably written in the closing years of the reign of Charles the Second, he professes his loyalty to the King. Christians should "take heed of laying their trouble at the door of kings," but rather "labour to see the true cause of trouble, which is sin, and to attain to a fitness to be delivered out thence, and that is by repentance, and amendment of life." "Besides," he adds, "we must mind our duty."

VI.

Bunyan, Marvell and Dryden were almost exact contemporaries. The first may be said to have been the voice of a popular Puritan culture; the second the voice of a cultured middle-class, connected with the popular Puritan culture through religion; and the third the voice of the Court and Country House, connected with the cultured middle-class through "the French spirit of the age." Put in that way, we can see that English culture in the late seventeenth century was not the courtly monopoly that Dryden may have thought it was. The matter is complicated by politics, which were further complicated by religion. Dryden himself is a good example of these complications. No scruples seem to have prevented him from writing, in 1659, *A Poem upon the Death of His late Highness, Oliver, Lord Protector of England, Scot-*

land and Ireland, and a year later, *A Poem on the Happy Restoration and Return of his Sacred Majesty, Charles the Second*. And in the "Parliament of Saints," specially selected by Cromwell in 1653, there sat not only the Baptist leather-merchant Praise-God Barebone (whose picturesque name posterity associates with this parliament) but such future champions of Charles the Second as General Monck, afterwards Duke of Albemarle, and Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, afterwards the Earl of Shaftesbury.

On the other hand, when Dryden wrote in 1682 a poem in defence of the Church of England and in 1687 a poem in defence of the Church of Rome (a Catholic King, James the Second, having meanwhile ascended the throne), his change of heart—if I may correct here a misapprehension in my pamphlet *English Literature and the Agnostic* (1944)—was quite sincere. His sincerity is proved by his remaining a Catholic after the advent of William the Third, who deprived him of his various offices. The one time Poet Laureate, in fact, died a comparatively poor man and remained a Catholic to the end.

In culture generally, the eighteenth century may be said to have begun with the Restoration of 1660, as in politics it began with the Revolution of 1688 when the dogma of Divine Right disappeared for ever from English politics. It was the beginning of a period of relative calm, of aristocratic, classical disdain for religious or political enthusiasm; this, coupled with the popular form of peaceful Puritanism inspired by Bunyan (and, more lamentably, by commerce), produced the famous or notorious "complacency" with which the eighteenth century is associated.

The Augustan age was the period of Correctness, in language as in life. But the aristocratic element should not be exaggerated. Compared with Restoration culture, it wore its gentility with a difference. Not only was it based upon the coffee-house and the town, not upon the Court and Country House—a big difference, to begin with—but in Addison's own circle there was a variety of "breeding," even if they all accepted his famous maxim (so different from ours): "A Philosopher—which is what I mean by a Gentleman." In

Swift's circle, in the Scriblerus Club, two lords, a poor relation, a doctor and the son of a linen-draper engaged in equable converse. Swift is known to have been full of praise for the *Pilgrim's Progress*; and the Puritan part of the nation, which had formerly produced that masterpiece, now produced the fertile journalism of Daniel Defoe, the son of a butcher. Although Swift and Defoe were on opposite sides in the politico-religious controversies of the time, they must have reached pretty well the same great reading public, the one with his *Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*, the other with his *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* and *Journal of the Plague Year*. The Court was no longer one of the chief centres of culture; the kings, queens and princes of England during the eighteenth century occupied a sort of middle position between that scoundrel Henry the Eighth, who was a poet and a composer, and that modern gentleman George the Fifth, who was a keen collector of postage stamps. The focus had shifted to the town and coffee-house, and where once Charles the Second had done his best, in bed and out, to emulate *le Roi Soleil*, the centre of culture—of literary culture, at any rate—by the mid-eighteenth century was not the court of George the Second or the country-house of the Earl of Chesterfield but the taverns round about Fleet Street, where the son of a provincial bookseller discoursed with eloquence to a poor Irish hack-writer, a successful portrait-painter, an actor, a Member of Parliament and a Scots laird. The Court of Charles the Second—even if we take Dryden's view with a pinch of salt—had given place, in less than a century, to Number 7, Johnson's Court. It is astonishing that Trotsky, who was fairly well acquainted with the literature and art of Europe, should have written in *Literature and Revolution* of "the problems of art, which were in the custody of special priestly castes." The history of English culture doesn't bear him out; for "special priestly castes" hardly applies to the Old Devil Tavern at Temple Bar, where the step-son of a bricklayer laid down the law to "the sons of Ben," or to the Scriblerus Club and Johnson's Court just mentioned, or to that humble studio in Norwich where an illiterate painter of genius canvassed

methods with the son of a miller. And if it applied to the circles of Bacon, Wotton, Herbert, Sidney, and to John Dryden discussing dramatic poetry on the Thames in company with Sir Robert Howard, Lord Buckhurst and Sir Charles Sedley, it didn't apply again to the peripatetic conversations of Wordsworth and Coleridge, to the room over a bookseller's shop in the Strand where a carpenter's daughter discussed literature, music and philosophy with Herbert Spencer and G. H. Lewes, or to that trench in France where a Jewish private worked out the problems of poetry and life . . .

We have, clearly, to consider all these instances—and many more, of course—not simply ignore those which don't happen to fit our theory. Despite the partial separation of upper-class culture from the rest of the national culture which occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century, and despite the emergence of yet another *nouveaux riches*, we can hardly say that culture in the eighteenth century became " bourgeois " in the Marxist meaning or " upper-class " in Edith Olivier's sense. For what was the supreme achievement of English culture during that period, during the post-Augustan eighteenth century, the time of the Georges ? Literature, music, architecture, were in a fairly healthy state, though it was not one of their best periods ; and if it was the period of the Erastian Church, when the Clergy became almost a branch of the Civil Service, it was also the period of the Wesleys. But probably the supreme achievement of English eighteenth-century culture was not in Johnson, Fielding, Arne, Adam, or even in the Wesleys, but in the creation of the first really native school of painting. And the men who created it came largely—like the creators of the Elizabethan drama—from humble stock : Hogarth, the son of a hack-writer ; Gainsborough, the son of a working-class Suffolk family ; Reynolds, the son of a schoolmaster ; Wilson, the son of a clergyman ; Blake, the son of a hosier ; the illiterate " Old Crome " of Norwich ; Cotman, also of humble Norfolk ancestry ; Constable, the miller's son ; the cockney Girtin ; and Turner, who was the son of a Covent Garden barber.

VII.

Did not the English upper classes, did not the English country house, have a share in this creation of native painting? Did not they act as patrons? Would not Crome, Constable, Gainsborough, have starved without commissions from the gentry? Personally I have nothing but admiration for squires such as the Gurneys, the patrons of John Crome, "whose formal status was that of a drawing-master," says R. H. Mottram, "but who was treated as a member of the family." All patrons, however, were not of the quality of these Quaker Norfolk squires; and if we are bound to lift our hat to George the Third for founding the Royal Academy in 1768, we must also record the opinion of Halévy, confirming Thackeray, that "the gentry had always admired in him his tastes for country life and sport, and were not scandalized by his indifference to literature, science and art."

"From the point of view of the encouragement of great creative art," wrote Roger Fry in *Vision and Design*, "there is not much difference between an aristocracy and a plutocracy. The aristocrat usually had taste, the plutocrat frequently has not.. But both alike desire to buy something which is incommensurate with money. The aristocrat, by his taste, by his feeling for the accidentals of beauty, did manage to get on to some kind of terms with the artist. Hence the art of the eighteenth century, an art that is prone before the distinguished patron, subtly and deliciously flattering and yet always fine. In contrast to that the art of the nineteenth century [when, in Fry's opinion, the aristocratic was succeeded by the plutocratic patron], is coarse, turbulent, clumsy. It marks the beginning of a revolt."

It seems to me that this revolt began much earlier, in the eighteenth century itself. For Hogarth's patron was the nation; and it was to the nation that he addressed himself. He did this by means of reproduction of his paintings, which was popular and lucrative. He made by the public sale of his engravings the means to live and work in his own fashion which he could not derive from aristocratic patronage. If

Hogarth was thus largely independent of aristocratic patronage so early (he lived from 1697 to 1764) and if we remember too that before Hogarth the chief "English" painters had been foreigners, then it becomes clear that English painting was not much more indebted to the patronage of the Country House than was Dr. Johnson's dictionary, and that the revolt mentioned by Fry came earlier than he indicated.

In architecture, there wasn't much difference between the aristocratic and the plutocratic patron (if, indeed, the two can be really separated). "Over two hundred mansions had been built in the course of the eighteenth century," says Halévy. "In 1815 the movement had not slackened. But the artistic worth of all these country houses, the seats of the aristocracy, was very slight . . . The Gothic fashion was as insincere as the neo-classical. There were not even two rival schools, inspired by opposite convictions. The selfsame architects, clever men of business, men like Wilkins and Nash, worked in either style indifferently, and produced, to suit the whim of their client, a Doric portico, or a decorated facade, at need even a Chinese pagoda."

Blake, again, had no artistocratic patron; he was an independent craftsman, not rich and famous like Hogarth but satisfied with the small sums he obtained from his engravings and from the occasional sale of his self-illustrated poems. "The misunderstanding between art and commerce is bound to be complete," observed Roger Fry; and Blake said much the same thing when he wrote:

> When Nations grow old the Arts grow cold,
> And Commerce settles on every tree . . .

But it needs to be remembered that every aristocracy was once a plutocracy: I don't see how the fact can be denied, least of all in regard to England. For what was the main part of the Elizabethan-Jacobean aristocracy, many of whom were cultured in every sense of the word? Surely the main part were families which had become rich by the looting of the monasteries under Henry the Eighth or which had turned peasant land into sheep-runs or which were engaged in the

Slave Trade between Africa and the Spanish American colonies? The Tudor *nouveaux riches* were hated by the feudal families, but the hate didn't prevent many inter-marriages, as symbolized in a later age in the famous painting by Hogarth.

Why, then, did Commerce only visibly affect Culture in the nineteenth century or the end of the eighteenth? Why did plutocracies—when they had grown out of Norman barbarism—manage to form themselves into aristocracies before that time and not after? It couldn't have been the taint of money that was responsible for the difference between the culture connected with the Elizabethan "bull"—or rather "wool"—movement and the culture connected with the period of commercial prosperity in England in the nineteenth century and America in the twentieth. For the lucre was as filthy in 1580 as it was in 1880: families whose wealth came either from the legal robbery of the Church and the peasants or from the flourishing Slave Trade between Africa and America could not have afforded to look down their moral nose at families whose wealth was founded on the distress of the poor in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What, then, made the court and country-house culture under the Tudors and the Stuarts a culture, at its best, in the true or Maritain sense, while the culture of the British and American *nouveaux riches* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was and is a thing to be shuddered at, part pathetic, part obnoxious, a mere material gesture towards the spiritual world?

VIII.

There are no doubt many answers, and some of them may be the part concern of my next chapters. But it seems clear to me that no one answer is sufficient. My present argument is the argument against a main part of both the Marxist and the Conservative creeds, which puts the culture of the past in the exclusive possession of the upper classes. I have pointed out that the culture of Shakespeare's time needed Shakespeare and the popular idiom and the middle classes, as well as the

court and country house ; and therefore the question we may be supposed to have asked in the last few paragraphs has to be modified from its simple meaning, in view of the evident fact that culture in its finest aspects does not spring from national prosperity, but from national health in both the material and spiritual senses.

I have pointed out that even the short period of cultural upper-class domination in the Restoration period was not such a monopoly as it might seem at first glance, and that in the eighteenth century a national culture, very different from the Elizabethan-Jacobean but still a unity, existed and flourished, being based more on the town than the court, on the taverns, coffee-houses, newspapers, publishers, rather than the country houses of the aristocracy. The royal and aristocratic patronage of the arts was passing, and Hogarth and Johnson, with their " anonymous public " and " common reader," were taking its place.

Another obvious question obtrudes itself : did this change in circumstances, not only from the self-conscious upper-class culture of the Restoration but from the more real contribution of the court and country house to the Elizabethan-Jacobean national culture, did this change itself lead to cultural decline, not apparent at the start but becoming more and more evident ? The actual cultural products don't seem to me to have declined very much with the changing of society, and it is commonly accepted that the old popular culture, which was largely based on agriculture, was only killed completely with the full force of the industrial revolution in the age of Victoria. It is also commonly accepted that English science, though tracing its descent from Roger and Francis Bacon (and thus ultimately from the Italians, the Arabs and the Greeks), was largely the creation of the late seventeenth century onwards. A recent view among literary critics and philosophers is that this development of science, the improvement of the written language, the creation of the Royal Society, etc., led to an impoverishment of culture as a whole. This view originated partly with T. S. Eliot, whose famous phrase, " the dissociation of sensibility," occurred in his essay on the Meta-

physical Poets, written in 1921. And there is now perhaps "some danger of its becoming a dogma," as observes Bonamy Dobrée, reviewing Knight's *Explorations* in the Manchester University literary review, *Humanitas*, Autumn 1946.

"Is it not possible," asks Professor Dobrée, "that this new analysis may be simply part of the Anglo-Catholic movement seeking arguments to justify its attitude, or merely seeing the course of history through its own spectacles? And was not the change in language far more the answer to purely social demands and the growth of a large new reading public than to an incipient schizophrenia? And finally, is it really better to write like Sir Thomas Browne than to write like Swift? or to write like Nashe than to write like Defoe? I am not prepared at the moment to sustain this counter-argument; but somebody might well do it, and perhaps it is time that they did."

This is a valuable warning, coming from so distinguished a source, but I think personally that Eliot's main argument is convincing, that there *was* a certain poverty of sensibility in much of the literature of the eighteenth century onward, as compared with Shakespeare, Jonson, Herbert, Marvell. I cannot, as I say, perceive any great overall decline in the level of culture between the time of Elizabeth and the time of the Regency; each period, in fact, seems to have had what the other lacked. Keats at one end of the time scale was certainly a great genius, but I don't believe even he could have written, had he lived, those "few fine plays" he set his heart on; but not only the masters, Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson, but lesser men such as Tourneur and Middleton, wrote fine dramatic poetry under Elizabeth and James the First. The best poems of Wordsworth and Keats are surely as good as the best poems of Donne and Marvell; but dramatic poetry proper was truly the monopoly of the Elizabethan-Jacobeans. It will hardly be denied, either, that music was superior among the Elizabethans and painting among the men of the eighteenth century and the Regency; painting, and also caricature, was almost as popular in the latter period as music in the former.

But the best contrast is in what I can only call " ordered prose." The Elizabethan-Jacobeans, with their " sensibility on the tip of the senses," were lacking, not only in painting and novel-writing, but in argumentative prose. Bacon is the principal exception, but he was truly, as Knights observes, the pioneer of the scientific age: he looked forward to the future, to Dryden and the Royal Society, to Newton, perhaps to Voltaire. The staple prose of the Elizabethans was that written by Sidney, Nashe, Greene, and Donne, a prose of great imaginative power but hardly one in which a writer—as distinct from a preacher in the pulpit—could pursue an argument, step by step. Dryden's observations on the " barbarity " of the Elizabethan language were, in this limited fashion, quite correct. It was a language pre-eminently of the spoken word; the very official proclamations of Elizabeth often read—or rather sound—like Shakespearean blank verse. It was probably almost impossible for any Elizabethan or Jacobean to speak badly. From our knowledge of the books of such working-men as Bamford, Lovett, Cooper, Holyoake, it is clear that we can make a similar point about the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: that it was almost impossible for any man in that period to *write* badly. Before the Entry of the Gladiators with Northcliffe and the Yellow Press—" Hail, Demos! those about to lie salute thee " —it seems to have been perfectly easy for any literate person, whatever the deficiencies of his early education, to write down his thoughts clearly, plainly and with dignity; as it seems to have been perfectly easy for any Elizabethan, literate or illiterate, to express himself in speech with charm, fluency and vigour.

By the end of the eighteenth century, then, such a " scientific " prose as the Elizabethans lacked had been firmly established, and we find it in the Great Reviews of the Regency period and after, in the *Quarterly*, the *Edinburgh*, *Blackwood's*, whose critics, like Cobbett with his " tuppenny trash," owed much to Swift and Johnson, who in their turn owed much, not only to Dryden and Bacon, but to the general Classical learning that followed the Renaissance. Dryden thought of

the culture of the Restoration in terms of Augustan Rome, and Edinburgh in the time of the Regency reviews was often described as "the Athens of the North." Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Byron to some extent, reacted against this Classical tradition and inaugurated—"as every schoolboy knows"—the Romantic Revival. For all their great qualities, the romantic poets could only better the stock poetry of the eighteenth-century hacks and equal, at their best, the best of their non-dramatic predecessors from Spenser to Gray; they could not quite equal the dramatic poetry of Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson, though Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, all tried their hand at writing for the stage. Part of the quality, the experience, of the work of Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson became the province, not of poetry but of the novel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and even Dickens, great as he is, particularly in comedy, was handicapped severely by the taste for sentimentality that was the manner of the age, the Victorian age, in culture generally.

IX.

So we become aware of certain cultural splits *before* the Industrial Revolution. The Victorian sentimentality was hardly something invented by themselves, to offset the rigours of the new industrialism; it had its roots deep in the heart of the eighteenth century, thirty years before James Watt's grandmother put the kettle on the hob. When the entire collection of elderly gentlemen at an Edinburgh club wept in unison over George Eliot's *Adam Bede* in 1859, they had quite a century of tears behind them; and even the Great Reviews, the custodians of the dry-eyed, Classical tradition, succumbed pretty early to the damp spirit of the age. Speaking generally, we may say that, while in the eighteenth century and the Regency period, sentimentality was offset by the common sense of such people as Johnson, Cobbett, Jane Austen (and there must have been plenty of them, for these writers were

widely appreciated), in the Victorian age even the best writers were very sentimental indeed. No novelist before the Victorian age could have risen to the comic heights of Sairey Gamp and sunk to the sentimental depths of Tom Pinch in one and the same novel, and with the same consciousness of general approval. But the seeds of this sentimentality were sown in the Era of Enlightenment; and Dickens, Thackeray, Charles Reade, Browning, Charlotte Yonge . . . were only a logical development of Goldsmith, Sterne, the *Journal to Stella* and the Man of Feeling.

I shall not attempt to define sentimentality, but it clearly betrays a divorce between emotion and intelligence. The tough-guy attitude is not really the opposite: it is complementary, betraying an exaggerated fear of sentiment that leads on the one side to brutality, on the other to mush. Fundamentally, it is the world of Hollywood and no doubt springs from the Victorian sentimentality, as that sentimentality sprang from the cultural deficiencies of the Restoration and eighteenth-century Enlightenment. But what were these deficiencies? I believe Professor Knights is on the right track in his essay on the pioneer Bacon in the volume of *Explorations* mentioned. "What we need," he concludes, "is not to abandon reason, but simply to recognize that reason in the last three centuries has worked within a field which is not the whole of experience, that it has mistaken the part for the whole, and imposed arbitrary limits on its own working."

I accept, then, *in general terms*, this "dissociation of sensibility." It seems to me quite an accurate description of the difference between the general culture of the Victorians and that of the Elizabethan-Jacobeans. If one were compiling an anthology of English sentimentality, of divorce between emotion and intelligence, one would find very few items before the Restoration. From the Restoration onwards sentimentality, as cheerfulness to Boswell's philosopher, keeps breaking in. It is not too apparent in Restoration comedy, though there are many touches beneath the sophisticated cynicism; it is more noticeable in Swift than in Pope, though still hidden away; but in the post-Augustan eighteenth

century it comes into its own, with Richardson, even Fielding in places, above all with Sterne and Goldsmith. It is common in Scott, Byron and Landor; and overwhelming throughout the Victorian age. I take literature as my standard, for that is the art wherein sentimentality is most observable by the layman; and literature is bound to reflect, more immediately than music, painting or architecture, the general cultural habits of the period in which it is composed.

Intelligent Conservatives of the Country-house school of cultural thought will say at once that the growth of sentimentality, which as a matter of historical fact developed along with the development of science and the extension of democracy, was therefore inseparable from them; and that the solution to the problem of general cultural ill-health to-day, of which sentimentality remains one of the chief symptoms—"In the state of slush in which we have the misfortune to live," observed the late T. E. Hulme; and the last chapter of Captain Aubrey Jones's *The Pendulum of Politics* (1946) is entitled "The Conservative Ideal in a Sentimental Age"—the solution, they will say at once, is a return to a more aristocratic, more agricultural, more religious form of society.

I am not here concerned with whether this solution is practicable or not; it is rather a question—for this chapter—of whether the full implications of the dogma of Dissociation of Sensibility lead us towards this diagnosis and this solution. I believe that they do: and so I was careful to write, "I accept, *in general terms*, this 'dissociation of sensibility'," because I believe that some modifications, other than the valuable hints thrown out by Bonamy Dobrée, are essential to a proper understanding. The contrast I have laid before the reader is that between the general culture of the Victorians and the general culture of the Elizabethans. I have further said that this contrast—I took the one point of sentimentality—is most easily observed in literature. I now add that some points of value can be more properly understood if we consider, in this connection, Shakespeare and Dickens.

Shakespeare and Dickens . . . Each writer, it will be agreed, bestrode his age like a colossus; each was very popular in his

own time ; each has lasted in almost full strength to the present day. " Literature," as distinct from " books," to thousands of English people who never read anything save the *News of the World* or the illustrated journals of blood sports, means in fact Shakespeare and Dickens. There is no third author to share the burden of reputation with them.

This is obvious enough, but it is at the same time curious. Apart from the superficial recognition of those who hardly read at all, there exists still a genuine appreciation of these two authors. Dickens is the only " classic " to be widely read at the present day, and many of his characters—Bumble, Micawber, Pecksniff, Squeers—have passed into the language as a convenient shorthand for indicating certain perennial types ; while Shakespeare, if not exactly popular (no poet of any stature has been popular this century), is easily the most widely read writer among the Elizabethan-Jacobeans. I don't think we should put down this latter fact entirely to the account of educational habits : there *is* something in Shakespeare that is lacking, except in places, in every other writer of his time. And this something is not his subtlety of language, nor even the wide variety of his scenes and characters ; it is something much more " ordinary " and is so obvious that it is often overlooked—it is his general human appeal. Neither Marlowe nor Spenser nor Jonson nor Donne, nor even Herbert, has this immediate human appeal of Shakespeare—and the fact that Chaucer has a great deal of it is obscured to-day by the foreignness of his language to modern eyes.

That Dickens has this general, immediate, human appeal of Shakespeare will be admitted by everyone ; his comedy is at least equal to the master's, and he only fails, comparatively, in tragedy because of his sentimental attitude and the sentimental culture of his age. He is a lesser man than Shakespeare " on the serious side," but between the creator of Falstaff and the creator of Sairey Gamp there is not much to choose. There is a kind of pathos in Shakespeare generally that is only found at rare intervals in the work of Marlowe, Jonson and Donne. No one else, I believe, in the Elizabethan literary world could have written the scenes upon the heath

in *Lear* or the last act of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare is much besides, but he is easily the most Dickensian of the Elizabethan writers, as Dickens is the most Shakespearean writer among the Victorians.

A link like this is of the utmost importance for the matter in hand; it gives to "sentimental" a meaning other than the pejorative. If Dickens is sentimental, as he certainly is, he has nevertheless in most of his novels passages of a Shakespearean comic richness and a Shakespearean pathetic strength which are so bound up with his sentimentality as almost to defy separation. The "dissociation of sensibility" can be said to have been responsible for his grosser sentimental indulgence; but it is an axiom in literary criticism that an author shall be judged by his most valuable works or the most valuable parts of them, and if we accept Shakespeare at his best as presupposing a valuable Elizabethan culture then there seems no valid reason why we should not accept Dickens at his best as presupposing a valuable Victorian culture. For if the Shakespearean comic richness of Dickens was a thing quite out of touch with most of the culture of his time, his Shakespearean pathetic strength was also the most valuable characteristic of George Eliot, Emily Brontë, Thomas Hardy, and several other Victorian novelists, as the general Victorian "family" background—when all has been said against it—was a source of strength rather than a source of weakness.

X.

The Victorian sentimentality, then, was set against a background of something infinitely more respectable; not all the tears were synthetic, even Mrs. Browning was a more cultured woman than *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* makes her out to be, and Dickens wrote *Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit*, George Eliot *Middlemarch*. It will have been noticed that Mr. Eliot took poetry as his standard when throwing out the theory of "dissociation of sensibility," and I agree that a great period of poetry—especially if it is bound up with a great period of

music, as it was among the Elizabethans—is more evidence of a living culture than an equally great period in prose fiction. For I take music and poetry not only to be the highest forms of art, but also the arts most closely connected with Everyman, not in his library but in his essence. The Victorian inferiority in music and poetry betrays some inferiority in general culture, compared with the Elizabethan-Jacobean; but the rise in the level of moral feeling which M. Maritain has observed of the present age is the heir of Victorian culture, the heir of the liberal cultural tradition, and that was expressed in literary art in the great period of the novel from Dickens to Conrad. It might be said that in Henry Fielding in the mid-eighteenth century the novel began to take the place of poetic drama, but the novel up to Dickens, Emily Brontë and George Eliot, though written by such great men as Fielding and Scott, was crude in sensibility compared with the dramatic poetry of Shakespeare and Jonson. It is only with the Victorians and the Edwardians that the novel can properly be compared in point of sensibility, range and power with the Elizabethan drama—with Jane Austen as the Regency pioneer of the great Victorian achievement.

"Dissociation of sensibility," therefore, with the modifications I have suggested. Eliot's theory was based on the contrast between Victorian and Elizabethan poetry; taking culture as a whole, even literature as a whole, the contrast is still there, but it is considerably modified, and doesn't lead us so inevitably to the Conservative diagnosis and solution. The Elizabethan-Jacobean culture was set against a background of social and moral darkness without the reform of it which is the Victorians' answer to rebuke of theirs. The growth of democracy, the growth of liberalism, the growth of science, even the growth of sentimentality, did not produce a culture that was inherently bad. What may be said to have occurred, probably as a result of the Industrial Revolution and the immense increase in population, was that culture became more a matter of individual, private sensibility, and that something of the homogeneous nature of the old order was lost.

What is seriously amiss with the view of many Conservative writers on the problem is that they are content, like the Marxists, to deal in ponderous abstractions, bearing little relation to either historical fact or literary sensibility. Thus to read Edith Olivier's *Four Victorian Ladies of Wiltshire*, one would think that the Court and Country House were, not simply one valuable part of the old culture, but the prime mover of European civilization! This is a most innocent and provincial view. Edith Olivier wrote at the end of her interesting book:—"All over Europe, the great houses have been the centre from which the civilization we know spread slowly over the lands which had once been united under the Roman Empire. It was nurtured in the country houses of the aristocracy. The ladies of the Italian Renaissance gathered round them the artists and poets of their day. The *Courtier* of Castiglione describes the court of Beatrice d'Este, Duchess of Milan, and from that we know what other courts were like. The poetic constellation of the Pleiades sparkled round the Queen of Navarre. In this country, we hear in Queen Elizabeth's day of 'the college' which Mary Sidney assembled at Wilton and from which there issued the *Arcadia* written by her famous brother, Sir Philip Sidney. The little German courts of the eighteenth century were the soil from which grew the musical genius of Bach and Mozart and the poetry of Goethe. At the same time, the Whig aristocracy of England was not only building the great English country houses, but was nurturing within them the public spirit of country gentlemen who sustained in this country the tradition that politics was a noble career for the cultured and patriotic patrician."

We have already seen, in one or two respects, how this rosy picture should be modified. In the comparison between Daniel's *Cleopatra* and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* we have, in little, the essential difference between the culture of a leisured class, cut off from intimate contact with the living language of the field and the street, and the culture of a professional dramatist, embodying the genius of the people. We observe that Edith Olivier mentions Sidney's *Arcadia*

as if that were one of the chief achievements of Elizabethan literature! Admittedly, there are several amusing passages in this very dreary work; but in the age of *Dr. Faustus*, *King Lear* and *Volpone*, it is hardly worth mentioning at all—particularly as Wilton's better gift was the humble priest of Bemerton and that poetic-musical culture of which he was the exemplar. The opinion of historians and literary critics doesn't bear out, again, Edith Olivier's picture of the English aristocracy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Where she saw culture and patriotism—which undoubtedly existed—Leslie Stephen was putting his emphasis somewhat otherwise, writing in his classic work, *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*: "The upper classes, who had gained all they wanted, were comfortable and irresponsible; able to carry on a traffic in sinecures and pensions, and demoralized as every corporate body becomes demoralized which has no functions to discharge in proportion to capacities."

"The nobleman," writes Stephen of the mid-eighteenth century, "has ceased to consider the patronage of authors as any part of his duty, and the tradition which made him consider writing poetry as a proper accomplishment is dying out. Since that time our aristocracy as such has been normally illiterate. Peers—Byron, for example—have occasionally written books; and more than one person of quality has, like Fox, kept up the interest in classical literature which he acquired at a public school, and added a charm to his parliamentary oratory . . . But a certain contempt for the professional writer is becoming characteristic, even of men like Horace Walpole, who have a real taste for literature . . . Walpole can speak politely to men like Gibbon, and even to Hume, who have some claim to be gentlemen as well as authors; but he feels that he is condescending even to them, and has nothing but contemptuous aversion for a Johnson, whose claim to consideration certainly did not include any special refinement. Johnson and his circle had still an odour of Grub Street, which is only to be kept at a distance more carefully because it is in a position of comparative independence."

For a picture of the fashionable vulgarity of London in the eighteen-twenties, we can turn to Alice Acland's recent biography of Caroline Norton, née Sheridan:—"The London in which Helen and Caroline Sheridan made their début as young girls," writes Miss Acland, "was the glittering, feverish London of the eighteen-twenties. It was ruled by wealth and fashion, and characterized by reckless extravagance . . . One of the most striking features of the English upper classes at this time was their passionate pre-occupation with money. Their lives were spent in an alternation between schemes to acquire it and a startling speed in getting rid of it again. For money a man of fashion would do almost anything. He would cheat his friends, mortgage his estates, impoverish his near relations, or marry a hideous heiress. Women also were expected to unite themselves with odious old men or with heartless libertines in the interests of this quest. Their complacency was taken for granted."

"This world of jungle warfare," as Miss Acland justly describes it, was not entirely the product of the Napoleonic wars; for some of its features are noted in more detail throughout the letters of Jane Austen, who died in 1817. I suppose the lame excuse could be advanced that even this feverish, extravagant life—the very worst side, I can well believe, of the contemporary aristocracy (for the honest sporting squire, however uncultured in one sense, I share the sneaking affection of most people)—I suppose the excuse could be offered that even this life of dissipation created employment for others. But for whom? it must be asked. Not certainly for the more "worthy" section of the Lower Orders, but mainly for horse-dealers, makers of fashionable trifles, and suchlike. Lovett notes in his autobiography how disgusted the older cabinet-makers were at the shoddy stuff then in fashion and which they had to make because of the demand, often against their craftsman's conscience.

The same is true, on a larger scale, with those country houses about which Edith Olivier wrote so enthusiastically. They must have varied a great deal, but we have seen Halévy's view, and, as the mainly frivolous or luxurious tastes of the

eighteenth-century aristocracy corrupted the architects—or some architects—and turned them into mere clever business men, so the fashionable tastes of the jungle world of the Regency and George the Fourth corrupted the cabinet-makers. "The greatest foe to art is luxury," said William Morris: "art cannot live in its atmosphere."

Although art, again, knows no frontiers, there are certain native traditions which should be respected, and which many of Miss Olivier's aristocrats did not respect. "An art of peasants rather than of merchant-princes or courtiers," said Morris once of the English architectural tradition, "it must be a hard heart, I think, that does not love it: whether a man has been born among it like ourselves, or has come wonderingly on its simplicity from all the grandeur over-seas. A peasant art, I say, and it clung fast to the life of the people, and still lived among the cottagers and yeomen in many parts of the country while the big houses were being built 'French and fine'."

Morris would also have challenged Edith Olivier's statement that the aristocracy in the eighteenth century, or any century, "built" the great country houses, or any houses. "Nor must you forget," he said to a meeting of the Trades' Guild of Learning in 1877, "that when men say popes, kings, and emperors built such and such buildings, it is a mere way of speaking. You look in your history-books to see who built Westminster Abbey, who built St. Sophia at Constantinople, and they tell you Henry the Third, Justinian the Emperor. Did they? or, rather, men like you and me, handicraftsmen, who have left no names behind them, nothing but their work?"

The view of this professional artist about the growth of civilization during and after the Dark Ages must be quoted, too, to offset Edith Olivier's simplified notions of the nurturing of civilization in the country houses of the aristocracy. I take my quotation from Morris's address before the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design, delivered in 1879. I have room here for only a short extract, and must take up Morris in full stride. He is speaking about the Dark Ages . . . "That is pretty much the sum of what so-called history has

left us of the tale of those days—the stupid langour and the evil deeds of kings and scoundrels. Must we turn away then, and say that all was evil? How then did men live from day to day? How then did Europe grow into intelligence and freedom? It seems there were others than those of whom history (so called) has left us the names and the deeds. These, the raw material for the treasury and the slave-market, we now call 'the people,' and we know that they were working all that while. Yes, and that their work was not merely slaves' work, the meal-trough before them and the whip behind them; for though history (so called) has forgotten them, yet their work has not been forgotten, but has made another history—the history of Art. There is not an ancient city in the East or the West that does not bear some token of their grief, and joy, and hope. From Ispahan to Northumberland, there is no building built between the seventh and seventeenth centuries that does not show the influence of the labour of that oppressed and neglected herd of men. No one of them, indeed, rose high above his fellows. There was no Plato, or Shakespeare, or Michael Angelo amongst them. Yet scattered as it was among many men, how strong their thought was, how long it abided, how far it travelled! . . . History (so called) has remembered the kings and warriors, because they destroyed; Art has remembered the people, because they created."

XI.

The late Miss Edith Olivier—a lady of charm and distinction well known in Conservative circles in south Wiltshire—was not telling fibs in the passage I have ventured to criticize: indeed, most of what she has written there is either true or partly true. But she has simply missed out all the other contributions that went to the making of English and European culture, in order to gain a cheap victory for the Court and Country House. We can gladly accept her confirmation that the gentry in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were one of the custodians of the English cultural

tradition, but she hadn't a suspicion apparently that the eighteenth century witnessed a decline in this respect from the sixteenth and the seventeenth. She even imagined that the Victorian ladies she was dealing with were the equals in culture of the Herberts, the Howards, the Bacons, the Wottons, of Tudor and Stuart times. She must have forgotten that Matthew Arnold described the Victorian aristocracy as "barbarians." He wrote in *Culture and Anarchy*: "When I want to distinguish clearly the aristocratic class from the Philistines proper, or middle class, I name the former, in my own mind, the Barbarians. And when I go through the country, and see this and that beautiful and imposing seat of theirs crowning the landscape, 'There,' I say to myself, 'is a great fortified post of the Barbarians.'"

Of course, when Arnold made his celebrated division of Victorian society into Barbarians, Philistines and Populace, he was careful to note that in all three classes there existed many "aliens," as he called them ("they are sown more abundantly than one might think"), whose chief characteristic was their humanity, not their thinking in terms of class machinery. "This number," he wrote, "is capable of being diminished or augmented," that is "in proportion both to the force of the original instinct within them, and to the hindrance or encouragement which it meets with from without." It was mainly hindrance that it met with in later Victorian days, and in the twentieth century, but this hindrance was not dictated by "the masses," as so many people believe; it was dictated by Commerce, of the Philistine middle-class mainly, but with which the Barbarians had been only too eager to ally themselves.

Professor Berdyaev is among those many contemporary writers who think that culture has been sacrificed to democracy. "The thoroughly justified process of democratizing culture, of communicating it to the popular mass," he writes in *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, "has the natural reaction of lowering the qualitative level. This process means that two things are happening: the cultural level of the masses is raised, their cultural interest is aroused, but at the same time

the masses begin to dominate culture and adapt it to their own level.'"

This is the rather shoddy account—surprising in a writer of Professor Berdyaev's calibre—that is offered by so many of the upper-class cultural critics, whether Conservative or Marxist or ex-Marxist, an account vitiated by their obvious concern to put the blame for the deficiencies of modern culture, the direct offspring of Victorian culture, on to the shoulders of the Lower Orders. It is a singularly contemptible procedure besides bearing no relation whatever to the facts. Arnold may have had serious faults in cultural diagnosis, but his famous division of Victorian society is extremely useful as a pointer. On Berdyaev's abstract, theoretical view, the Populace must have been to blame for the barbarity of the aristocracy and the Philistinism of the middle classes. Arnold would not have agreed: the principal fault, as he saw it, was that all three classes were too interested in "machinery," meaning outward things, and not enough in "culture," or things of the mind and spirit. Why were the Victorian aristocracy—generally speaking—barbarians? Even Berdyaev would hardly inform us that the Victorian aristocracy had lost their culture by listening at the key-hole of the Servants' Hall, or that they were so enthusiastic for the democratic principles of '89 that they burnt their Virgil and took up hunting. Evidently the reason for the barbarity of these barbarians was not in their servants but in themselves—or perhaps in that tradition of luxury in whose atmosphere, as Morris pointed out, art cannot live. I should say myself that it was a mixture of many things that led to the comparative poverty of Victorian country-house culture when set against the Elizabethan-Jacobean, and that the influence of "the masses" was not one of them. How could it have been one of them? The influence of the Lower Orders on the Victorian aristocracy was nil.

The popular newspaper of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries—often called the Yellow Press—is rightly considered one of the principal cultural evils of our time and was no doubt one of the things Berdyaev had in mind when he lamented

the cultural domination of the popular mass. But who began—in England, at any rate—this Yellow Press? Was it begun by the Trade Unions? or by the Co-operative Society? or perhaps by the Liberal Party, in whose local organisation, as Halévy has told us, artisans and labourers were beginning to take a big share?

No, it was begun by none of these. Who, then, did begin it? It was begun by the Conservative Party. "It was the Conservative Party," writes Halévy, "which, at the very time when both in London and the provinces it was extending its control over the press, created a new type of newspaper to meet the needs of a public more extensive and less educated than that which journalism had hitherto addressed. On May 4th, 1896, the young Alfred Charles William Harmsworth—the future Lord Northcliffe—brought out the first number of the *Daily Mail*, a paper of reduced size and costing only a half-penny. The new paper contained no feature which resembled the carefully accurate information and well-informed argument which for over a century had been the glory of British Journalism. There were illustrations: serial stories: political articles of extreme brevity and preceded by large headlines which dispensed a hurried reader from the perusal of the text. And there was an abundant supply of sensational news items to tickle the popular palate, crimes, catastrophes, royal marriages and funerals, sport, naval and military reviews and wars. Harmsworth's venture was immediately rewarded by an unprecedented success. At the end of the first three months the *Daily Mail* had reached a circulation of over 200,000 copies, at the end of three years the circulation had almost reached 550,000."

Many persons, when they read this passage, or a similar one, about Northcliffe and the Tory Party "creating a new type of newspaper to meet the needs of a public more extensive and less educated than that which journalism had hitherto addressed," tend to think exclusively, and most unhistorically, of the new reading public engendered by the 1870 Education Act. They forget—Halévy himself has forgotten—that "the glory of British Journalism" included Cobbett's *Political*

Register, Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian*, and other extremely popular newspapers, as well as the *Times*, the *Morning Post*, etc., and that the *Daily Mail* appealed to readers of less intelligence than those workmen who read Cobbett and Hetherington as well as those aristocrats who read, or took in, the *Times*. Politely assuming that the tastes of "the masses" were even more vulgar than their own, the Conservative Party organizers, aided by commercial adventurers like Northcliffe, proceeded to appeal to the lower, animal instincts that are in all of us, instead of appealing to the finer side of our natures, as both the popular and more consciously cultured papers did before. It is significant that neither Cobbett nor Hetherington—though possibly O'Connor—felt any need for large headlines, inaccurate information, and "sensational news items to tickle the popular palate." Such tickling was indeed popular, for, as Hamilton Fyfe enthusiastically informs us in his biography of Northcliffe, "The Best People *did* read the *Daily Mail*. It was now seen in first-class railway compartments as much as in third-class. It had made its way from the kitchen and the butler's pantry of the big country houses up to the hall table"—*having first of all* made its way down to the kitchen and the butler's pantry from the owners of those country houses, who were the directors of the Conservative Party and the main commercial impulse behind those large headlines, that inaccurate information and those sensational news items of crime and war.

Fortunately, I am able to rebuke the Conservative Party for starting the Yellow Press in the words of its present leader, Mr. Winston Churchill. Recalling the Press as it once existed in the years immediately preceding the advent of Harmsworth, Mr. Churchill wrote in his autobiography, *My Early Life*, that "The newspapers catered obediently for what was at once an educated and a popular taste." The phrase removes at one stroke the special pleading of the Yellow Press that the educated public was always different in kind from the popular. Mr. Churchill has literary history on his side; Halévy—for once—was writing with only partial truth.

XII.

A similar innocence to Edith Olivier's, though this time masked by an attitude of sturdy realism, is observable in J. Wentworth Day's *Harvest Adventure* (1946)—in some ways, an excellent book. Mr. Day is like Goldsmith's Mr. Hardcastle: he loves everything that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine. He represents, at his best, what might be called the *Country Life* section of the modern aristocracy or upper classes. He is extremely knowledgeable about farming, natural history, hunting, fishing, shooting, horses, dogs. He dislikes, he says, big cities and "the modern craze for speed"—thereby showing himself to be a bit of a fraud, for he joined the *Daily Express* as Publicity Manager in 1923, was feature-writer and dramatic critic for the *Sunday Express* 1926-32, and among his works listed in *Who's Who* are to be found *The Lure of Speed*, with the late Sir Henry Segrave, 1929; Segrave's life, 1930; *Speed: the Life of Sir Malcolm Campell*, 1931; and *Kaye Don—the Man*, 1934.

He quite sincerely believes that the culture of himself and his hunting, fishing and shooting friends, with their appreciation of old books, old paintings, old coins, old furniture, old armour, old wine, old cobwebs, etc., is comparable with the culture of the Elizabethan-Jacobean gentry, at its best. And this idea—being, I suppose, common to most subscribers to *Country Life*, the *Field*, the *Tatler and Bystander*, *Sport and Country*, the *Sketch*—is worth refuting, particularly as Mr. Day gives us the opening by quoting on page 130 of *Harvest Adventure* a famous anthology verse by Sir Henry Wotton.

Now Wotton and his circle, which included the families of Herbert, Bacon, Howard, were all that Mr. Day and his sporting friends are not. It is true that their cultures overlap to a limited extent: Mr. Day could converse with Wotton on farming, natural history, sport and horses much more intelligently than could I or millions of others. But Wotton and his circle were not only interested in farming and sport, they were not only interested superficially in the culture

of the past. (For a liking for " old books, old wine " is a connoisseur's appreciation, not a genuine love of literature, which has, of course, no connection with material things.) From *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, by Logan Pearsall Smith, we learn that this famous gentleman, who lived from 1568 to 1639, was not only a figure of importance in the state, a courtier, an ambassador, and a wit (his most celebrated witticism was his definition of an ambassador: " an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country") ; he was deeply read in history, moral philosophy, civil law: he was a minor poet ; he was interested in science, education, architecture ; he could play well on the viol de gamba ; he was religious and a friend to scholars ; he was an appreciator of contemporary literature, contemporary music, contemporary painting ; he was a Latin pamphleteer and in 1624 was made Provost of Eton ; he wrote a book on the *Elements of Architecture* and another on the *State of Christendom* . . .

No doubt there were " barbarians " in the ranks of the Tudor and Stuart aristocracies. It would be untrue to argue that there is not a word in Mr. Day's book to show he is interested in literature or the arts in their contemporary manifestations ; but clearly he is not very interested, and there are indications that he thinks such stuff only suitable for so-called intellectuals who don't know how to load a gun. On farming, natural history, sport, " the modern craze for speed," one can trust Mr. Day to show great knowledge and appreciation ; but on little else. As a representative of the best type of contemporary aristocrat, he reveals a saddening decline in standard, not only from Wotton of Kent, but from the Gurneys and the Buxtons of his native East Anglia.

The Conservative diagnosis, then, is much like the Marxist : a simplification of the facts, to suit a preconceived theory. The truth of their position is the historical one that the Court and Country House were an important part of the English cultural synthesis in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in part in the eighteenth. But they don't add to their position by claiming that this court and country-house culture

represented the most important part of that synthesis, or by denying that the nineteenth century saw an almost complete collapse of country-house culture, as the eighteenth century did of court culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURE AND AGRICULTURE

I.

"FOR the twentieth century the terms Culture and Agriculture connote entirely different, unrelated worlds. It is the aim of this book to suggest that this antithesis is false...." Thus Messrs. C. G. Hutchinson and Frank Chapman in their foreword to an anthology, *Village Life and Labour*, which came out in 1940 and which consisted of passages from the writings of Cobbett, Richard Jefferies, George Sturt (who wrote mostly under the name of George Bourne), Adrian Bell, A. G. Street, and others.

"Others" also applies to the aim of the editors; for if the Common Man of the twentieth century thinks that culture and agriculture are entirely unrelated to each other, there are certainly plenty of Uncommon Men to put him right. I say "right," because, though I have, as will be seen, certain quarrels with the work of Messrs. Massingham, Murry, etc., their main position seems to me established beyond criticism. It is very tempting, no doubt, particularly when we are reading their less impressive successors, to dismiss all that "organic environment" and "roots in the soil" stuff with a city sneer, or even to talk, on the lowest level of wit, of that Bourne from which some cultural travellers never return; but we have only to remember the universally-respected William Cobbett to know that the Industrial Revolution changed the culture of England almost as obviously as it changed the face of the land.

Cobbett was not only a genius: he was representative of a large body of working people who may be said to have seen the change from agricultural to industrial England in their own life-time. No one will be so foolish, of course, as to give a definite "date" to the Industrial Revolution, which is still

taking place, but the first quarter of the nineteenth century may be said to have been the time when the change became manifest to every observer. "We must remember," write the Hammonds, "that the new towns were drawing into factory and slum men and women who had themselves passed through a revolution . . . As an experience in the individual and family lives of the men and women drawn into Manchester and Bradford, the Industrial Revolution was sudden and its consequences sweeping."

The past always looks rosy: it is the experience of all of us that the weather, for instance, seems to have altered for the worse since we were children. But we need not doubt Cobbett's essential grasp of truth when he wrote in 1835, just before his death: "If I have one wish more ardent than all other, it is this; that I, enjoying my garden and few fields, may see England as great in the world, and her industrious, laborious, kind and virtuous people as happy as they were when I was born." The writings of the Lancastrian radical, Samuel Bamford, born near Manchester in 1788—"My father was a weaver of muslin"—give a picture of the late-eighteenth-century family background that is essentially the same as Cobbett's; and I have already quoted, in my second chapter, the words of the Chartist pioneer, William Lovett, born in Cornwall in 1800, who looked back to his grandfathers' time as a period "when property was secure and working people happy and contented."

Although Lovett, as Professor Tawney reminds us, "did not know or understand the north," he understood clearly enough the breaking-up of the old family order which seemed at first to be inherent in the new industrialism: "Children forced to compete with their parents," he wrote sadly, "wives with their husbands, and the whole society morally and physically degraded to support the aristocracies of wealth and title." Like Cobbett and unlike Engels, he saw the remedy in constitutional reform, not in revolutionary violence. It is a very remarkable thing that the chief English radicals of the early nineteenth century were not only constitutionalists (as I stressed in my second chapter) but also realists in regard

to the new conditions. They never wrote a line suggesting that the new industries should be scrapped and England return to an agricultural way of life, though they recognized bitterly enough that, as Cobbett said, "The mechanic inventions, pushed to the extent that they were, were productive of great calamity to this country." But they limited themselves mainly to maintaining the need for a reformed Parliament to curb the excesses of the new profiteers. "As to politics," wrote Cobbett of his youth, "we were like the rest of the country people in England; that is to say, we neither knew or thought anything about the matter... I do not remember ever having seen a newspaper in the house, and most certainly that privation did not render us less free, happy or industrious...."

But observe the change! and observe Cobbett's own realization that the changed conditions rendered necessary a change in popular culture. Of the period 1805 to 1815 he subsequently wrote: "During all this time, the people were reading, and especially the labouring classes. So that England presented to the world this singular spectacle. The Government, the rich, the pretended learned, ignorant of the causes which were shaking society to its base, while a considerable part of the middle class and a large part of the very poorest class of all, understood these causes perfectly well." Of Cobbett's own part in the enlightenment of his countrymen, Samuel Bamford wrote: "At this time [about 1816] the writings of William Cobbett suddenly became of great authority; they were read on nearly every cottage hearth in the manufacturing districts... He directed his readers to the true cause of their sufferings—misgovernment; and to the proper corrective—parliamentary reform." In the 'thirties we find Lovett on the same tack; and with Lovett, of course, his mentor Francis Place and other Chartists of the reform school.

Halévy and the Hammonds are right in placing stress on the pacific influence of Methodism, but the influence of one man —Cobbett—must have been nearly as great during the critical period 1810-35. Although the Hammonds are wrong, I

believe, in emphasizing the difference between Cobbett and Lovett: "Cobbett who idealized the past the peasant was losing, and Lovett who idealized the future that he saw in the workman's grasp"—for, as we have seen, Lovett looked back with regret to his grandfathers' time and Cobbett turned from recalling with approval the absence of newspapers in his youth to writing newspapers himself for the manufacturing districts—though the Hammonds place a wrong emphasis there, I believe, they recognize the immense influence exerted by the *Political Register*. "It has been said," they write, "that when the licence enjoyed by Gibbon was claimed by Carlile a new world had taken to infidelity; so when Cobbett's 'Twopenny Trash' succeeded to the *Letters of Junius* a new world had taken to politics. The characteristic of this age was the cheap pamphlet or paper written for the working man [and mostly *by* the working man]. At first this literature found its audience chiefly among London shoemakers, small tradesmen, and artisans, but in time it spread to the miners and the mill workers; Lancashire was for Church and King in 1793, but for radical reform in 1819... The mills used to turn out, ten years later, when the London coach brought Cobbett's *Register* to the Lancashire towns." "At its height," says G. D. H. Cole, "the unstamped *Register* [i.e. the twopenny edition, not subjected to the Newspaper Tax] had a sale of sixty thousand copies, and most of these copies were read, not by a single working man, but aloud in working-class houses, clubs, and branches throughout the country."

And Bamford noted that the influence of the *Register* was towards peaceful agitation and against violence; he attributed to Cobbett the abandonment of rioting among the northern weavers and the creation instead of an organized movement for Reform.

II.

Parliamentary reform, then, extension of the franchise, tax-free newspapers, public libraries, good schools for every-

one: these were some of the things that the Radicals of the early nineteenth-century fought for, as improved conditions of work and of pay in relation to hours were the chief things pressed for by the Trade Unions, their natural successors. The practical, moral policy of these working men is not only significant of the influence of Methodism—as we have noted—but is also a proof of their compromising attitude to the new industrialism. Most of the early Radicals were brought up in an agricultural environment, and, like Lovett, they often regretted the general happiness of the past. But, like Burke, they faced things as they were and saw the new problem, not in terms of how much evil to cast out, but "how much evil to tolerate." There couldn't have been anything at an earlier period so remarkable as that change in Cobbett: from the careless ignorance of politics and newspapers which he observed of the country people in his youth, and which he whole-heartedly approved, to his own "tuppenny trash," that *Political Register* which was read on nearly every cottage hearth in the manufacturing districts.

Lovett, too, came partly of agricultural stock: his mother was of a family of Cornish blacksmiths. He loathed the new industrialism, as did most of the thoughtful workmen of the time, but he never once suggested—as did O'Connor with his popular but futile Land Scheme—that anyone could escape from it. All his energies went to propaganda for the creation of new constitutional weapons to fight the new abuses. The Chartism of the reform school, though later they suffered in the defeat which the revolutionary school had brought upon them, was in its origins as much a cultural movement as a political. Labourers in the country could remain illiterate, while still drawing the essentials of culture from their environment and craft traditions; but citizens in the new industrial era, workers in the industries of the big towns, must be able to read, must have cheap, tax-free newspapers, must be able to vote, must understand the working of industrial society: that is the conclusion I draw from a study of Cobbett and Lovett together, these men covering the period of a century of overwhelming change, from 1770 to 1870.

Is this conclusion drawn by those modern writers who have most urged upon us the close connection of culture with agriculture? Do Messrs. Massingham, Murry, Duncan, etc., spend most of their time in pointing this out? They do not. They are so concerned, in their mainly excellent writings, with giving us the details of the close relation of culture with the soil that they scarcely trouble themselves about the matters that troubled Cobbett and Lovett. These Radicals were certainly troubled in mind and spirit, but they didn't remain simply troubled: they took the only decision which lay in their power; in the comparison with modern writers of the "roots in the soil" school, they strike me as having been practical persons. When we have read, for example, *Where Man Belongs*, that recent interesting book by H. J. Massingham, are we any further forward in our consideration of the problem of culture in a modern, democratic society? We are not. We have been initiated, by an expert in the subject, into the organic order of the pre-industrial society of England; we have learnt how much Shakespeare and Jane Austen owed to an agricultural environment which they shared with illiterate craftsmen whose names are legion, but unknown; we have learnt, in admirable detail, of the close connection of the small manor house with the village community, and of the craftsmen still existing in obscure corners of our land.

But Mr. Massingham appears to think that the industrial worker of the present age is consciously trying a wrong way of life. So many writers in the *Adelphi*, too, dwell on the "sin" of divorcing work from life. But if a person is born into industrial society, as most of us are to-day, and if he finds, as he must find if he has any intelligence at all, that his work, which in most cases he cannot possibly alter, is boring, non-creative work (even more boring than hoeing turnips), how is it a "sin" for him to devote most of his interest to his leisure time? Cobbett and William Lovett must have known as much about the old village community as do Messrs. Massingham, Murry, Williamson, Duncan, etc., but they recognized that that form of life was gone for good for millions of people, the majority of the nation, and that another way

of life, not deliberately chosen, but a way of life that could—and can—be bettered by deliberate effort, must take its place.

In recognizing what was under their nose, they didn't sniff at it and turn away, as Mr. Massingham turns away from contact with nine-tenths of present-day English society. The country folk could do very well without political knowledge and without newspapers, Cobbett observed; but the new industrialism brought new problems, problems which could only be resolved by political knowledge on the part of the mass of the industrial population and a growth of new industrial responsibility to take the place of the old village and craft responsibility. Hence the *Political Register*, and the efforts of the Government to kill it; hence the agitation for a free Press; hence Chartism and the growth of the Trade Unions. Lovett saw that the new industrialism was ruining the institution of the family; but he didn't escape the problem by writing nostalgic books about his Cornish childhood, he worked for the reform of the new conditions. He must have said in his heart: there is no reason why an industrial society should not be a good society, even a cultured society, providing it become, in the first place, *democratic*. The old agricultural order was hierarchic, and Mr. Massingham lays great stress upon the virtues of this system—unlike Richard Jefferies (not to mention George Bourne himself!), whose irony was chiefly directed against it, who hated the class-distinctions of the old village community and who exulted that the rule of the squire and the parson was visibly decaying.

III.

That there was more essential democracy in some parts of the feudal order than in some parts of *soi-disant* democratic societies I can well believe. But a system that lent itself so easily to corruption must have had something wrong with it. Who *began* the Enclosures? Not the nineteenth-century *nouveaux riches*, but the sixteenth-century *nouveaux riches*, long before the Industrial Revolution. At least, they began

it on a large scale; but it goes back further still, to the feudal lords themselves. The Hammonds, in their chapter on Enclosures in *The Age of the Chartists*, not only cite a famous case of 1603, but say there is no reason to think that in rural times lords of the manor were less acquisitive. "We hear less about it because the educated opinion of the day was all in favour of enclosing, and not anxious to protest against technical illegalities." And before the "enclosing movement" of the sixteenth century brought its crop of evictions, economic forces had long been at work breaking up the village community into large holders and small. The growth of large customary tenancies was a well-marked movement which went on quite apart from any encroachment by manorial authorities on the customary land.

Mr. Massingham makes much of feudal rights, but a distinction must be drawn between the legal framework of rural life and its economic tendencies. Behind the stiff legal framework of the manorial organization there was a tendency for property to pass into the hands of the most prosperous tenants, and there was a sort of primitive commercialism even at a time when commercial ideas had little influence over the methods of agriculture. The organization of the manor was compatible with a good deal of shifting of property among the customary tenants, and an alteration in its arrangements began at an early date without any external shock. The economic rigidity of rural life in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was much less than is suggested by the stiff and unchanging legal forms.

There is also to be considered the progress of enclosure among the peasantry themselves. By a slow process of attrition, which went on quietly from one generation to another, peasants formed compact fields out of scattered strips and substituted land surrounded by hedges for rights of grazing over the common pasture and waste. Thus subsequent enclosing by lords and large farmers was not so much a movement running counter to existing tendencies as a continuation on a larger scale, and with different results, of developments which in parts of England were already at work.

Absentee landlords and parsons—to take another point—were not the creation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: they are protested against in the pages of *Piers Plowman*. The history of the Peasants' Revolt in the fourteenth century shows clearly that the revolutionists hated, as the peaceful Langland hated, the power of the lawyers—or, rather, of those lords, temporal and spiritual, who used the legal jargon of the lawyers to cover up their jobbery and repression. "Langland's complaint is not merely that the poor want food and raiment," wrote Arthur Burrell, the editor of the *Everyman* modern version of *Piers Plowman*; "it would appear from him that they needed protection against themselves and against the great. The adulteration of food and drink, the want of the poor man's lawyer, the general corruption and deceit all round him, the extremes of luxury and penury—these are the things that wring his heart . . The poor man, being poor and unversed in the ways of bribery, could get no lawyer to help him. There was no man to set the poor right in the usage of the law courts, civil and ecclesiastical."

Langland, of course, was writing during a period of unrest; but a social historian or a student of culture has to take the rough with the smooth when he considers a certain order of society in the past. Mr. Massingham has given us the best side of the old rural order, reminding us—and the reminder is necessary—that some of the essentials of democracy could, and did, exist within the feudal framework; but, while he doesn't explicitly deny that there also existed a rougher side, he seems to think that it didn't matter very much and that even the conservative Langland must have erred on the side of intolerance. "Extremes of luxury and penury": that was Langland's observation of late fourteenth-century England—and also the observation by the Franciscan Salimbene on thirteenth-century Italy. It is idle to say that Langland's gloomy picture was due entirely to the Black Death of 1349 and the vicious wastefulness of the French campaign. There must have been something in the very tissue of the old feudal order which resulted in corruption and led to "extremes of

luxury and penury" ; and Jefferies, I believe, knew what that something was. Feudalism, though at its best an admirable system of mutual rights and obligations, suffers from the same inherent defect as dictatorship. It works smoothly enough so long as tradition is sufficiently strong to force a lord to recognize his own obligations to his peasants, as theirs to him ; but once there occurs (as there is bound to occur from time to time) a lord weak or vicious, who by his example weakens the tradition, and once a catastrophe like the Black Death or the French wars reduces labour, then we get on the one hand dismissal of old obligations and on the other crippling statutes enforcing penury and leading to revolt and counter-repression.

Observe, too, the contrast between Langland's view of fourteenth-century England and Cobbett's view of eighteenth-century England. Both were contained within the old rural order, in so far as the new industrial development in its full force had not yet arrived. But if Cobbett had observed the injustices and the poverty which Langland observed of his time, then certainly he would have spoken of it without mincing his words. " Extremes of luxury and penury " were what he observed of the new industrial society, but not of the old rural order of his boyhood. Matters were very far from being ideal in eighteenth-century England, as we know both from modern historians and contemporary literature ; but the social student of the period—in the words of Messrs. Cole and Postgate's book *The Common People*—" is forced to catalogue a series of convincing reasons for discontent, and then to record contentment." It appears that rural society must have changed a good deal between Langland's time and Cobbett's, and that, despite the Enclosures of the sixteenth century and after, the change was mainly for the good

IV.

It seems that the conditions of rural life improved after the collapse of the feudal tradition and with the growth of demo-

cracy. I believe this is largely true, on balance, but all change in human affairs involves a loss of something valuable, as well as a good riddance of something bad. It is Mr. Massingham's insistence on the merits of the old order, and his steadfast refusal either to see its drawbacks or to admit any merits in the new, that is so objectionable to anyone anxious to have that balanced view which is essential for a proper understanding. Jefferies may not have had the detailed historical knowledge on some points that Mr. Massingham possesses; but, like Cobbett and Lovett, he was a realist and recognized that the past was dead. "I cannot regret the mediaeval days," he wrote, perhaps with Langland among others in mind: "I do not wish them back again, I would sooner fight in the foremost ranks of Time." He wanted the latest mechanism for agriculture and the latest amusements and opportunities for "keeping in touch with the mental life of the time" to be more accessible to the villagers. He wanted "the light railway to call at the farmyard gate" and looked forward to the time when villages should own themselves and have the right to buy back land from the landowners at a reasonable price. Mr. Massingham would agree with some of these objectives; but is there the slightest excuse for his supercilious attitude to the modern urban-dwellers? "They are populations rather than persons," he writes loftily, "and they do the same things because of themselves they do nothing. They do what their industrial economy tells them to do. What they are told to do has nothing to do with what they would naturally choose to do, and in past ages could do, and loved to do by virtue of being human beings. Doing the same things day after day, they are bored—bored, as the saying is, to death; and death plays a very large part in modern civilization. It is mainly concerned with inorganic quantities. These are predictable because they always operate in the same way. So do the people who manipulate them. So hate abounds . . ."

I have never found "hate abounding" in big cities; probably Mr. Massingham has never found it—save in theory. What I have found is mostly kindness, as Dickens found it in

Victorian London and as Mr. Orwell found it on the road to Wigan Pier. The boredom of modern life, though much exaggerated in the novels of Graham Greene, is true enough, but the "abounding hate" is the rhetorical reaction of a superficial observer. Massingham has no *patience* with modern urban life: that is the root of the trouble. His keen and kindly observation deserts him when he turns from the village to the city, or from the past to the present. He can say finely of Shakespeare that his supreme creations "are so self-contained, that they burst their dramatic framework, like a fermenting home-made wine bursting its bottle . . . Nature's craftsmanship is there." This is well said, and I agree with Mr. Massingham that Shakespeare must have owed much to his rural upbringing (Massingham gives some interesting examples of Warwickshire idiom from the plays), but the above observation seems to me to be almost as true of Dickens, the most urban writer of all.

But these are minor matters. The chief point—the chief obvious consideration—Mr. Massingham has missed has been missed also by every other writer on the subject of culture whom I have read. Mr. Massingham, in fact, "sins" in very good company: not only with that great man, William Morris, but with such distinguished modern writers as Christopher Dawson, Lucien Romier, Aldous Huxley, John Middleton Murry, and numerous others. He has forgotten the population of this country—or, rather, he has failed to draw all the obvious conclusions from a study of its "notorious" increase. It is against that very notion of notoriety that I propose to tilt.

A few general facts may not be out of place, to start with. The population of England and Wales at the time of the Norman Conquest was about 1½ million. During the thirteenth century it was about 4 million. The Black Death in the fourteenth century reduced population by about a third, but in Shakespeare's time the population of England and Wales had reached about 5 million. By the beginning of the reign of George the Third the population of the entire country—including Scotland—was 7½ million. By the end of the reign of George the Third

this figure had almost doubled itself, reaching 14 million. About 1850 the population had grown to 27 million; about 1870 to 32 million; about 1890 to 38 million. To-day it is roughly 45 million.

It is evident from these figures that the progress of the population was "walking," as it were, from the fourteenth century to the mid-eighteenth. In the latter half of the eighteenth century it broke into a trot; the trot became a gallop as it sped past the milestones 1830, 1850, 1870, 1890, and not even the gravestones 1914 and 1939 could quite check its headlong career—though the introduction, so to speak, of modern methods is likely to bring it to a halt very soon. The "notorious" first big increase took place, then, at the same time as the Industrial Revolution.

Some distinguished modern writers take this coincidence to be cause and effect: they believe—incredible as it may seem—that the increase in population was actually caused by the Industrial Revolution. In *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, Christopher Dawson quotes (approvingly) this strange passage from a book by Lucien Romier: "In a hundred years the population of the world has doubled, that of Europe has tripled, and that of North America has multiplied thirty or forty times. This new humanity, *actually created by the new sources of wealth* [my italics], lives in masses and can only live in masses. If you alter one of the facts which contribute to the life of the mass, if you suppress the wealth that is being exploited, the aggregation or the unity of the individuals who together exploit this, if you take away their outlet or their profit from the collective activity, everything crumbles, the mass falls in ruins, the surplus population dies off, the children who were to be born fail to see the light of day."

That Mr. Dawson himself shares this strange opinion is seen not only by his quoting it with approval in that essay, but by another passage of his own in the same book. "It is true," he says, "that Western Europe and the United States of America advanced enormously in wealth and population, and in control over the forces of nature . . . but there was not a corresponding progress in spiritual things." This is a very

similar view, " wealth and population " going together, being both apparently aspects of the same " material progress." Aldous Huxley has said much the same thing: in *Do What You Will* he refers to " the *fact* [my italics] that machinery, by increasing production, has permitted an increase in population." This statement is perhaps the most absurd of the three —most absurdly worded, I mean, for Romier, Dawson and Huxley all make the same elementary mistake. I fancy that Mr. Huxley's more scientific grandfather—the great T.H.— would have had something to say about that misuse of the word " fact."

For, of course, it isn't a fact at all. Wealth and population don't necessarily go together, and the Industrial Revolution itself did *not* cause the vast increase in the population of Britain during the nineteenth century. Messrs. Romier, Dawson and Huxley suppose that increase of wealth means increase of population, as if by rattling two half-crowns together in one's pocket one could produce a baby. The facts are all against this theory. Not increase of wealth, but increase of medical skill, caused the vast increase in population of Britain during the early nineteenth century (after, of course, the emigration from Ireland has been deducted), as further medical knowledge and sanitary improvement caused the even greater increase later on. Quite as many children were born in wedlock— and many more outside it—in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as in the nineteenth, but comparatively few survived birth, childhood or adolescence. Small-pox, for instance, used to wipe out whole families, as it still did, though with decreasing frequency, well into the second half of the nineteenth century—and as similar diseases still do in some parts of the world.

If wealth, and not medical skill, caused increase of population, we should expect to find the richest people with the biggest families, whereas it is common observation—and always has been—that the poorest parents have most children.

Nor does congregating in big cities, round the sources of wealth, produce more population in terms of family units than village or gipsy life. When the Irish emigrated to Britain

and North America in the nineteenth century, the number of Irish people in the world wasn't increased thereby, except in so far as they shared in the general benefits of improved medical skill; the population was simply transferred and Ireland itself severely reduced. We see the same thing in England: the massing in big cities meant the depopulating of the villages and small towns, a transfer of population covered up to some extent by the rapid increase of population generally, caused by one thing and one alone—the improvement in medical science, aided a little later on by an improvement in city and village sanitation.

V.

Of course, it appears absolutely incredible on the face of it that such conditions as those obtaining in the industrial areas during the early nineteenth century should have resulted in a general increase of population. We all know our Dickens, and a good many of us our Kingsley, Charles Reade and Mrs. Gaskell. But we make the mistake—the perfectly natural, human and creditable mistake—of contrasting that grim state of affairs with the comparatively healthy present. (Though much remains to be done.) We don't often trouble to compare the health—which is not necessarily the same as the happiness (the acute remark of Messrs. Cole and Postgate is relevant here)—of the nineteenth century with that of the eighteenth (to go no further back). The census returns of 1801, 1811 and 1821 prove that in every county of England without exception the population had increased. And according to statistics gathered in a manufacturing district, the death rate in 1780 amounted to a fortieth of the population. It was only a fifty-fourth in 1810, and was to fall to a sixtieth in 1830. We can hardly deny that the conditions of life among the poorer classes were even worse before the establishment of the factory system, which concentrated their misery in a few large towns, where it was exposed to the universal gaze and became a public scandal.

I don't wish to deprive the nineteenth century of the moral credit (the reader will remember that I made a special point of it in my last chapter, when contrasting the Victorian age with the Elizabethan-Jacobean); but something has to be added. The seeking for remedies showed an admirable spirit, or more likely a pricking of conscience; but the devising of remedies was dependent upon the vast increase in medical and sanitary knowledge which was one of the chief features of scientific advance in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth.

So the problem is more difficult than such distinguished writers as Romier, Dawson and Huxley conceive It is the "mass" quality of modern civilization that is the trouble, as they recognize—and as Mr. Massingham recognizes—but the problem hardly becomes clearer if we ascribe the increase of population to economic factors that had nothing to do with it. We could soon reduce the population of this country to the eighteenth century level: all that would be needed would be to destroy post-eighteenth century medical and sanitary knowledge, so that out of every five children born three or four would fail to survive childhood and so that recurrent plagues would again sweep through our towns and villages, as they did in the good old days of merrie, typhous, small-poxed England. It is not only from social documents that we derive this knowledge of the painful past: literature is full of it, from Langland to Dickens, and we have still a long way to go. Admittedly, what one has never known, and can hardly conceive, one doesn't feel the lack of; but who can doubt that out of every ten mothers who muttered "God's will be done" over the grave of a loved child, nine at least must have felt that, in some way or other, the disease could have been mastered or prevented?

It is very easy, in the twentieth century, to become a bit impatient with the halo which now surrounds the heads of the medical profession. Just as the favourite Victorian "middle-brow" novel was a story about a young clergyman, devoted to God, who wins through against worldly opposition to a position of trust and reverence in a country parish, saving many souls by the way and marrying in the last chapter of the third volume the youngest daughter of a rural dean; so the typical

modern circulating-library novel is a story about a young doctor, devoted to medicine, who wins through against cynical opposition to a position of trust and reverence in the slum quarter of an industrial town, saving many bodies by the way and marrying in the last chapter of the book-of-the-film the only daughter of a kidney specialist. There is something rather horrible, besides, about the sight and smell of a modern hospital ward, not to mention a modern operating theatre: there seems something inhuman about that clean efficiency, something even a trifle sinister about the calm purity of the sisters and the obvious capability of the jovial doctors. One doesn't have to be Bernard Shaw to find oneself a shade sceptical over the popularity of the contemporary doctor's legend.

But we tend, I think, to contrast that clean efficiency with a mere day-dream of the past, with a past peopled exclusively by brawny laughing shepherds and buxom-breasted milkmaids ; whereas the true comparison is with the Crimean hospitals before Florence Nightingale took over, or with a wounded sailor having his leg amputated by rough methods, the tar-brush waiting by, or with the *Journal of the Plague Year*, or with the people dying like flies in any epidemic of the past that was " the mere despair of surgery."

So our irritation at the more absurd aspects of the modern medical fetish should not lead us into the error of Christopher Dawson, in seeing nothing but " material " gain in the period of the Industrial Revolution. For though the increase of population was not due to the new sources of wealth, the Industrial Revolution could not have succeeded without that increase, and the inventive genius which made possible the Industrial Revolution and the medical development which made possible its continued success were both features of the scientific progress of the eighteenth century. It is easy to make too much, like Dickens's Mr. Gradgrind, of the benefits of an increase of population and expectancy of life ; but when we talk with Dawson, Romier, Huxley and others of " an enormous advance in wealth and population," we are mixing up spiritual matters with material. It is true that, as I say, the science which made possible the Industrial Revolution

made possible also the progress in medical skill and sanitation, but the latter aspect was not developed for material profit, as was largely the former,; it was developed for motives which can only be called spiritual—or, if you like, mental combined with spiritual.

The growth of population has posed many new problems, mostly social and political up to recent times, mostly cultural I believe to-day ; but Mr. Dawson is clearly wrong in thinking that this growth was due to the material qualities of science : it was due mainly to the spiritual qualities of science, to the belief, acted upon, that it is better for five children out of five to reach maturity than for four to die at birth, in childhood or at adolescence. It is rather hypocritical of us to shake our heads over the fact that the doctors, scientists, engineers, reformers of the nineteenth century did not forsee the problems that growth of population would bring. Sufficient for their day was the goodness thereof ; we would still be climbing trees had any pioneer, with a vision of the future, relinquished his experiments. It is essential to realize that the solution of one problem or series of problems breeds another, often of a totally different sort and needing a different kind of intelligence to solve. The instance I have mentioned is a particularly good example : the solution of the medical problem led to problems of society and politics and culture which needed—and need—other intelligences and sensibilities to solve. Another instance, perhaps the most striking of all, is that of democracy itself. It was good that feudalism, an essentially barbarous system which nevertheless did beneficial work in its time, should disappear ; but the development of democracy didn't mean that the problems of society were finally solved. Indeed, such are the problems of democracy that one can feel a sneaking sympathy for those who, like Messrs. Massingham, Murry, Shewring, Duncan, look back with regret to the good old feudal days—seeing themselves, of course, as knights or priests or honoured craftsmen, never as harmless old women burnt for witchcraft or serfs branded for a paltry offence.

But we should have the courage of our traditions : the problems that have been solved seemed at the time—who

can doubt?—as perplexing as ours do now. Who could have divined, for example, that some of the main problems of medical science, the despair of humanity for thousands of years, would be solved within a century? Yet so it was, between Simpson and Curie, between Pasteur and Fleming. Who could have foreseen, again, that the illogical constitution of the United Kingdom would work as well as it has done in the last two centuries? As for Columbus, he didn't even know that he had discovered a new continent.

It is true enough, as I hinted in my introductory chapter, that democracy has been built upon the machine, but only in so far as a democratic way of life and universal literacy were the obvious answers to the initial problems of the Industrial Revolution and the vast increase in population. The feudal days to which so many of our modern writers wish to return, seeing in them the only "natural" way of life, were days in which the population of England and Wales was unnaturally limited—by premature death—to 4 million people. Even in the period just before the Industrial Revolution the population of Great Britain was only between 7 and 8 million, whereas it would have attained—if modern medical and sanitary knowledge had been available to the thirteenth century onwards—to at least 100 million. When Mr. Murry urges us all to return to the soil, I sometimes wonder whether his early education included elementary mathematics. True, I don't know myself the entire acreage of agricultural land in this country, even if we take into account the land that could probably be reclaimed for farming purposes within twenty years or so. But I should very much doubt whether British farming, thus extended, could support 40 million people. Imagine 20 million farm-labourers all hoeing turnips! It makes one's back ache, even to think of it.

Farming may have been carried on less economically in the rural past, but I don't suppose there was a great deal of land wasted. And this country managed to find work on the land for about 5 million people, including dependants, in the eighteenth century. If the scientific progress that produced the increase of population had not also produced, at the same

time, the Industrial Revolution, then there would have been large-scale emigration to Australia and Canada throughout the nineteenth century.

True, we are all of us dependent upon the farmer for the food we eat; but in the nineteenth century—and, indeed, up to quite recent times—there was ample food being harvested and slaughtered in the world to satisfy the demands, not only of the vast agricultural areas themselves, but of the very few countries (Britain was for many years the only one) which had become predominantly industrial. The natural spread of medical science from Europe and America to less fortunate continents—I am quite aware that large regions of Africa and Asia have been barely touched as yet—has resulted in that contrast between increase of population and stationary or decreasing food supply which is engaging the attention of Sir John Boyd Orr.

No doubt the Industrial Revolution has hastened this process, but it would in any case have arrived: the area of the earth is limited, but the population increases every year. Mr. Murry has an English village lovingly in mind when he tells us to return to the soil; but if we all took his advice, the majority of us would have to emigrate to Australia. There is simply not room for us on the farms of Britain, and in course of time there would not be room for us on the farms of Australia and New Zealand. The "notorious" decline of the British population that statisticians foresee in the future will have its obvious disadvantages, but a decline in the population of the world generally may be the only answer to the problem of feeding us.

The Industrial Revolution wasn't foreseen: it grew up gradually in rural areas. It is plainly impossible to put one's finger on the time in man's long mechanical development when this genius for invention ceased to be a good thing and became a bad. As the new industries and the new medical development were aspects of the same scientific advance—however ignorant they may have been of each other—it is surely better to take them together in a balanced view: to be thankful for the one and to try to reform the bad features of the other.

Mr. Massingham makes a great deal of the harmful influence

of the nineteenth-century Enclosures. But there again the immense growth of population—from 7½ to 14 million during the reign of George the Third—has to be taken into account. Particularly is this necessary in considering the early years of the century, because the increasing mumbers had to be fed while as yet there was little importation of foodstuffs from abroad. The problem wasn't completely solved, of course, and was complicated by the war; but it led to the reorganization of farming, to the development of agriculture on more scientific lines, and so to the enclosing of those open fields and commons which had escaped the previous enclosing of feudal times and the sixteenth century. People like Mr. Massingham don't inform us whether the policy of non-enclosure would have enabled agriculture to feed the extra 6½ million.

VI.

There are few writers of the near past whom I respect more than I do William Morris. Most of his views—some of them, of course, are the views of his acknowledged master John Ruskin—seem to me as reasonable as they were obviously the result of deep reflection and a humane heart. If for my present purposes I dwell on some considerations he never took sufficiently into account, I do so partly because the criticisms I have ventured to make of the opinions of modern writers such as Massingham and Murry might seem to be mere contemporary skirmishes without the tackling of that central tradition of Ruskin-Morris upon which most of the modern ideas of culture and agriculture, labour and handicrafts, are based.

"Suppose," Morris once said, "people lived in little communities among gardens and green fields, so that they could be in the country in five minutes' walk, and had few wants, almost no furniture, and no servants, and studied the (difficult) arts of enjoying life, and finding out what they really wanted; then I think we might hope civilization had really begun."

The reply of most people to this vision of an earthly paradise would be, I fancy, the ironical repetition: "Yes, just sup-

pose . . ." But a more serious criticism—apart from any refutation of the curious view that to have no servants would be a change for the majority—is the fact that a civilization of the kind described was as impossible in the Britain of Morris's time, with its 35 million people, as it is to-day. Such an ideal would have been a practical proposition in the Middle Ages, with the population unnaturally restricted to a few million people, but what size country would be required for Morris's civilization to be undertaken by 35 million I cannot even imagine. The majority in modern England, in Morris's time and ours, live in big cities, without much elbow-room; and while "gardens and green fields" are practicable in the sense of private gardens and public parks, "the country in five minutes' walk" must remain a dream.

Not that Morris idealizes the Middle Ages in quite the same way as Mr. Massingham: like Jefferies, he believed above all in democracy and saw little to commend in the system of hierarchy. We learn from Mrs. Meynell's biography that he had only one bone to pick with the admirable ancient who looked after his Oxfordshire home, and that was "the automatic and feudal manner in which his hand rose to his forehead at every word he uttered when talking to his 'betters'." We have seen Morris's view of the Dark Ages and his assertion that the history of the people was the history of art. Speaking of the art treasures in the London museums, he once said: "Wonderful as these works are, they were made by 'common fellows,' as the phrase goes, in the common course of their daily labour. Such were the men we honour in honouring those works. And their labour—do you think it was irksome to them? Those of you who are artists know very well that it was not; that it could not be. Many a grin of pleasure, I'll be bound—and you will not contradict me—went to the carrying through of those mazes of mysterious beauty, to the invention of those strange beasts and birds and flowers that we ourselves have chuckled over at South Kensington. While they were at work, at least, these men were not unhappy, and I suppose they worked most days, and the most part of the day, as we do . . ."

These points are most important for modern men to note, but they leave out of account those people in past times who were not craftsmen at all. Admittedly, in a largely agricultural society, the labour of even the lowest serfs must have been more akin to craftsmanship than the labour of most people in a modern factory, but it gives a false impression to lay all the stress on "the carrying through of mazes of mysterious beauty" and none on those who homeward trod their weary way. Farm-work is healthy work, in more than one sense, but most of it, particularly in those ages which Morris was thinking of, was very laborious indeed and could only have been made tolerable without the petty laws and the overseeing which actually went with it. The life of the average serf in the Middle Ages may have been more like the life of the slave in the American plantations than like the ideal picture which even Morris presents. At any rate, if we see it as a mixture of the good and the bad, of craftsmanship and serfdom, we shall probably have a more accurate notion than if we lay all the stress on either side. And neither Morris nor his successors mentions the most obvious thing about the early Middle Ages they so overpraise; they know their Langland and therefore don't commit the blunder of praising the later Middle Ages overmuch, but to the average Englishman of the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Morris was particularly keen on the twelfth) surely the most evident evil to be borne was that of foreign, military domination? What was the life of the average native when Stephen and Matilda were fighting their civil war in the 'thirties and 'forties of the twelfth century, that time "when God and His saints slept"? And the various forest laws, and other Norman barbarisms, are about as worthy of commendation as the conditions in the Nazi concentration camps.

The Ruskin-Morris axiom—"That thing which I understand by real art is the expression by man of his pleasure in labour"—might seem to be accurate enough, if we are talking in ideal terms. But in every age some people, at any rate, must have had to labour at work which was necessary but uninteresting, though it is perfectly true that the more complicated the

society the greater the burden of inartistic toil. "There *is* dull work to be done," admitted Morris in a lecture on the decorative arts in 1877, "but now only let the arts which we are talking of beautify our labour, and be widely spread, intelligent, well understood both by the maker and the user, let them grow in one word *popular*, and there will be pretty much an end of dull work and its wearing slavery; and no man will any longer have an excuse for talking about the curse of labour, no man will any longer have an excuse for evading the blessing of labour."

But, even if Morris's ideas were put into practice in the manufacture of useful things, that employment only caters for a small minority of men in modern England, both in Morris's day and ours. No decorative arts can affect the working lives of miners, railwaymen, post-office sorters, clerks, dustmen, dockers, shop-assistants, and millions of others; and most of these professions would be needed in any complicated society, whether Communist (Morris was for a short time a member of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation) or capitalist. Morris might have retorted that he preferred an uncomplicated society; but he could have had that only on its own terms: for example, by having three or four children out of every five dying before maturity, as in the eighteenth century and all centuries preceding. Morris never took into account the fact that it was the vast increase of population which created modern society and the complications arising from it.

"To plough the earth, to cast the net, to fold the flock," he said in a later lecture,—"these, and such as these, which are rough occupations enough, and which carry with them many hardships, are good enough for the best of us, certain conditions of leisure, freedom and due wages being granted. As to the bricklayer, the mason, and the like—these would be artists, and doing not only necessary, but beautiful, and therefore happy work, if art were anything like what it should be. No, it is not such labour as this which we need to do away with, but the toil which makes the thousand and one things which nobody wants, which are used merely as the counters for the competitive buying and selling, falsely called commerce—

I know in my heart, and not merely by my reason, that this toil cries out to be done away with."

Even if this happened, though, there would still remain masses of laborious and inartistic work which Morris does not mention. The lives of an agricultural labourer, of a fisherman, of a shepherd, would indeed be pleasant enough, were the conditions which Morris makes universally granted. And I know from conversation that bricklayers, masons, house-painters, etc. do mostly like their work, under certain conditions, even when they are engaged upon jerry-built eyesores, much more, of course, upon houses fit for Eros to live in. But, while these make up a fair number of modern workers, both in Morris's time and ours, there remain others, most of whose toil does not come under the counters of commerce. Presumably, in Morris's perfect society, coal would still be needed, and so coal-miners; dust would still be a nuisance and a disease-carrier, and so dustmen; correspondence would still be a pleasure and a duty, and so postmen and sorters; harmless people, like Palme Dutt, would still need to be protected, and so policemen; drains would still have to be cleaned out, and so sewerage-workers; roads would still need repairing, and so road-menders; wages would still have to be paid, for Morris has mentioned it, and so clerks; people and goods would still have to be transported, and so engine-drivers, firemen and cleaners . . . So one could go on, listing the necessary work of any but a primitive and sparsely populated society, and none of the jobs mentioned or mentionable is pleasurable work normally and none has much connection with craftsmanship.

Take my Uncle ————. He goes to work every night at twelve, and his job, a comparatively easy job, usually given to Undergound workers in their last years of service, is to fill all the lamps on a certain number of parked trains, in readiness for the morning's traffic. Now it happens to be a job with easy hours (to make up for night duty): you can either dawdle, and take five or six hours over it, or work hard and finish in about three or four. But, either road, there's nothing in the least craftsmanlike about it; how could there be, when it's simply the monotonous labour of filling each of several hundred

lamps with the correct amount of oil? It is a job that could truly be called responsible, since the safety of thousands of passengers depends upon these lights, but it is equally a job with no breath of variety in it.

Or take post-office sorting. I have done it myself, like many others, on Christmas-rush occasions, and my Uncle ———— did it for forty years. This must be one of the most monotonous jobs on earth, and no machine, short of a Capek robot, could do it for you; for while a machine can frank letters, it can't read writing, memorize places and slip letters into appropriate pigeon-holes. It is a job that must be done by hand, but there's no handicraft in it, and little variety. And this, too, is a highly necessary and responsible position.

Sometimes, when Mr. Murry takes time off from urging us all to return to the soil, he writes of the high cost of stamps, saying that the Government's refusal to lower postage rates is a sign of how little modern politicians care about civilized intercourse. Most of us will agree with the complaint; but what would happen if England were converted to the creed of the *Adelphi*, if we all downed our sinful tools and made tracks for the nearest farm? Admittedly, I can't tell Mr. Murry exactly how much industrial labour is required before his letter to Mr. Williamson, concerning the sins of the industrial age, is safely delivered. But postmen, sorters, porters, engine-drivers are some of the shameful, inartistic professions which serve Mr. Murry in this respect—"populations rather than persons," of course (if I may return to the words of Mr. Massingham), "doing what their industrial economy tells them to do. It is mainly concerned with inorganic quantities. These are predictable because they always operate in the same way. So do the people who manipulate them. So hate abounds . . ." etc. I don't think myself that hate abounds in the intricate network of postal machinery, for instance, but if we take Mr. Massingham at his word, then clearly that hate, that boredom to death, is necessary before Mr. Massingham's love can be transmitted to Mr. Murry, Mr. Murry's to Mr. Williamson, and Mr. Williamson's to "Sir Oswald Mosley.

VII.

Morris's "necessity for making labour sweet to all men" hardly enters into practical politics in a modern society, however independent of the Stock Exchange. If he failed in his practical life (a democrat, as Holbrook Jackson says, whose work appealed mainly to the fashionable rich), it was partly owing to the several mistakes he made in a view of life which was, in general, or so it seems to me, evidently correct. "He had the courage," says Jackson, "to make no compromise with the social system he condemned." Brave words, and largely true. But Cobbett made a compromise; William Lovett made a compromise. And this difference in attitude was not due entirely to the fact that Cobbett and Lovett came of working-class stock, while Morris (to quote Jackson again) "was rich enough by inheritance to gratify any whim." It wasn't merely the rich man's ignorance of certain social problems: Morris was a practical man, but there were some important considerations he never took sufficiently into account.

He would have preferred a less complicated society, but he could have had that only on its own terms. He might have accepted those terms, but what he never realized was that such a choice could not be his, or anybody else's, in real life. Only in abstraction can we choose between a hard but comparatively interesting way of life, with the prospect of losing our John or Susan by disease, and a comparatively easy but boring machine existence, with our John and Susan surviving to partake in that existence. In real life we are born into a certain order of society, and it shows cowardice rather than courage to maintain we have been born out of our due time. Some compromise is inevitable between the ideal society of our imagination and the actual possibilities our present society presents. Morris seems to have thought of this when he admitted in a lecture at Birmingham that the nineteenth century "has made it possible for many a man to live free, who would in other times have been a slave, body or soul, or both"; and when he gave this typical illustration of the mingled good

and bad of his age: "I know that England and the world could very ill afford to exchange the Birmingham of to-day for the Birmingham of the year 1700: but surely if what you have gained be more than a mockery, you cannot stop at those gains, or even go on always piling up similar ones. Nothing can make me believe that the present condition of your Black Country yonder is an unchangeable necessity of your life and position: such miseries as this were begun and carried on in pure thoughtlessness, and a hundredth part of the energy that was spent in creating them would get rid of them."

There Morris speaks with the voice of Cobbett and Lovett, as in that passage where he asks his audience: "What remedy can there be for the blunders of civilization but further civilization? . . . Doubtless education will both grow in quality and in quantity; so that it may be, that as the nineteenth century is to be called the Century of Commerce, the twentieth may be called the Century of Education."

It is in remarks such as these that I prefer to see the true Morris, and I believe that the main reason for his more celebrated attitude of defiant melancholy—"no compromise" and "born out of my due time"—was his restricting of the arts to the plastic arts. "I have spoken of the popular arts," he once said, "but they might all be summed up in that one word Architecture: they are all parts of that great whole, and the art of house-building begins it all . . . Architecture would lead us to all the arts, as it did with earlier men: but if we despise it and take no note of how we are housed, the other arts will have a hard time of it indeed."

It was quite a legitimate use of the word "arts" that Morris mostly used, but it was unfortunate that he should not have realized that, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the arts connected with architecture were bound to decline, but that this did not necessarily mean a similar decline in literature and music, or even in painting. As a matter of fact, while music did share in the decline of the architectural arts (painting is a more difficult subject to estimate, for the first native school, as we have seen, was almost contemporary with the industrial movement), literature remained worthy of its traditions, the

Victorian novel being an outburst of creative energy only to be compared, in English literary history, in its variety and popular appeal, with the Elizabethan-Jacobean drama. It seems that Morris was partly wrong when he said that " the death of one art means the death of all," for the inartistic Victorians produced a literature as great in its own way as the superb architecture of the illiterate mediaeval craftsmen. Nearly as popular, too, and this is an addition really astonishing if we remember the growth of the population and the manner in which the Industrial Revolution had unsettled family life. Dickens was read, as the Hammonds note, by gentlemen in luxurious libraries and by the poorest-paid of Northern operatives; and he was read equally, of course, by the many grades of society in between. " How can I ask working-men passing up and down these hideous streets day by day to care about beauty ? " asked Morris once in London. Yet the fact remains that there were many, if a minority, who did care about such things, who read their Dickens and their Milton, their Bible and their Bunyan, their Cowper and their Burns ; who appreciated Hogarth and Cruikshank ; who studied the stars and bought tattered copies of works on astronomy from the second-hand bookstalls ; who coupled " self-improvement " with their political activities. There were as many such in the ranks of the Populace as among the Philistines and the Barbarians, on Arnold's reckoning ; and his evidence only confirms what we read in the autobiographies of the working-men themselves.

Morris had a cultured mind, he was a democrat, and he believed that the history of the people was the history of art. But his concentration on the architectural arts led him to attach too much importance to the " hideous streets " and not enough to the actual people who passed up and down them. That was partly the reason for the irony of his career : " He lived and worked for the common people," says Jackson, " but his poetry and romances have never been popular, and the works of his hands are the treasures of the rich "—while those of Dickens are the common possession of us all.

VIII.

I have mentioned that Morris was for a short time a member of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation. His views were evidently not those of the typical Marxist, and it is not surprising to learn that he became disappointed very soon with their procedure, as they on their side must have been baffled by his views on art and a bit shocked by his cheerful ignorance of the sacred books. His Socialism is usually dismissed nowadays with a kindly smile, but he certainly believed it followed quite naturally from his views on art. To some extent his belief, I think, was justified.

He saw the main enemy in Commerce. "To speak plainly it seems to me that the supremacy of Commerce (as we understand the word) is an evil, and a very serious one; and I should call it an unmixed evil but for the strange continuity of life which runs through all historical events, and by means of which the very evils of such and such a period tend to abolish themselves."

He proceeded to mix Ruskin with a little Marx, with the following result: "I have looked at this claim by the light of history and my own conscience, and it seems to me so looked at to be a most just claim, and that resistance to it means nothing short of a denial of the hope of civilisation. This then is the claim: It is right and necessary that all men should have work to do which shall be worth doing, and be of itself pleasant to do; and which should be done under such conditions as would make it neither over-wearisome nor over-anxious. Turn that claim about as I may, think of it as long as I can, I cannot find that it is an exorbitant claim . . . The price to be paid for so making the world happy is Revolution: Socialism instead of *Laissez faire*."

As far as the "conditions" mentioned are concerned—that men should work under conditions as pleasant as possible and that they should not be in constant fear of the sack—Morris's "claim" is simply the common demand of all nineteenth-century reformers, whether Radical or Socialist; it was the demand of Cobbett, the Chartists and the Trade

Unions, and has partly been met. There is no talk of Power either in Morris or Lovett, whereas Marxist literature talks of little else. That is probably the main difference between the reformers and the revolutionaries; but, passing over Morris's ignorance of the mood of his bedfellows, what made him think, I wonder, that the actual work of most people would become less irksome under new management? Certainly men's labour should not be dependent on the whims of the Stock Exchange, but certain minor industries—the chief being the Post Office—have been nationalized for centuries, and the work of the postmen, sorters, etc., hasn't become less boring thereby. Coal-mining may be a job "worth doing" (in the sense that it is a necessary and responsible position) but it cannot be said to "be of itself pleasant to do." It can only be made relatively pleasant by the conditions which Morris and other reformers have mentioned; the work in itself is exceedingly disagreeable, as are many other jobs in industrial society.

Mines, though, were not the creation of the Industrial Revolution. "Manufacture, like agriculture," says Halévy, "had its roots deep in the soil. Great Britain was rich in mines. There were tin and copper mines in Cornwall which had been worked from the remotest antiquity. There were copper mines in Anglesey also, and lead mines in Derbyshire, Flintshire and Cumberland. Coal mines and iron mines were the most abundant of all. There were the coal mines of Durham and Northumberland, situated to the north and south of the estuaries of the Tyne and Wear. For a long while past these coal-fields had supplied the capital by sea with the fuel necessary for its fires. There were also the coalfields of the Scottish Lowlands between Edinburgh and Glasgow, and the coal mines around Whitehaven, the source whence the Lowther and Curwen families drew their wealth . . . No disturbance was caused in 1815 by the introduction of the capitalist system into mining, for the sufficient reason that this system had to some extent always existed there . . . The heads of certain old families, such as the Lowthers in Westmorland, the Curwens in Cumberland and the Percys in Northumberland were the hereditary rulers of a realm of colleries . . . Industrial feuda-

lism blended here with agrarian feudalism. A system of ancient standing, it did nothing to disturb the existing relations between classes."

The " revolutionary " aspects Halévy sees in the appearance of a new class—the captains of industry—and in the concentration of an enormous number of workmen in a small number of large factories. Industry had its evils, of course, before the coming of the factory system. Halévy gives the example of weaving: " Unbridled competition, over-production, periods of crisis, merciless sweating of the handicraftsman—all existed in this industry before the appearance of the factory. Yet these evils are universally considered as inseparable from the modern organization of commerce and manufacture." It would appear that industry before the Industrial Revolution not only concerned a minority but had more connection with traditional craftsmanship and with village life. " Industrialism grew up," writes Dawson, " not in the continental centres of urban culture, but in the most remote districts of rural England, in the homes of nonconformist weavers and ironworkers."

There is also to be noted the mechanization of the human will that came about with the improved methods of production. " English industry before this time," write the Hammonds, " was unmethodical. Bouts of work and bouts of play used often to alternate, violent play following violent work . . . Improved methods of production involved the training of the working population in orderly and regular habits." Morris puts his finger on a very important point when he says that when he considers his life he finds out that it is under the influence of two dominating moods " which for lack of better words I must call the mood of energy and the mood of idleness: these two moods are now one, now the other, always crying out in me to be satisfied." Undoubtedly the revolt of the workers against the new mechanical developments was partly due to the discipline—almost the feudal discipline at first—that had taken the place of the old alternation of work and play which followed the mood of energy and the mood of idleness.

It is obvious that this discipline has come to stay, that no change from capitalism to socialism can affect it. As Britain

grew in population and mechanical complexity, more and more people found themselves doing specialized and rigidly disciplined jobs which were not necessarily harder in themselves, or even more boring, than the jobs of the largely rural past, but which were lacking in the variety which compensates a great deal for the labour of the countryman or the small industrial craftsman. Morris himself was a jack of all trades and a master of most, but the modern world in general is a world of specialists and no alteration of government can alter that fact.

I see, then, two main weaknesses in the Ruskin-Morris line: first, that it made no compromise—at least, in theory (though Morris, as we have seen, was sometimes admirably inconsistent)—with the actual world; and second, that by concentrating on the arts and crafts which had their prime period of beauty in the Middle Ages it tended to neglect the more conscious efforts towards culture which had largely taken their place. The two faults are, of course, connected: the deliberate blindness to the fact that most men in the modern world have to work at jobs which are not in themselves very interesting, and that no change in government can change that fact, this deliberate blindness naturally led to the overlooking of those strivings towards self-culture which are perhaps the most important aspect of Victorian civilization. When all has been reckoned with on the other side, I maintain that people in the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century did manage to adapt much of the old English culture to the new conditions. A reading of the autobiographies and memoirs of working-men of the period is not only a complete answer to Marxist cultural theories but truly a heartening reminder that the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century did not result in a general mechanical quality of *mind*. The personal and independent quality that Morris and Mr. Massingham rightly admire in the old rural culture seems to have survived in great part the change-over to large industry. It is only in the second century of the Industrial Revolution, our twentieth century, that the mechanical mind seems to have followed the mechanical conditions.

IX.

Some may say that it was only natural that the mass conditions should precede the mass mind, but we need to remember in the first place that the mechanical nature of our civilization—observed, it is true, by Carlyle as long ago as 1829—is not restricted to those who actually live in big industrial cities. Scarcely a change is noticed by the honest inquirer when he turns from the culture of the modern big city to the culture of the modern small town and village. Thousands of people must have been educated, as I was, at an elementary and secondary school in a country town in the period between the two wars, and they must have noticed, as I did, the almost exact identification of interests of the country boys with the town boys and observed how many of the former later emigrated to London or other big towns, to the cinemas, the jazz-bands, the dogs, because they were "bored to death," not with industrial civilization, but with the rural life. It is only the elder generation of villagers who have little patience with modern trends, and this impatience is largely shared by the elder generation in the big cities.

It is a mistake to assume that the modern urban population as a whole are "bored to death" with their environment. The truth of the matter is not a truth I am particularly fond of swallowing myself, but however distasteful I may find it, it is clearly this: that the vast majority of the urban population of England, which is itself the vast majority of the whole English population to-day, simply wouldn't understand the assertion that there is anything very wrong with their environment. This reaction is not a matter of social class, though many writers think it is. Dr. Joad, for instance, in that in some ways admirable book, *The Untutored Townsman's Invasion of the Country* (1946), is guilty of dividing the uncultured twentieth century into social classes: he deplores the fact that Lord Nuffield should have "introduced into the streets of Oxford regiments of working-class folk and their women, who are alike blind to the beauty and ignorant of the

traditions of the city to which they have been brought, and by their spiritual, no less than their bodily presence [I leave a space here for the *sic*-minded reader], impede the appreciation of those who value the things that belong distinctively to Oxford."

This may or may not be so, but why should folk like Dr. Joad and their women worry about the mote in the eye of Cowley Motors when half the beaming students themselves are " blind to the beauty and ignorant of the traditions of the city to which they have been brought " ? Jude the Obscure liked Oxford's church music ; a good part of the present-day undergraduate population prefer Swing, if one may go by their windows, through which stream the noises of the jungle. There is evidently no greater contrast between the buildings and the spirit of Oxford and the mental and bodily habits of the average modern working-man than between those buildings and that spirit and the mental and bodily habits of the average modern undergraduate.

The artist and poet William Morris also felt very sad about Oxford—but that was in the year 1883, when his inventive namesake, William Richard Morris, was only six years old and presumably in the scooter stage of his existence. In that year Morris gave an address on " Art under Plutocracy " at University College, Ruskin being in the chair. " When I remember," Morris said, " the contrast between the Oxford of to-day and the Oxford which I first saw thirty years ago, I wonder I can face the misery—there is no other word for it—of visiting it, even to have the honour of addressing you to-night."

Apparently, then, the beauty and spirit of Oxford had been partly destroyed by the University authorities themselves many years before it became the Latin quarter of Cowley. This was certainly Morris's opinion. In 1887 he wrote : " Oxford in those days [the eighteen-fifties] still kept a good deal of its earlier loveliness . . . Since then the guardians of this beauty and romance . . . though professedly engaged in ' the higher education ' (as the futile system of compromises which they follow is nicknamed), have ignored it utterly, have made its preservation give way to the pressure of commercial exigencies, and are determined apparently to destroy it altogether."

Dr. Joad seems to me to be falling into much the same error as Christopher Caudwell, when he assumed that the culture distinctive of the modern urban age is " proletarian " culture. A visit to an exclusive night-club would, one would imagine, be sufficient proof to the contrary ; but I can quite see where Caudwell and others went wrong. They contrasted this modern culture with the best culture of the Court and Country House in the past ; they didn't stop to think that modern culture would have been as horrifying and vulgar to Dr. Johnson as to the Earl of Chesterfield, to Blake and Burns and Dickens and Mark Rutherford as to the Four Victorian Ladies of Wiltshire. Caudwell, of course, being a Marxist, thought that the emergence of the jazz-and-Hollywood age was a pioneer step towards the proletarian revolution, whereas Dr. Joad thinks that " untutored townsmen " are to *blame* for it. Both pay a graceful compliment to their own class (that is, to themselves) by putting the responsibility for jazz and Hollywood and the Yellow Press on to the shoulders of the Lower Orders ; I suppose they would maintain that the night-club and the cabaret-show have simply caught the infection from beneath, as an aristocratic Victorian philanthropist sometimes caught small-pox from the slums . . .

But we who can face things as they are, who have seen the old-Etonian Cantabs queueing up to buy the latest jazz record at Miller's, know that the vulgarity of modern culture is not class vulgarity at all and also that the assumed boredom with modern life is a theory expressed by a comparative few. The vast majority are fairly satisfied with it, and pity their country cousins, who also pity themselves, that they are not so close to the Odeons and the dog-tracks. In the mythical world of some culture-agriculture enthusiasts, the villagers are so organically bound up with the soil as to have no need for urban amusements. The truth is that there are three complaints regularly put forward by the average villager of the under-sixty generation : (1) that the townsman has shorter hours of work ; (2) that he has better rates of pay ; and (3) that he has greater opportunities for amusement.

I don't suppose this average villager is entirely unconscious

of the compensating benefits of his lot. Though many village youths emigrate to the towns as soon as they are able there must remain a sizeable minority who recognize that farm work, though in detail often very laborious and boring, is not such a soul-destroying occupation as many jobs in factories or offices. They might not put it quite in that way, but it is pretty clear, even to an agricultural ignoramus like myself, that farm-work changes with the seasons and that, though there is nothing new in the labour for a villager of mature age, the constant variety of occupation throughout the year, afforded by the fact that farming is dependent on the seasons and the weather, is in striking contrast to many jobs in factories and offices, where a man may do exactly the same single job for years on end.

But as for that idea of "sin" which Messrs. Massingham, Murry, Duncan, etc., put forward from time to time, it seems to me to be fallacious. For instance, Mr. Murry writes in the *Adelphi*: "It is desperately difficult for the dweller in a modern city, the child of an urban and industrial civilization, to understand and sympathize with the craft of farming. If that sympathy and understanding are ever achieved, it will be a spiritual revolution. The shift of values and perspective required—from a mechanical to an organic view of reality, from the short-term to the long-term purpose, from prostration before the money-value to reverence for the concrete religious value—is tremendous." In Murry's view, then—and he speaks for the *Adelphi* movement and the culture-agriculture school in general—the average urban dweller is down on his belly before the bitch-goddess Mammon, while the average farm-labourer is full of reverence for real religious values. In short, there is an absolute contrast between the culture of the modern village and the culture of the modern city.

There isn't, and there has never been, this absolute contrast. Not only does the modern villager share a great deal of the mingled good and bad of our predominantly urban industrial civilization; the city-dweller is not nearly so cut off from the soil as Mr. Murry imagines. Hasn't Mr. Murry ever seen the allotments in the London suburbs, covered every summer

evening with railwaymen, bus-drivers, clerks, shop-assistants, etc., toiling away till dusk? Is it only the money that their wives will save by their home-grown cabbages that keeps them at it? Murry must surely know that it isn't, that in fact this money aspect hardly enters into their calculations. They must *like* gardening: that is the only explanation. Probably this preference (for many other hobbies are open to them) is partly caused by the contrasting atmosphere of their ordinary labour; but, whatever the reasons, how can it be said that the city allotment-holder or the city gardener (and such men are certainly in the majority) is ignorant of "the long-term purpose" and "the organic view of reality"? The truth, of course, is that these city railwaymen, clerks, shop-assistants, coalmen, bar-tenders, mechanics, bus-drivers, etc., were working hard on their gardens or allotments years before Mr. Murry and the *Adelphi* became "converted to the soil." What, then, are Mr. Murry and the *Adelphi* doing? They are doing the same thing as ex-Communists like Mr. Koestler, who are always on to us about the virtues of democracy. They are teaching their grandmother to suck eggs.

A man, they say, is known by his friends; he is also known by his hobbies. Whatever my own agreement with Messrs. Massingham and Murry over the contrast between the work of the farm-labourer in the past and the work of the machine-hand in the present, I must part company with them over the question of comparative spirituality. Most men to-day are born into industrial society; in other words—unless Messrs. Massingham and Murry believe in a kind of Original Sin—their life's work, apart from the details, is virtually chosen for them the moment they open their eyes on Hammersmith, Aston, Sheffield or Wigan. Their life's work cannot be said to be primarily their own choice; they don't *choose* industry or office, any more than a boy in the rural past chose farming. But hobbies are another matter: what a man does in his leisure time is largely his own preference; it is a spiritual choice, conditioned to a certain extent by circumstances but not dependent on them. And what is the chief recreation, the main leisure interest, of the average city-dweller of mature

age? The cinema, the public-house, the darts-club, the dog-track, the football-pool? All these are very popular, but the most popular of all is still the garden or the allotment.

In contrast to the sudden rural enthusiasm of the *Adelphi*, the average town-dweller has been keen on the soil ever since the Industrial Revolution removed him from more intimate contact with it. The Committee on Allotments that was set up in 1843, for instance, reported that "the desire of obtaining the tenancy of land appears to be universal among the mechanics and artisans of manufacturing towns and villages." The Hammonds write of allotments in the period 1832-1854: "The districts where the supply equalled the demand were, in fact, a very small part of the country."

The Hammonds also quote Faucher, a French visitor, as saying that one of the evils of which the poor were most conscious in Leeds about 1840 was the smoke that destroyed their little window-gardens. Dickens brings the point, as he brings most of the points, into *Hard Times*. "If you please, sir," says Sissy Jupe to the School Inspector, "I am very fond of flowers."

X.

There is also to be considered the problem of health—spiritual and physical. The "modern craze for sport," as we tend superciliously to call it, is a development, we tend to forget, that grew in proportion as the gin-shops and other activities of the nineteenth-century industrial slum receded; and this change for the better was strictly in accordance with the efforts of Lovett and other radicals and trade unionists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—not to deplore mechanism and to talk loftily of "hate abounding," but to face things as they were and try to improve conditions gradually. The shade of that "man of melancholy temperament soured with the perplexities of the world" (as Lovett was described by his mentor Francis Place) may not attend the home matches of the Arsenal, but he would certainly approve

the general popularity of the professional football team, instead of the gin-palace, professionals of an older trade, or the more brutal sports of the early nineteenth century, such as those fights in Lancashire where the right to strangle one's opponent was recognized, also to beat him to death with iron-rimmed clogs.

The conditions of existence certainly affect human life, but not quite in the direct way that some people imagine. Because the advertisements on either side the city street show the worst side of industrial society, the people passing by are not necessarily models for the commercial outlook of the advertisers. The commercial instinct is of Mr. Bounderby and Bitzer, but most of the inhabitants of Coketown were and are more akin to Stephen Blackpool, Rachel and Sissy Jupe. When Massingham and Murry equate the modern industrial city necessarily with " prostration before the money-value " and the rural past necessarily with " reverence for the concrete religious value," they are reckoning without their George Bourne, who wrote that, " In Farmer Smith's youth, however tender and quiet individual tastes may have been here and there, the general temper of the neighbourhood was bucolic—was grossly materialistic."

" God made the country, man the town " is, of course, a sentimental attitude, even to those who make great play with roots and the organic environment. But the entire argument of the rural school of cultural thought in general betrays a similar sentimentality, though I wouldn't say that I don't share some of it myself. It was D. H. Lawrence who wrote : " The real tragedy of England is the tragedy of ugliness. The country is so lovely ; the man-made England is so vile." We have all said or muttered the same thing, especially when we have seen an immense hoarding, ELOGGS IS BEST, disfiguring the landscape. But if we look at the matter just for a moment in the scientific spirit, we see that the expression, " God made the country," only applies to " man-made country," and is therefore illogical to start with. Virgin country (Britain, say, at about the time of Moses) is not the pleasant fields, the rich woods, the bridged rivers, that we

at once think of to-day and which nearly everyone really admires in his heart. " The God-made country " is a land of dense forests, treacherous swamps, shaggy hills, where reigns, as Tennyson observed, " nature red in tooth and claw." It is not the God-made country that nearly everyone admires in his heart: it is the country after several thousand years of man's intense cultivation and genius for machinery. Compared with the country as it was before man ate of the tree of knowledge, the old rural order and the modern industrial society are simply variations of the same genus. This amusing piece from A. G. Street's *A Year of my Life* (1939) is relevant here: " This morning came a letter which annoyed me on two counts. The writer first suggested that I did not ' really farm,' and then accused me of farming by unnatural methods because I milked my cows by machinery. Bless her heart, for the writer is a she, doesn't she know that it is unnatural for human beings to extract milk from the cow by any method, even unnatural for them to drink it? . . . The farmer knows that the natural bent of the hen is to lay eggs in the spring of the year, but he knows also that to make a profit from that clucking bird he must make her lay all the year round, or rather most frequently during those months in the year when her natural habit would be to cease fire, so to speak."

Lawrence truly noted the lack of " the living intuitive faculty " in the modern industrial town, compared with the old rural order; but a similar lack must have been apparent in the old rural order compared with the ancient order of nature. Even Chaucer, a poet very much at home in his own time, wrote *The Former Age*, a poem on that Golden Age when men were content with the fruits of the earth and had not yet learnt even the use of a plough.

I don't quite see the contrasts Messrs. Massingham and Murry see, either to-day or in history. In what sense, I would ask, was English culture, previous to the nineteenth century, founded on the rural order? Certainly it was partly founded on it. The language of Chaucer and Shakespeare was shaped by rustics; and the culture of the country house in its prime period was connected with the illiterate, popular culture of the

village. I agree with most of what Massingham and others have said on this subject, but I add the rider that English culture before the Industrial Revolution was based, not on the village alone, but on a fruitful contact and compromise between the village and the town.

XI.

The contribution of the town should not be despised, is not capable of being despised by anyone who stops to think for a moment. Mr. Massingham and others make much of Christianity in the rural order, for instance, but though Jesus may have been born in the village of Bethlehem, the religion he founded or inspired grew to maturity in the big cities of the Graeco-Roman Mediterranean world, and the word " pagan " is derived from the Latin *paganus*, meaning " countryman." In *Change in the Village* George Bourne pointed out that the English countryman inherited a religious tradition, partly pagan, partly Christian ; many country people, up to quite recent times, believed in elves and fairies as firmly as they believed in heaven and hell. " Primitive pagan beliefs were slow to die out, if they didn't exactly flourish," wrote Bourne in *William Smith.* " It is likely that people suffered in their wits—were sluggish, I mean, and as credulous as they were densely ignorant—for want of plentiful and brisk social intercourse . . . Will-o'-the-wisps, fairies, witches, all gave ocular proof of their existence : ghosts were not unknown. Charms, prognostications, seemed truer than Gospel truth."

The origins of the Christian festivals themselves are mostly pagan. " There is hardly a popular feast or fast of the Church," says Laurence Whistler in his book *The English Festivals*, " that is not remembered in customs older than the Church—even the crosses on the buns of Good Friday precede the Cross, in earthly time." I notice that Dawson, in his *Mediaeval Religion*, refers to " the masses of uninstructed and half-converted peasants and barbarians who had found themselves Christians, as it were without knowing it, owing to the conversion of their landlords and chieftains." In such a situation,

the course of the Church was clear: to keep the old customs, while gradually altering the beliefs.

Chaucer's world was largely rural, and though the Wife of Bath came from Bath I have always considered her famous cry of delight as typical of the half-Christian, half-pagan attitude of the old rural order. This is the passage I am referring to:

> But, lord Crist! whan that it remembreth me
> Up-on my yowthe and on my jolitee,
> It tikleth me about myn herte bote
> That I have had my world as in my tyme

The reference to Christ there is half pious exclamation, half profane delight. It can be compared with a passage from perhaps the finest of all T. F. Powys's fables, *Mr. Pim and the Holy Crumb*, where the church clerk learns for the first time the meaning of the Holy Communion, the bell for which he has rung for years: "'Mr. Tucker do tell I,' said Pim, addressing himself to Miss Jarrett, 'that the Lord God, the Creator of the world, who be named Christ by drunken folk when pub do close, do change 'Isself into they scrimpy bites of Mr. Johnson's bread that thee do take and eat up at church railings'."

The big city of Rome was the centre of Christendom for hundreds of years; still is, of course, for our Catholic friends. Nonconformity grew up in the big city of London during the seventeenth century and the eighteenth. But country tradition has always thrived on paganism, and the religion of the average rustic in the old order must have been a curious mixture of saints and pixies—far removed from the orthodox Christianity of Mr. Massingham. The pre-Christian gods don't take kindly to cities: Francis Thompson once saw Jacob's Ladder at Charing Cross and T. S. Eliot has seen the souls that heaven and hell refused flow across London Bridge and down King William Street, but apart from Eros who dominates Piccadilly by day and symbolically by night, the ancient gods and goddesses don't thrive under the shadow of St. Paul's, and I should be surprised to discover Pan in

Wigan or Comus in Liverpool. So far, indeed, from Christianity being the countryman's religion, it is of all religions the most urban, more urban than the religions of Mohammed or Buddha, to say nothing of the polygamy of the ancient Greeks, Romans or Celts.

Christopher Dawson writes in *Progress and Religion*: "Rome, more than any other city-state of antiquity, was essentially an agrarian state. The foundation of her power and of her very existence was the peasant-soldier citizen . . . But with the conquest of the Mediterranean all this was changed . . . The great cosmopolitan city of gold and marble, the successor of Alexandria and Antioch, had nothing in common with the old capital of the rural Latin state." And it was in this cosmopolitan city, not in the old rural city-state, that Christianity developed.

The culture-agriculture school are forgetting, too, that Christianity was not the only gift that Britain received from the Romans. According to the late S. E. Winbolt, the pre-eminent gift of the earlier Romans was town-life: the biggest towns in England were built on the Italian model, they possessed formal charters, their citizens (like Paul of Tarsus) were *cives Romani*. "London remained essentially a walled city in Roman shape," wrote Winbolt, "till the Great Fire of 1666." Although much of the urban tradition of the Roman Briton was lost with the downfall of the Empire and the invasion of the barbarians, yet later on the spread of Roman Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons meant also the spread of Roman law and civic virtues. It is true that feudalism, particularly after the Norman Conquest, was based on the castle and the manor-village community, but when a serf escaped from a tyrannical master he fled to the towns, where he became a free apprentice; and the power of the big cities grew enormously as the old system gradually died away. It would be foolish and ignorant to say that there was nothing good in the feudal order (it depended almost entirely on the character of the lord, as Jefferies brings out well in his novel *After London*), but in plenty of such rural orders "freedom" and "the city" were synonymous terms to the badly-treated

serf, and though book-learning was kept up in the monasteries, printing was the invention of the towns.

I do think that we should still stick to compromise, and not simply indulge in nostalgia for a past that is irrevocably gone. The countryside itself is rapidly changing; the countryfolk are drawing ever nearer to the urban outlook, as a consequence of the central newspaper, film and radio. The change involves both gain and loss, as George Bourne recognized in 1920, in the preface to his memoir of his grandfather. Those who stress the one, while ignoring the other, are not very helpful to us. The very beauty of the old villages had its drawbacks. "For all this [peacefulness], as [Uncle] John once reminded me," wrote Bourne, "we shouldn't care to go back to those old times. Whatever its romantic charm, whatever beauty sentiment may have felt to be present in it, Farnborough village had squalid features, noisome not to the eye alone. Modern tastes could not have endured it. On either side of the 'street' was an open ditch or drain, in which the sewage was often stagnant. The 'old pollard' was the scene for pig-killings—including those from Street Farm itself. Straw fires to singe the slaughtered pigs were built, in public, under the old tree. Somewhere near here stood probably the village stocks, not quite disused, even at that date . . . Most people kept pigs, and made a practice of opening the pigsties every morning and letting the occupants out into the village street for the day. There can hardly have been any pretty front gardens. Pigs browsed on the grass that grew by the open drain."

Mr. Massingham will tell us that things were better in the rural past, before the nineteenth century. It depends, of course, on what he means by the "past." Conditions were probably better in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though we have to reckon with the extremely high death rate, surely caused in part by the insanitary state of cottages; but nobody can really tell whether the housing of the poor was good or bad in, for instance, Morris's favourite century, the twelfth, for the sufficient reason that no serf's hut from that period has survived. As the Vice-President of the Architectural Association, Mr. Ralph Tubbs, puts it in his book,

The Englishman Builds: "While the barons and the Church were leaving an impressive and lasting record of their power, the majority of the people lived, struggled and died unknown and their little flimsy houses passed into oblivion with them . . . The frail little cottages of mud construction have long since crumbled and returned to earth. Only the works that were carried out in masonry still stand . . ."

The details are, admittedly, meagre; but the peasants don't appear to have had very much comfort in that period, though they were presumably not blessed with our shameful modern sensibilities. Whether they were cursed with the evil of democracy we shall never know, but there is not much doubt that when Massingham, Shewring and others talk about the happiness of the old hierarchical system they are making the unwarrantable assumption that the Reverend John Ball, in the late fourteenth century, was not only unique in his protest but merely the product of a period of exceptional unrest. "Straw-bed is no bed, and on mine lieth naught but straw," cried a poor man in the thirteenth century. "No man will ever know mine abode, so poor it is." Shortly before Wat Tyler led the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, a member of the lesser gentry, complaining of the attempts of the peasants to better their conditions, wrote: "The world goeth fast from bad to worse, when shepherd and cowherd for their part demand more for their labour than the master-bailiff was wont to take in days gone by . . . Labourers of old were not wont to eat of wheaten bread; their meat was of beans or coarser grain, and their drink of water alone. Cheese and milk were a feast to them . . . their dress was of hodden grey; then was the world ordered aright for folk of this sort."

It is pretty clear, from our admittedly scanty evidence, that there was much bitter feeling among the peasantry years before the rising of 1381. As for the nineteenth century, the rural population had probably lost a good deal of what was more valuable in the old order, but they had gained some feeling of independence. George Sand wrote of the French peasants who had grown up since the '48 Revolution: "They have advanced greatly in self-respect and well-being, these peasants

from twenty years old to forty : they never ask for anything. When one meets them they no longer take off their hat. If they know you they come up to you and hold out their hand. All foreigners who stay with us are struck with their good bearing, with their amenity, and the simple, friendly and polite ease of their behaviour. In presence of people whom they esteem they are, like their fathers, models of tact and politeness; but they have more than that mere *sentiment* of equality which was all that their fathers had—they have the *idea* of equality, and the determination to maintain it. This step upwards they owe to their having the franchise. Those who would fain treat them as creatures of a lower order dare not now show this disposition to their face ; it would not be pleasant."

England, of course, had a very different background from the French. On the Continent, ever since the time of the Roman Empire, every country was divided within itself by a duality of culture. On the one hand there were the traditions of the court and the city which, after the Renaissance, fused with one another ; on the other hand there was the peasant tradition, which preserved its own art, its own costume, its own social customs. An extreme instance of this duality is provided by Russia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where the contrast between the French-speaking official or courtier of St. Petersburg and the patriarchal peasant, living in the mediaeval world, was so intense as ultimately to cause the dissolution of Russian society. But in England, since the Middle Ages, there has been no such contrast. Our society and culture have been much more homogeneous. We have not had a peasant art or costume, because our whole culture has been partly rural, based on a fruitful contact between the village and the town.

For all that different background, though—and it is impossible to overestimate the difference—George Sand's words about the French peasantry are echoed by George Bourne about the Farnborough potters and farmers. " It was Lady Palmer, or a friend of hers," he wrote, " who, missing the expected curtsy from Farmer Smith's second daughter, went to the farmhouse to complain. ' She couldn't think what had

come over Ellen—such a nice girl. But —' How the interview went I never heard; but after it Ellen gave out that she wasn't going to curtsy to Lady Palmer. I can believe that she never did; she was my own mother."

Mr. Massingham may deplore the dropping, or rather the not dropping, of that curtsy; but most of us, I fancy, will see in the incident a typical aspect of one of those gains which counterbalance the losses upon which Massingham and others insist. Edith Olivier makes much of "ladies of leisure" in her *Four Victorian Ladies of Wiltshire*, and certainly the idea is as old as Aristotle that the upper classes should justify their freedom from labour by maintaining higher pursuits. But it needs to be remembered how *little* of English culture has been the creation of leisured people. The folk-arts were the creation of hard, even monotonous work. When court and country-house culture was in its prime, it was bound up with pursuits of state and farming. Shakespeare and Dickens were professional entertainers . . . so one could go on. In other words, not only is the opposition between highbrow and lowbrow a thing of recent date, probably without precedent in the history of civilization, the problem of leisure time is also largely new. A situation has been created, chiefly by the Industrial Revolution coming to terms with democracy, in which the vast majority of people (and, after all, the majority must be our main concern) look upon, must needs look upon, work as something almost entirely distinct from "living." Modern man increasingly lives only in his leisure hours, and these hours are in process of being increased gradually year by year.

So the problem is not quite what the roots-in-the-soil school make it out to be. Certainly we can learn much from the agricultural past, and recognize that the change we have witnessed in the last century or so has involved great losses as well as great gains. But we cannot profitably learn anything if we insist upon the benefits of the past and the drawbacks of the present, if we see the past in terms of heaven and the present in terms of hell. If, for instance, we endorse Mr. Massingham's "hate abounding" view of the modern industrial city, or accept Mr. Murry's rigid distinction between the

religious outlook of the rural past and the material outlook of the industrial present, we are thereby sinning against precisely that sense of realism which was one of the chief characteristics of the old culture. They faced their problems; we must face ours. A diagnosis of the cultural situation that takes no account of present-day realities is worse than useless. Cobbett and Lovett, we have seen, faced the problem of the new industrial society; they worked for new constitutional weapons to fight the new abuses. Although handicapped severely by the revolutionary school of thought, they or their methods prevailed against the gigantic problems of the nineteenth century. Our problem is different from theirs: it is not so much the abuses of industrial society that we have to conquer (though some remain) as the abuses of machine-culture, and our chief constitutional weapon is not in the Houses of Parliament, or the logical development of democracy, but in education, or the maintenance of the cultural tradition. Books like Mr. Massingham's (his is the latest example of a series of distinguished essays on the subject by various writers) can do a great deal of good in this "constitutional" plan—but only if "revolutionary" dogmatic statements, such as those I have taken the liberty of objecting to in him and other authors, are revised in favour of a kinder and more realistic approach. "The critic," says I. A. Richards, "is as much concerned with the health of the mind as any doctor with the health of the body." But no doctor has ever cured an illness by turning away from his patient in disgust—and even that analogy, though instructive no doubt to certain writers in the *Adelphi*, is insufficient, "for we are ourselves," says Dawson, "part of that which we are attempting to criticize." Who knows but what, beneath the surface "hate abounding" of modern industrial civilization, there may not lie traditional virtues that will, in course of time, solve the problem of culture in a democratic society? We can at least proceed upon that more charitable assumption. It was, after all, the assumption of William Cobbett, whose Trash—"My Trash . . ." he says proudly—was read on nearly every cottage hearth in the manufacturing districts.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RELEVANCE OF RELIGIOUS DECLINE

I.

IN the last two chapters I have considered in some detail two cultural diagnoses, the Conservative and the rural, each of which is becoming increasingly popular of late, as enthusiasm for the Marxist solution disappears. There is, admittedly, a touch of political and literary fashion about this change in prognosis, the weakness, for instance, of Captain Aubrey Jones's interesting book *The Pendulum of Politics* (1946) being that the author gets a good deal of his effect by pouring scorn on the " progressive notions " which he himself held a few years ago, as Mr. C. S. Lewis often begins a sentence with the comforting words, " When I was an Atheist . . . " and as reformed blackguards on Salvation Army platforms relish in retrospect the drink and women of the Christless past. The weakness of a rapid change from self-confessed superficial ideas is that the new ideas, taken up with the old enthusiasm, may be superficial too ; or, alternatively, that the discarded notions were really the mere superficies of sound positions and the present scorn the pouring away of the baby with the suds. Geniune development doesn't work quite in the way of Captain Jones, or quite in the way of Mr. Ronald Duncan, who on Friday evening was editing the *Townsman* with a glass of brandy at his elbow and on Wednesday week was down on the farm, praising God in corduroys.

God in various guises is, indeed, the solution inherent in both the Conservative and the rural cultural diagnoses ; as the Marxian gospel leads inevitably to the barricade and the bloody revolution, so the creeds of the Country House and the Old Rural Order lead inevitably to the Conversion of England. " Conservatism—in the very broadest sense of the word—has declined because Christianity has declined," says

Captain Jones; "because Christianity has been succeeded, and has become corrupted, by sentimentality; because men no longer have the fortitude to await a salvation elsewhere and to steel themselves by present effort to merit it." "The decline of Christianity has coincided with a cultural decline," writes Arnold Lunn in *The Good Gorilla* (1944). "Until we return to *that* source [the Church], there can be no rebirth of Art or Literature." Middleton Murry is on a similar tack in one of his recent sermons in the *Adelphi*: "The convert to agriculture passes into a condition where his most humdrum and seemingly monotonous action has its own intrinsic validity. He ceases to demand that his work should be even 'interesting,' he feels it as part of a great and growing whole, stretching far back into the past, and far forward into the future. His personal life slips into perspective. He is serving something far greater than himself or his family, or even his country; he is serving something 'in whose service is perfect freedom.' He is serving God."

Mr. Murry's belief in religious conversion by way of the land is shared not only by Mr. Massingham and Mr. Duncan but by the Hindoo politician and mystic, the late Mahatma Gandhi, and the Catholic sculptor and writer, the late Eric Gill. Even M. Maritain, the most urban and urbane of Catholic apologists, has written in *Religion and Culture*: "Let us consider the spiritual man *par excellence*. What were the temporal means of Wisdom incarnate? He preached in villages. He wrote no books—that was a means of action too heavily weighted with matter—He founded no newspapers or reviews . . ."; and even Mr. Eliot, the most urban and urbane of Anglican apologists, has written in the *Criterion*: "To understand thoroughly what is wrong with agriculture is to understand what is wrong with nearly everything else . . . To have the right frame of mind it is not enough that we should read Wordsworth, tramp the countryside . . . or even own a country estate: it is necessary that the greater part of the population, of all classes (so long as we have classes) should be settled in the country and dependent upon it."

Unanimity of opinion like this is impressive, and, so far as

it goes, convincing. I have already stated my objections to certain details in the agricultural-cultural diagnosis, and it will have been observed, perhaps, that Mr. Eliot, too, slips into the common error of ignoring the vast increase of population since the days when " the greater part " of Englishmen were settled in the country and dependent upon it. In my last chapter I took Massingham and Murry as representative of the best sort of contemporary intelligence on the matter, and I came to the conclusion that their diagnosis and solution were too abstracted from contemporary reality. But the value of the books and articles written upon the general subject of agricultural-cultural relations is not in the category of the Marxist contribution. The Marxist contribution to cultural diagnosis was of value mainly because of the inevitable reaction to it. We cannot say quite the same of the agricultural-cultural diagnosis, because some of the work involved has a permanent significance ; for it was and is very important that we in the urban present should learn what we have lost, as well as what we have gained, in relation to the rural past. The reaction comes in, not so much in answer to the diagnosis (where it is mainly a matter of adding the various things that this cultural school has overlooked), as in answer to some of the solutions put forward. And these solutions being saturated with religion, this chapter has a duty similar to the duty of the last, to try and find out whether consciously agnostic persons like myself can accept part of the religious solution, as we, being urban, accepted part of the agricultural hypothesis.

I trust no reader will feel that this is simply splitting hairs, and that I split these hairs on other people's heads because I am myself ideologically bald on top. I assure this possible reader that I have as much my own opinions on the religious diagnosis as I have on the diagnosis of the Marxist, the Conservative and the truly rural. But, apart from the intriguing question as to how far any of our opinions are, or can be, our own, has my possible reader ever pondered, I wonder, that word " religion " ? It is a curious word, certainly, a word that might seem to mean either everything or nothing ; a word which, like the celebrated citizen of Tarsus, becomes

all things to all men. A goodly number of our cultural-diagnostic brethren are Roman Catholics; some of the most penetrating things written in our time about cultural problems have been the work of Catholics. Their solution is obviously Arnold Lunn's: until the mass of what was formerly Christendom return to the bosom of the Church, there can be no rebirth of Culture. If all the thinkers who share the religious view of culture were of their mind then the problem before this chapter would be simple enough: it would resolve itself into a discussion as to what, in my opinion, England would gain and/or lose by a return to Rome. Unfortunately, though, while many of our best minds on the subject are Roman Catholics, others are not. Mr. Eliot is one of the pillars of the Anglican Church, whose objections to Rome have always seemed to me very similar to the Agnostic's objections to the Christian Church as a whole. While Mr. Murry is the author of *The Betrayal of Christ by the Churches*, a book which may not have been placed, like the *Pilgrim's Progress*, on the *Index*, but which is not likely to be pleasing to orthodox minds.

No one who has followed Mr. Murry's writing at all can be ignorant of the steps which he has taken to discover his own rather peculiar version of Christianity, because those steps form one of his favourite subjects for analysis; what has led him to Christ is the influence of the Deist Rousseau, coupled with the influence of the Christian heretic William Blake and the influence of the Laurentian D. H. Lawrence, whose philosophy, in so far as it was not just Laurentian, was agnostic. What can perhaps be termed irreverently "the bats in the *Adelphi*" are Christian bats, but slumbering peacefully upside down: naturally, in that posture, when they open one eye to view the established Churches, they are horrified to see popes, bishops, priests, parsons, ministers, all the wrong way up, and naturally, being conscientious souls, they write books and articles to show that Jesus was quite a different kind of person from what these official ecclesiastics have all this time supposed . . .

So we have now the following main parties: (a) the Roman

Catholic order of Gill, M. Jacques Maritain, Mr. Christopher Dawson, Mr. Lunn, Father d'Arcy, Mr. Shewring; (b) the Anglican order of Mr. Eliot, Brother Every, Canon Demant, Miss Sayers, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Bethell, and others of the *Criterion-Theology*-B.B.C. group; and (c) the *Adelphi*-pacifist-agricultural party, led by Mr. Murry and—perhaps a shade reluctantly—by part of the ghost of D. H. Lawrence. There are doubtless other sections who see the decline in culture as the obvious product of the decline in religious belief, sections representing the Methodist, the Greek Orthodox, and other varieties of modern Christendom, to say nothing of the many followers of Mahatma Gandhi. But these three main categories are enough to be going on with, indeed a trifle more than enough for initial scepticism, for we see that "the return to religion" covers beliefs ranging from Roman Catholicism to the curious creed of Mr. Murry—which is either Christian agnosticism or agnostic Christianity.

That it should be so is both a strength and a weakness. The weakness is plain enough: it lies in the distinctly possible case of an "unbeliever," dissatisfied with his philosophic lot, who reads a book by Maritain or Dawson, follows it up by reading Eliot or Lewis, and rounds the whole thing off by subscribing to the *Adelphi*. He is told to return to God—but he cannot be blamed overmuch if he groans between books: "*Quot homines, tot dei.*" For while there may be something in the common belief that all religious roads eventually lead to Rome, to reach Rome by way of Rousseau and D. H. Lawrence is a roundabout proceeding more reminiscent of Chesterton's drunkard than of any sober development.

II.

Our distinctly possible "unbeliever," then, is asked by various authorities to return to the land or to God, or to both. Luckily there is only one land, the ground we stand on; but there are so many Gods, or versions of the same God, offered

for his inspection that it is no wonder if he becomes confused. Can the fault possibly lie in that very word, "religion"? It covers so much. Perhaps it covers too much? That, at any rate, is a possible line of enquiry.

Admittedly, this vagueness is a strength, in so far as it involves "a return to religion" which can be accepted by virtually everyone. If "religion" simply means a concern for something higher than our physical appetites, then it is redundant really to talk of a "return," for most people are religious already. Hitler would qualify pretty well for Number One in a contemporary Rogues' Gallery, yet it would be dangerous to say that the late lamented *Fuehrer* had no religion. I think it quite likely that he had too much. His religion may not have been the Roman Catholicism of his youth, though he continued to describe himself as a Catholic in the German *Who's Who* long after he came to power and in the British *Who's Who* (1945) there is the item: "Religion, Catholic." In 1944 he said: "I can be absolved from my duty only by Him who called me to it. On July 20th, when a bomb exploded within five feet of me, it was within the power of Providence to kill me and put an end to my life's work. The fact that on that day the Almighty protected me I regard as a confirmation of the mission entrusted to me . . ." etc., etc. But formality means nothing, however sincere the religious fanatic may have been. For his real religion (which he probably identified with God) was, quite simply, Germany—not the Germany of Dürer or Goethe or Beethoven, but the Germany of Bismarck and the iron heel. He no doubt reflected, as he took poison or as the bomb with his name on it descended, that he had done all in his power to serve his God, and I should be surprised to learn that a single scream from Buchenwald troubled his conscience as he entered Valhalla, goose-stepping obscenely in the purely Nordic air.

So many people, including Captain Aubrey Jones, think that the leaders of Nazi Germany were Atheists or Agnostics. Mr. Dawson, too, refers to "the pagan character of the Nazi ethic." Admittedly, the creed of politicians can never be accurately gauged by their speeches or professions, but of the

three principal Nazi leaders who committed suicide or were killed before the end of the war, two—Hitler and Goebbels—could hardly open their mouths in public without mentioning God, the Almighty or Providence. While of the leaders tried and condemned at Nuremberg, ten claimed to be Catholic, ten Protestant, and only one—Rosenberg—Atheist. And it is instructive to learn from the official reports that it was only Rosenberg (no doubt as big a scoundrel as the rest) who had the dignity to die quietly, without making a sermon or striking an attitude before the rope.

Von Papen, not only a Catholic but a Papal Chamberlain, was one of the men most responsible for getting Hitler into power in Germany. Addressing a Catholic meeting at Cologne in 1933, he said that " Providence destined me to render an essential service in the birth of the government of the national regeneration." The *Annual Register* for the same year attributed Hitler's success in large part to the help of the Catholic Church : " The gigantic swing-over of the Catholic middle-class in West and South Germany to the Nazi Party broke the power of the old middle-class Catholic parties." At the *Anschluss* with Austria in 1938 Cardinal Innitzer welcomed the Nazis with swastikas on the churches and the ringing of bells. He commanded all Austrians to submit to Hitler, as the man " whose struggle against Bolshevism and for the power, honour and unity of Germany corresponds to the voice of Divine Providence." A religion of some kind, even if it be only gutter patriotism, is held by nearly everybody. So it becomes apparent that, in putting the decline of culture to the account of a decline in religion, the various bodies of religio-cultural diagnosis are saying nothing at all unless they add the kind of religion they have in mind. And this is bound to be different with each group's idea of the true faith.

Let us try to reduce these complications. My own case is instructive : I am an agnostic Humanist, but I find myself in agreement with about three-quarters of the cultural writings of Christopher Dawson and about one-quarter of the cultural writings of M. Maritain and Mr. Lunn. This does not mean that I am roughly half-way on the road to Rome : it means

that in the Catholic-cultural position of these admirable writers there are points of contact with the cultural position of people like myself who think Catholicism mistaken. An agreement like this has two possible explanations : either it is due to the Catholic-cultural position being merely a part of the general cultural experience of Europe, which approaches to the view of George Santayana who holds that Catholic culture is the finest culture in the world providing one isn't so foolish as to believe in the religion ; or else it is due to the cultural position of agnostic Humanism and other similar beliefs having come directly from Catholicism and owing whatever strength they may have to that source.

The latter explanation is the one that Catholic writers make so much of. I think it can be shown that they are slightly mistaken, that the explanation which is supposed to explain away humanism, agnosticism, etc., really explains away, if we care to be logical to the end, Catholicism itself. " High-minded Victorian agnostics," says Mr. Lunn sadly, " living on the capital of Christian tradition . . . " " Liberal idealism," groans Mr. Dawson : " merely an unsubstantial shadow projected from the religion of the past . . ." Several pages could be filled with remarks like these by Catholics, all tending to the curious conclusion that, as liberalism and agnosticism are based mainly (in Europe) on Christianity, therefore they have no value at all. Perhaps part of the absurdity comes from the other side : for all I know, some Agnostics, Humanists, etc., may have stoutly denied that their belief is based mainly on the Christian order. Such a denial is to me incomprehensible, for the Catholic accusation, though it is blissfully unaware of it, is an assertion of the evolution of ideas, of the normal and natural development of a culture. Messrs. Lunn and Dawson forget that not everyone accepts their view of religion as having virtually begun—apart from superstition—between the years B.C. 1 and A.D. 1 in Palestine. Humanists hold that Christianity itself is based upon a mass of pre-Christian beliefs, that it could not have existed without them, that in fact—if you like to use bad language—Christianity is " merely an unsubstantial shadow projected from the

religion of the past." Even orthodoxy admits the contribution of the Jews before Christ and of Plato and Aristotle through the doctors of the Church in the dark and middle ages. The Agnostic adds to these the contributions of Egypt, Persia and lesser religious cultures of the pre-Christian order. This is not to disparage Christianity: it is to pay it a well-deserved compliment, for everything of importance in human life is based upon tradition. To dismiss liberal idealism for being based mainly on Christian ideas (this, at least, is the view of many modern Catholics, though Cardinal Newman called liberalism " Satan's chief instrument in deluding the nations ") is just as absurd as to dismiss Christianity for being based mainly on Moses, Plato, Aristotle, the Persians and Paul.

If the whole of European history since the fourteenth century is not to be regarded as a deviation from the Truth (and if that is so, what would become of the modern Roman Church, which, as Coulton pointed out, is largely the creation of the Counter Reformation ?), there seems no reason to deplore the generalized form of the Christian maintenance, as any more dogmatic form appears to be contrary to the spiritual needs of the age.

" Our own civilization to an even greater extent than those of the past," says Dawson in *Progress and Religion*, " has been the creation of a religious tradition, for it is to Christianity that Europe owes its cultural unity." As Christianity is based firmly upon earlier civilizations and religions, all Dawson is really saying is that the present owes its culture to the past—which is not so much a truth as a truism. Admittedly, Christianity could have existed without Plato; it could also have existed without Moses, perhaps without Jesus; but in none of these cases would it have been Christianity as we understand the term to-day. Modern Europe owes nearly everything to Christianity (though the contribution of Islam to European culture was also very great, as Dawson recognizes in *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*), but as Christianity owes nearly everything to ancient Egypt, Persia, Palestine and Greece, all we are saying, again, is that the present is based upon the past, that the child is father of the man. And this is a pre-Wordsworthian truth.

Dawson, of course, has to give his "Darwinian" version of history with a slight difference, so that, while nine-tenths of his admirable writings could have been written by an agnostic historian of like genius, the remaining one-tenth could have been written only by a Thomist. Everything goes back to Christianity: everything European, that is. Liberalism, Progress, Democracy . . . all are founded upon Christian metaphysics. "And what, Mr. Dawson," one cheerfully continues, having made a note, "and what, Mr. Dawson, are Christian metaphysics founded upon?" At this point the historian glances at the clock, and, finding that it is later than he had supposed, presses into one's hand a much-thumbed edition of St. Thomas Aquinas, before hurrying off to give a lecture on the foundations of Buddhist thought. So that after all Mr. Dawson's scholarly researches, we are back where we started from and the journey into the past seems hardly necessary. We don't even need St. Thomas, for a penny Catholic catechism will do the trick equally well. If history is conceived in the spirit of revelation, then all tracing of cultural growth back beyond a certain point becomes heretical.

III.

But "A religion without Revelation is a religion without History," says Mr. Dawson, provokingly. It seems to me that only a religion without revelation can be a religion with history and without myth. In his many excellent works Dawson has stated that one of the distinguishing features of Christianity —at any rate, compared with some of the religions of the further east—is that it is based upon historical happenings. Furthermore, because liberal idealism, agnosticism, humanism, are based mainly, in Europe, on Christian thought, they too are based upon history. But it needs to be remembered that these latter "religions without revelation" carry their history far back beyond the birth of Christianity, and so are more historical than their parent. History seen through Christian eyes is—quite logically, of course—provincial history:

it relates everything to obscure events which may or may not have taken place in Palestine nearly two thousand years ago, as Islamic history relates everything to slightly less obscure events which may or may not have taken place in Arabia in the seventh century. For the Christian historian, the Islamic historian is simply mistaken; for the Islamic historian, the Christian historian suffers from the same inevitable defect.

The believer in Islam thinks it blasphemous to worship Christ as a God; to him, Jesus is simply one of the prophets, like Abraham, Moses and Mohammed. Some Christian scholars, ingenious rather than logical, have said that Islam is nothing more than a Christian heresy. The logical answer, of course, is that Christianity, from a similar point of view, is nothing more than a Jewish heresy. "Every Church is orthodox to itself," wrote Locke; "to others, erroneous or heretical." Even Bunyan had periods in Doubting Castle on this score, as he has recorded: "Every one doth think his own religion rightest, both Jews and Moors and Pagans, and how if all our faith, and Christ and Scriptures, should be but a Think-so too?"

Speaking of the rise of Christianity, Dawson says in *The Judgement of the Nations*: "What could have seemed more impossible than the transformation of the civilization of the ancient world [or, more accurately, the civilization of the Mediterranean] by a group of obscure and uneducated men from a despised race in an obscure province?" This seems to me an incomplete sentence: "seemed more impossible *to whom*?" is the obvious rejoinder, for the sentence as it stands is meaningless. Certainly the rise of Christianity would have seemed extraordinary had anyone known, about A.D. 50, that it would happen. Unfortunately for Dawson's argument, though, this applies to most major events: the influence of the obscure merchant-traveller Mohammed is even more extraordinary, and who could have supposed, about 800 B.C., that a tribe of farmer-warriors in central Italy would one day conquer all the known world? All three events can be explained by the normal methods of history; Mr. Dawson has probably explained to his own

satisfaction the amazing rise of Islam, but his explanation would not be found acceptable by the pious pilgrim to Mecca.

It is only the agnostic historian who can logically recognize that both Christianity and Islam have proved generally beneficial to the world's culture, and that the good they have done will live after them, while their evil deeds are buried with their bones. Personally I prefer, as Dawson does, historical religious cultures like these to static religious cultures like some of those further east, and I should say with Dawson, or rather following him, that one of the chief gifts of Christianity to the modern world is its gift of historical awareness. Liberal idealism can scarcely be blamed for having learnt that lesson from its master and for having bettered the instruction.

Not that primitive Christianity was a historical culture quite in the modern Catholic's way. (Cardinal Manning, of course, insisted that "the appeal to history is a treason and a heresy.") There can have been few blunders so striking as that made by the ex-Methodist, ex-Atheist, Catholic-convert Arnold Lunn when he wrote: "The supreme test of a philosophy is its prediction value, and by this test secularism is bankrupt and Christianity triumphant." It is rather embarrassing for me to remind Mr. Lunn of his Synoptic Gospels, but there he will find several prophecies of Jesus that the end of the world was nigh. Mr. Lunn is not alone in his curious opinion. For instance, Professor Berdyaev writes in *The End of Our Time*: "The promises of Humanism have not been fulfilled." This sounds to me too much like a political orator, accusing the rival party of not fulfilling their election pledges. The election pledges of Christianity (if I may borrow the argument for a moment) were that the world was going to end about A.D. 60—80. It didn't. After that "disappointment," I wonder that any Catholic has the nerve to shake his head sadly because some of the things Humanists thought would be likely to come about in the future have not yet come to pass. Did any Humanist mention a date? Did not they all say, with Leslie Stephen, that progress would be extremely slow and that it would probably be interrupted

by "reversions to the Middle Ages" (to quote Berdyaev himself on Hitlerism and Stalinism)?

What is so striking about the prophecies of Jesus is their tone of absolute certainty. The writers of the Gospels admittedly use slightly different words, but their fundamental agreement is very close indeed and strongly suggests that Jesus, on two or three occasions, actually said something of the sort. Certainly the primitive Christians believed the end of the world was approaching; they also must have thought that the world began about four thousand years before their time. Later Christians have been forced, by their greater historical, archaeological and geological knowledge, to take a wider view; logically, what they have done is to extend their historical culture against the clear statements of its founders. Primitive Christianity was based upon a conception of the Fall of Man that took place certain clearly-defined Jewish generations before, and upon a conception of the end of the world and the Last Judgment several years hence. It was an historical religion, admittedly, but of such a provincial order as to have little significance for modern civilization. The valuable things in Christian culture are of more recent growth and have not much connection, save in that sentiment which some Catholics so curiously despise, with the things that may or may not have happened in Palestine during the reign of the second emperor of Rome.

That sentiment which some Catholics so curiously despise . . . I am thinking of the remarks of T. E. Hulme, a writer who has had a great influence on Dawson and Eliot. "I have none of the feelings of nostalgia," wrote Hulme, "the reverence for tradition, the desire to recapture the sentiment of Fra Angelico, which seems to animate most modern defenders of religion. All that seems to me to be bosh. What is important is what nobody seems to realize—the dogmas like that of Original Sin, which are the closest expression of the categories of the religious attitude. That man is in no sense perfect, but a wretched creature, who can yet apprehend perfection. It is not, then, that I put up with the dogma for the sake of the sentiment, but that I may possibly swallow the sentiment for the sake of the dogma."

My own opinion is the exact opposite : I prefer the sentiment of Fra Angelico, and those parts of the Gospels from which that sentiment sprang, to the dogmas of T. E. Hulme and those Councils of the Church where they were first invented. I am expressing a preference, in other words, for that part of Christianity which produced Christian art and literature over that other part which produced Christian persecution and war.

IV.

" We have come to the parting of the ways," says Dawson. " Either Europe must abandon the Christian tradition and with it the faith in progress and humanity, or it must return consciously to the religious foundation on which these ideas were based."

This is an astonishing statement, coming as it does from a genuine historian. A student of culture of Mr. Dawson's calibre should be aware of the fact that mankind has never come to the parting of any ways. Such melodramatic notions have a place in Hollywood, but not in history. And what is even more astonishing is the fact that this statement is by no means unique in Mr. Dawson's works ; in nearly every book, he has said something similar. For instance, in *The Modern Dilemma* (1932) he writes as follows :—" European civilization was rationalized and secularized until it ceased even nominally to be Christian. Nevertheless it continued to subsist unconsciously on the accumulated capital of its Christian past, from which it drew the moral and social idealism that inspired the humanitarian and liberal and democratic movements of the last two centuries. Today this spiritual capital is exhausted and civilization is faced with the choice between a return to the spiritual traditions of Christianity or the renunciation of them in favour of complete social materialism."

Neither of these things seems to me in the least likely to happen. A tradition is not abandoned so easily, nor can the bulk of Europeans in the twentieth century accept a religion which was acceptable to St. Thomas Aquinas in the unlucky

thirteenth. As well might Mr. Dawson expect St. Thomas to have accepted the religion of the ancient Germans or Celts, which doubtless was quite a decent sort of religion in the third century but which must have seemed as barbarous to St. Thomas in some ways as his Catholicism seems in some ways barbarous to us. For nowadays we leave it to harmless lunatics to ponder over "the few saved and the very many damned," and the notorious prophecy that the blessed souls in the hereafter will receive delight and instruction from witnessing the tortures of the damned is a prophecy that might have appealed to the late Herr Himmler but in modern civilized society finds a place only in a psychologist's notebook, under the letter S.

And if we must return to the "foundations," why should we stop at the Common Doctor of the Church? Why not return to Augustine, Paul, Jesus, Greece, Persia, Moses, Jehovah, Egypt—and beyond? There is no saying how far you may fall if you deliberately cast yourself down the traditions of the past. Take St. Thomas's barbaric opinions about hell. Hell wasn't his invention, nor was it the invention of Jesus or the writers of the Gospels, though Jesus therein made it part of his prophecy. Hell came from the old Persian religion, and might have stayed there to rot for all the good it has done since. There is not a word about eternal damnation in the Old Testament, but that horrible and fantastic doctrine forms a part both of Christianity and of Islam. Abu Sa'id Hasan, for instance, who lived from 643 to 728, went so in fear of Hell that when he heard of a man who was condemned to a thousand years in Hell before he could be saved (the story does not tell us where this interesting information came from), he wept and said, "Would that I were like that man!" Our own Dr. Johnson feared death for the same reason. "You seem, sir," said Mrs. Adams to him once, "to forget the merits of our Redeemer." "Madam," he replied, "I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said that He will set some on His right hand and some on His left . . ." "He was in gloomy agitation," adds Boswell, "and said 'I'll have no more on't'."

There is not much evidence for the modern Christian apology that the myth of the terrors of hell prevented crime among the barbarians of the dark and early middle ages. I certainly believe that many of the other tenets of the Christian faith had a civilizing influence in those times ; in fact, I agree with most of Mr. Dawson's observations in *The Making of Europe*—a book it is almost impertinent to praise. But I believe also that Mr. McCabe is on the right track when he suggests in *The God of War* that the dogma of hell may have set a dangerous example to men, for if you think of a God in terms of a slaughterous, revengeful person, then to be slaughterous and revengeful yourself is to partake in the nature of the deity. Consider the Inquisition, which tortured heretics in this world to prevent their everlasting torture in the next. I daresay there were a good many inquisitors who were just sadists, but any institution has a right to be judged by its best men, and clearly the more sincere of the inquisitors were not criminals, but entirely logical religious fanatics. The Inquisition followed logically from the belief in hell, as the belief in hell must have followed logically from that other old Persian belief, the dogma of Original Sin. Part of this is contained in the Old Testament, but in a comparatively mild form, as a mild form of hell is contained in the religion of ancient Egypt. It was the painful, " logical " brooding of lonely desert monks, in both Christian and Islamic shelters, which produced that fantastically detailed and horrible picture which used to frighten good men like Abu Sa'id Hasan and Dr. Johnson (though it had no effect on rogues, Bunyan's Mr. Badman, for example, dying peacefully) and which is still used in some Catholic countries to frighten little children.

To call such a man as Torquemada a criminal is misleading : he was clearly a fool, a religious maniac. A fool of a more sympathetic and humane character must have been that other Spaniard whom Mrs. Clifton refers to (quite approvingly) in her recent *Vision of Peru* : " A Spaniard, in a market-place of Africa, wept to see divided a man from his wife, a mother from her child and to see the negroes shipped in chains across the ocean. He blamed himself for weeping because the bondage

would result in the slaves being taught the Faith and this would be a good far greater than their anguish . . ." Altogether, we can see what that third Spaniard, George Santayana, must have been thinking of when he implies that Catholic culture is the best culture in the world—providing that a man is not so foolish as to believe in the religion.

Admittedly, this seems like a paradox ; but it is not really so, for Santayana equates " Catholic culture " with what he calls " Mediterranean culture " and is also called by some people—including Catholics, as we shall see—"Graeco-Latin culture." The intelligent M. Maritain sees that this equation will not do at all, from the Catholic point of view. Once admit that equation, and you deny the supernatural basis claimed by Catholics for their faith—and by Mohammedans for theirs—and you must agree with Santayana that all religions have been invented by men.

Maritain writes as follows, in his chief work on the subject, *Religion and Culture*: " When faith and charity diminish among the majority in the Christian nations, many come to think that, because Christianity was the vivifying principle of their historic culture, it is essentially bound, enfeoffed to it. Certain apostles of Latinity (I bear it no grudge, let me assure them) are convinced—the remark was made to me one day—that ' our religion is a Graeco-Latin religion.' Such an enormity is full of significance. Not realizing from what spirit they derive, and oblivious of the divine transcendence of what constitutes the life of their life, they end in practice by worshipping the true God in the same fashion as the Ephesians worshipped Diana and primitive man worshipped the idols of his tribe."

The enormous indignation of M. Maritain is full of significance. His is a logical mind, but unfortunately when logic is applied to supernatural positions it is apt to produce supernatural nonsense. Thus the distinguished Frenchman can give us the following piece of empty rhetoric :—" Catholics are not Catholicism. The errors, apathies, shortcomings and slumbers of Catholics do not involve Catholicism . . . The Church is a mystery, her head is hidden in the sky, her visi-

bility does not adequately manifest her nature; if you seek to know what represents, without betraying her, consider the Pope and the episcopate teaching the faith and morals, consider the saints in Heaven and on earth, avert your eyes from us poor sinners. Or, rather, consider how the Church heals our wounds and leads us hobbling to eternal life."

I call this "empty rhetoric" for several reasons. The first is the obvious rejoinder that to say "Catholics are not Catholicism," besides going clean against Jesus's words, "By their fruits shall ye know them," is a very useful and quite unscrupulous sleight-of-hand. The errors of the Inquisition, for example, clearly having come directly from the Catholic conception of the everlasting tortures of hell, were not the errors of individual Torquemadas but of Catholicism itself. Similarly, the errors of the Puritan persecutions were not the errors of individual Zeal-of-the-Land Busies but of the doctrines of Luther and Calvin which they did their clumsy best to carry out.

And consider the very different attitude of M. Maritain when he looks at other beliefs. He quite plainly thinks that, while the errors of Catholics do not, of course, involve Catholicism, the errors of Protestants, Liberals, Humanists, constitute a damning indictment of Protestantism, liberalism and humanism.

V.

M. Maritain's conscience in action is luckily less supernaturally logical than his conscience in theory. It was all very proper for him to say, in 1931, "consider the Pope . . . ," but a few years later the current Pope supported Franco and such Catholic intellectual leaders as Don Luigi Sturzo and M. Maritain himself were, much to their honour, by no means disposed to follow His Holiness's lead. In the *Criterion* at the time, Mr. Eliot warmly approved M. Maritain's "independent and courageous position" and spoke of "the just impartiality of a Christian philosopher." Yet it has often been considered to be a good thing to practise what you preach,

and this is one of the barbarous theories expressed by Maritain in his *Religion and Culture*: "The non-Christian nations are incapable of distinguishing between their autochthonous culture, with all its human values in themselves deserving of respect and filiel piety, and the errors and superstitions of their religions. And Christian universalism will have to show them how such a distinction can be made and how the Gospel respects and superelevates, and by slow degrees transforms, such particular values. The demonstration is, as a rule, not unattended with bloodshed . . ."

The demonstration is, as a rule, not unattended with bloodshed. Why was M. Maritain, then, so reluctant to admit the assertion of Senor Suner that the war of the *Franquistas* was "a Holy War"—especially as the Pope and the great majority of the Catholic priest had accepted that assertion? It is true that Spain was not "a non-Christian nation" at the time of Franco's revolution, but it was certainly the excuse of the revolutionary army that the Spanish Government and its followers were non-Christian. As Eliot remarked in another *Criterion* commentary: "One might think, after perusing a paper like the *New Statesman*, that the elected Government of Spain represented an enlightened and progressive Liberalism; and from reading the *Tablet* one might be persuaded that the rebels were people who, after enduring with patience more than one would expect human beings to be able to stand, had finally and reluctantly taken to arms as the only way left in which to save Christianity and civilisation."

The latter view was certainly that of the Catholic hierarchy, in theory and in action; they practised what they preached—"a Holy War." M. Maritain also preached, admittedly in rather a vague form, a holy war or a series of them: General Franco and Senor Suner might well have read, and warmly approved, that passage of Maritain in 1931. When, however, a few years later they come to practise what he preached, he turns against them and takes refuge in "the just impartiality of a Christian philosopher." I can well understand Senor Suner's anger at this humane lack of logic, and from his point of view the anger was justified.

Religion and Culture is a book full of these contradictions, according as to whether M. Maritain's individual humanity or his supernatural, superstitious theories are in the saddle of his mind on each particular occasion. On some occasions, both climb into the saddle at once and we get Maritain's slender liberalism almost squeezed off the seat of sanity by a lumbering great jack of an Original-Synthesis that should have been decently buried five centuries since. Thus he goes on from that denial of the Mediterranean-Catholic cultural equation to an assertion that everything good that takes place in the world necessarily belongs to the Catholic Church : " ' Are not all things,' indeed ' ours, we who are Christ's ' ? "

Such an illusion may seem harmless enough, and even charming, but observe one of its consequences. Maritain has previously told us that " One Name only has been given to men in which they may be saved . . . Even an authentically Christian civilization does not escape many accidental blemishes. Only a Christian civilization can be exempt from essential deviations."

This playing with words, by which the *Auto-da-Fé* and the prisons of General Franco become mere " accidental blemishes " on Catholic civilization (though one might have thought that they were " essential deviations " from the spirit of the more civilized portions of the New Testament), is very necessary for the author's argument. In the past hundred years, he continues, we witnessed this sad spectacle : " The defence of the poor and the oppressed, zeal for justice, peace and liberty, the crusade against the tyranny of money, against the enslavement of body and soul to economic interests—the earth was strewn with innumerable Christian parts abandoned. They were picked up by the adversaries of the Christian name."

This, of course, is not strictly true, for there were many Christians, as well as liberal idealists, Agnostics and Atheists, in the ranks of nineteenth-century and twentieth-century reform. Joseph McCabe makes a similar mistake in that in some ways admirable book, *The Social Record of Christianity* ; the true position is rather that given by Graham Wallas when he speaks of " the working alliance " for social reform of the

Evangelicals with the agnostic Radicals. But Maritain's statement certainly puts the stress in the right place, for what is particularly noticeable in the history of these reforms is the virtual absence of official clerical support—indeed, the reformers often had to fight against the Church.

But Maritain sees this as an " accidental blemish." Furthermore, he sees the very reforms and the progress he has admitted as belonging " invisibly " to the Church. In other words, no matter how much the clergy at the time tried to thwart progress, and no matter how often the most zealous reformers were outside the Church, the ultimate credit for reform and progress must go to the Church, not to the people outside. There is a certain specious or supernatural logic about all this, it is true, but unfortunately for entire Catholic comfort, M. Maritain, in so lauding the invisible part of the Church, the head in the sky, has dealt a mortal blow to the very heart of the visible portion—which, like Solomon's baby, is inseparably bound up with it. And this is no light matter, for has not he said : " If you seek to know what represents the Church, without betraying her, consider the Pope and the episcopate teaching the faith and morals " ? It was a mere ordinary, sinful Christian who wrote in *Progress and Religion* (1929) : " The nineteenth century was an age of political reform and humanitarian idealism. It has witnessed all over the world the destruction of slavery, the abolition of torture and cruel penal codes and a systematic attempt to cure famine and disease." But it was Pope Pius the Ninth who wrote in 1864 : " The Roman Pontiff cannot and ought not to be reconciled and come to terms with progress, with liberalism, and with modern civilization."

The Popes, bishops, clergy who condemned or actively opposed the spiritual and material progress which M. Maritain, wise after the event, approves, these men were not wicked scamps or mere idle loafers—or, rather, the few who were don't affect our consideration of the majority who were not. They were mostly—who can doubt it ? —sincere, honest and zealous Christian gentlemen ; and it was because of their quite sincere reading of Christianity, " the faith and morals " which

" represent the Church without betraying her," that they condemned or actively opposed spiritual and material reform.

To take a comparatively trivial instance. When chloroform was first suggested for easing the pains of child-birth, the majority of the orthodox clergy spoke against it. Not, we may be sure, because of any desire to perpetuate the suffering of their womenfolk, but simply and solely because of the barbarous, pre-civilized notion of Original Sin. Part of that truly antediluvian idea concerns the daughters of Eve ; as the sons of Adam were forced to dig the soil and to sweat and to multiply their seed, so the daughters of Eve were forced " in sorrow " to bring forth children. " In sorrow." God had spoken clearly enough ; if He had looked into the future, so to speak, and approved the use of chloroform, He would have qualified His original statement. But He didn't. Therefore He didn't approve the use of chloroform . . . That is how these people's minds worked, and that was the logical conclusion they came to.

The dogma of Original Sin also affected the Church's attitude to social reform. Father Luis of Granada wrote in chapter three of his *Treatise on the Ineffable Mystery of our Redemption* : "This poison of sin entered the first man, who was the root and origin of mankind, and, affecting the root, the father of us all, extended to all his children. As St. Augustine says, ' Thus the human race was lost when the man perished who contained it all ; for he engendered us in his fallen state.' It is the common law of the nations that children take the rank of their parents ; the son of a noble is a nobleman, the son of a peasant is a peasant ; a free mother's child is free, and a slave mother's is a slave."

It is easy to see how this doctrine, particularly in the minds of the more logical of the clergy, became interpreted to mean that a man's duty was to serve God in the condition of society into which he had been placed, and that all measures to change that condition, particularly measures designed to promote an eventual merging of classes into one, were wicked. As the English Church Catechism puts it : " To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters and to do my duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call me." It is

often forgotten that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was not only put on the Catholic *Index*, as a book subversive of established authority, but was condemned by Protestant spokesmen on the same grounds.

When religious observers like Mr. Ivor Thomas, M.P. in *Time and Tide* write that Murry and Maritain (together with Butler, Lewis, Sayers, Joad, Croce . . .) are a witness that " we are on the eve of a religious revival," the first question to ask is : what religion is being revived ? Signor Croce is an anti-clerical of many years' standing, and the " significant trend " Mr. Thomas sees is represented by an article by the distinguished philosopher with the title, " Why we may not refuse to call ourselves Christians." Mr. Thomas has the grace to add : " It is true that Croce's Christianity, being without institutions, creeds, dogmas and sacraments, has not much in common with historic Christianity," but he hasn't asked himself whether that form of " Christianity " (agnosticism with a touch of Christian sentiment) is not precisely the thing that M. Maritain, Miss Sayers and Mr. Lewis spend most of their time in attacking. The " belief " in Christianity that Signor Croce holds is that held by Senor Santayana : both philosophers equate Christianity with Mediterranean culture (the " significant enormity " of M. Maritain, the " significant trend " of Mr. Thomas) and both, being anxious to maintain the culture, take their caps off in church with a shrug of the shoulders more reminiscent of Socrates and his cock than of the Pope and his bull.

Mr. Dawson himself is in some danger of being burnt by the Inquisition. When he stresses, as he does so often, the fact that modern Europe owes a great part of its culture to the Church, or when he urges his belief that a religion is *culturally* necessary, he is within sight of the significant enormity that so scandalizes the supernatural logic of M. Maritain. When he says that " the great religions are the foundations on which the great civilizations rest," he is uttering an historical truth which agnostic Humanists like myself can embrace with gratitude ; but when M. Maritain tells us that the duty of the Catholic Church is to take over the other great civilizations

" not without bloodshed," he is uttering the same kind of barbarous propaganda as that uttered by General Franco and which so digusted all decent people—including Maritain himself.

What is Mr. Dawson really interested in, apart from the pious hope that one day " the universal Church " of Catholic abstract theory may become by consent the universal Church in concrete reality? He is obviously interested in the continuity of European culture. One of our finest humanist literary critics, who has indeed written a book entitled *For Continuity*, puts the case for humanist concern for this subject in *Education and the University* (1943), explicitly dissociating himself from the view of Mr. Eliot, who had criticized his humanist approach in his own address to the Archbishop of York's Conference at Malvern in 1941. " It is the preoccupation," Dr. Leavis replies, " with cultural values as human and separable from any particular religious frame or basis, the offer at a cultural regeneration that is not to proceed by way of a religious revival, that prompts the description ' humanist.' Literary criticism must, in this sense, always be humanist; whatever it may end in, it must be humanist in approach, in so far as it is literary criticism and not something else. It seems to me obvious that the approach needed in education must be in the same way humanist . . . The aim is to kep as close as possible to the concrete, and to deal with general considerations in terms related as immediately as possible to practice—or to particular proposals conceived as practical."

The answer to the problem of culture, too, I feel, must be in this way humanist and must keep as close as possible to the concrete. The valid criticism of those who make the religio-cultural diagnosis is that they conceive as solution no less a thing than wholesale conversion—conversion to a brand-new form of Christianity through the soil, conversion to Christian Conservatism " in the very broadest sense of the word " because Captain Jones has seen through Low and the *Manchester Guardian*, conversion to the doctrines of St. Thomas Aquinas by means not unattended with bloodshed, conversion to Catholicism (meaning in practice the Roman Church of the

twentieth century) because the very different Catholic Church of the early middle ages unified European culture more than a thousand years ago . . . Proposals like these are completely divorced from contemporary reality; indeed, that of Mr. Dawson limits itself in the main to a reminder that modern Europe owes much more to Christianity, and also to mediaeval Islam, than some people have supposed—and this is a valuable reminder both for those who, like Mr. McCabe, elevate the contribution of Islam at the expense of the Christian contribution and for those who, like the majority of Catholic writers, elevate the Christian contribution at the expense of the Islamic. "It is impossible to separate culture from religion," says Dawson, "and the farther we go back in history, or the lower we descend the scale of social development, the more closely are they related to one another." Precisely; but the argument logically leads us to the addition: "And the higher we go, the less." And this, too, may be an historical truth.

VI.

What I want to dissociate myself from in the strongest terms is that philistine, so called "scientific" view which sees Christianity as merely one of the great religions, no more important for us than Buddhism. (The argument is also used, in a rather different context, by the new school of Californian mysticism, centring around Heard, Huxley and Isherwood.) It is true that nearly every tenet of the Christian faith is duplicated, almost in the same words, by each of the other higher religions. But we are Europeans (and most Americans are also Europeans): Christianity is virtually the only high form of religion we have ever known—for the comparatively few Jews (whose great contribution to our civilization, quite apart from Christianity, has been out of all proportion to their numbers) and the very few Mohammedans don't affect our discussion of Europeans in general. Our whole manner of thought, our whole literature, our whole art, our whole conversation, even to a great extent our science, are

permeated through and through with Christian ideas and, even more important, Christian emotions. "Thank God," said the virtually agnostic D. H. Lawrence, "I am *not* free—any more than a rooted tree is free." The roots of modern European culture are mostly Christian roots, and for pointing this out in his many volumes—particularly as he made a point of stressing the mediaeval Islamic influence also—Christopher Dawson should have been received by the R.P.A. with open arms as a fellow-Darwinian. It is only the charm of novelty which leads Huxley and Isherwood to get so excited over the Transmigration of Souls or the concept of Dharma, Kharma and Nirvana.

Modern European culture, mainly rooted in Christianity, has got to remain Christian in some respects. It would be as foolish—and, I should say, as impossible—for us to throw Christianity completely overboard (as Dawson fears) as to return consciously to Catholicism (as Dawson hopes). The "high-minded Agnostics" whom G. K. Chesterton used to laugh at in his (presumably) low-minded way were high-minded precisely because they did something which G. K. C. believed to be impossible: they discarded Christian metaphysics, while retaining a large part of Christian morality and sentiment.

This was entirely in accordance with the normal methods of cultural development, as seen in the history of mankind or in the biography of a single being. Christianity, perhaps above all, adopted this method; otherwise it wouldn't have been able to survive. A big book would be required if one were to list the many things that Christianity took over consciously from earlier sources, to say nothing of the even more numerous things which it took over unconsciously, because of the normal working of men's minds. The very expression, "the Holy Roman Empire," in the truly Catholic days when it was a reality, tells us that, though Christianity can claim much of the credit for unifying European culture, part of the credit must go to the pre-Christian Romans, themselves the heirs of Greece, who were the heirs of the ancient Egyptian-Mediterranean culture. To the writer of the Apocalypse Rome was the scarlet

woman, the abomination of abominations, the whore of Babylon (an idea borrowed by the Reformation fifteen hundred years later), but the time came—not unattended with mass murder—when this abominable Rome, who was no better than she should be, became the holy of holies, the seat of the Pope, the destination of the shorter pilgrimage.

Nor was this procedure—" high-minded mediaeval Christians living on, and *in*, the capital of the pagan empire "—restricted to things outward. It was even more noticeable in things of the mind. The Alexandrian Fathers " received Plato into the Church," as a witty priest once put it in the *Criterion* ; and in the thirteenth century Aristotle, or a part of him, was led in by St. Thomas Aquinas. The laws of modern Europe and America date back to mediaeval Christendom and thence to pre-Christian Rome. And everyone is aware that the mediaeval Church did a good deal to preserve classical literature and art, though we must add to the more popular of Catholic legends the further historical facts that the Moors, in Spain and elsewhere, did an equal amount of preservation, without the forgery and the omissions and the burning that were the darker side of the Christian monastic culture.

Mr. Dawson is probably quite right to lament that Christian historians have " strangely neglected " the mixed culture of the Western Mediterranean, whose predominating features were Moslem. But the condemnation cannot include other historians, for both H. G. Wells and Joseph McCabe have laid great stress on it. Admittedly, they have contrasted the scientific nature of this mixed civilization with the religious nature, the theological bent, of mediaeval Catholicism ; whereas Mr. Dawson reminds us that Moslem theology was as universal in its claims as the Catholic. Let us admit that religion dominated both cultures, while reminding Mr. Dawson that religion could hardly have dominated this *mixed* culture of Moslems, Jews and Christians which the Moslem civilization had largely brought about. It is difficult not to feel, even in the light of Mr. Dawson's own facts, that Mr. McCabe is at least partly right when he stresses the *tolerant* nature of this Moslem-inspired mixed civilization—which was also, of course,

as Dawson has said, Greek-inspired. And it is a melancholy fact that, after the century or so when Christians put themselves to school with the Arabs at Toledo and Barcelona, their successors spent two or three centuries in driving their former masters out of Europe.

A similar thing is to be observed of the cult of chivalry, which Catholic journalists suppose to have been of Christian origin but which Catholic scholars like Dawson know to have been of Moslem. Mr. Dawson evidently cannot approve of the Albigensian heresy (which, as he says, came from the same quarter in southern France) any more than could Pope Innocent the Third, who, early in the thirteenth century, launched a crusade against it and put it down successfully "not without bloodshed." (It was, in fact, exterminated, with a great deal of murder and torture.) So there seems to be some truth in the traditional agnostic view that the new ideals of culture, learnt by the Christians from the Moslems and the Jews (who had learnt them from the Greeks and others), were accompanied by a measure of tolerance and even free-thought which was opposed by the Catholic Church. This is not to deny the achievements of the Catholic Renaissance later on, but it is to point out how many "pagan" elements managed to survive to build up those achievements and how scandalized by most of those achievements would have been not only St. Bernard of Clairvaux but St. Francis of Assisi himself.

The same normal methods of cultural development, so curiously despised by Chesterton and Mr. Lunn, are seen in the biography of an individual human being—for the natural laws of growth apply to the mind in much the same way as they do to the body, and we know that a baby in the womb compresses into nine months untold aeons of animal development. The normal method of life is precisely this constant process of rejecting some things, while retaining others, a process which Chesterton and Mr. Lunn conceive as being peculiar to the Agnostics. Our mental and spiritual development proceeds by as many little stages as our physical development; we are not free of what has gone before, any more than a tree is free of its roots.

There is no question of a deliberate break, there never has been, in "the shoddy secular substitutes for Christianity." The Catholic criticism of secularism falls into two parts, each neatly contradicting the other. Humanists, Agnostics, and so forth, are first criticized for living on the capital of Christianity; before they can reply that this procedure is entirely in accordance with the normal development, including the Christian development, of cultural civilization . . . "*Furthermore*," the Catholics bellow, "you are completely cut off from your religious roots." Personally I feel that, if only the Catholics would decide which accusation they prefer, then we could begin to talk sense. I don't deny that some of the blame may rest on the other side; dogmatic Atheists, for instance, who are really nearer to Catholicism than to agnosticism, are, I suppose, indignant when you tell them that much of their culture is based on Christian ideas. But the true agnostic position (however much individual Agnostics may blusteringly deny it) is clearly the application to culture of the theory of evolution. And this *means* living in great part "on the capital of Christianity," as Christianity lived and lives on the capital of the classical culture, the Persian culture, the Hebrew culture. This last is partly accepted by Mr. Lunn, who speaks truly of Christianity being "the heir to Greece and Rome." (Though it became the heir to Greece through Islam.) Put accusingly, this logically resolves itself into: "High-minded Christians, living on the capital of Greece and Rome." They certainly did, partly, and all of us can be very grateful for the fact, while regretting with Matthew Arnold that mediaeval Christendom so sacrificed the Hellenic spirit to the Hebraic. "To the worth and grandeur of the religious side in man," said Arnold again, "culture is rejoiced and willing to pay any tribute, except the tribute of man's totality."

VII.

I may be reminded that this book is understood to concern itself mainly with English culture, and that Catholics are a

small minority in England, taking the population as a whole. This is true enough, though I have never denied that modern culture is bound up with the past, including the Catholic past, and English culture to some extent with European. It should be noted furthermore that the Church of England contains some Anglo-Catholics, exceedingly vocal of recent years, whose cultural position is almost indistinguishable from the Roman.

Certainly, though, the bulk of the population occupy in religious matters a position roughly half-way between Catholicism and agnosticism, whether they are in the Low section of the Church of England, in the Nonconformist Churches, or non-church-goers who retain much of this "middle-Christian" culture. Mass-Observation reports, including one referred to by the Church Assembly which issued in 1945 the famous pamphlet, *Towards the Conversion of England*, reckon the proportion of British church-goers as about 10 per cent. to 15 per cent. I suppose another 10 per cent. to 15 per cent. are conscious Agnostics, Jews, Atheists, etc. This leaves roughly 70 per cent. to 80 per cent. who don't think highly enough of Christianity, or the Churches, to partake in the religious services, except on rare occasions (though a good few listen regularly to the radio services), but who would be very indignant indeed if you suggested that they were not Christians.

"It seems possible," wrote Renan in 1887, "that the collapse of supernatural belief will be followed by the collapse of moral convictions and that the moment when humanity sees the reality of things will mark a real moral decline. Under the influence of illusions the good gorilla succeeded in making an astonishing moral effort. Remove the illusions and a part of the factitious energy that they aroused will disappear. If you take away the working man's beer you must not expect to get the same amount of work out of him."

This passage is quoted by Dawson in his essay, "Rationalism and Intellectualism," and also forms the theme and the epigraph of Arnold Lunn's *The Good Gorilla*; yet neither writer sees what is wrong with it. Renan was evidently working on the assumption that there is a small minority of

people who dictate the religion or the philosophy of an age, and a great majority, " the working man," who take what " beer " is offered to them. This may have been the case in certain ages and civilizations of the past, but the problem of religious belief in the modern world, both in Renan's time and ours, is not so simple. The growth of democracy has not been in the political sphere alone ; there is no question to-day of a small minority either dictating the religious opinions of the majority or thinking it expedient to propagate a religion in which they themselves don't believe. The B.B.C. and most national newspapers in Britain are propagandists for Christianity ; Christianity is taught in all schools ; most people say they are Christian if asked their religion. Yet the churches and chapels have never been so empty and the belief in some of the essential doctrines so slight. It is absurd to blame either the cinemas, which are vaguely Christian still (our biggest cinema capitalist, Mr. Rank, is an ardent Methodist), or the R.P.A., which has affected only a minority. It is the general cultural climate of the age which is working against orthodox religion ; but this hasn't resulted in a general moral decline, as Renan feared, for even M. Maritain has admitted the moral advance in the last hundred and fifty years.

In 1903 an inquiry was initiated by Cadbury in the *Daily News* into the condition of the religious denominations in London. It was found that of every hundred inhabitants only sixteen were practising Christians. The result of this, and subsequent surveys, has led many religious writers—including Miss Sayers, Mr. Dawson, Professor Berdyaev and Brother Every—to refer to the present position as remarkably like decadent Rome's. They predict a new Dark Age, with people like themselves in the position of the monks, carrying on Christian culture while the new barbarians work out their barbarity in the world beyond the cloister. They forget that the religion the Romans took lightly was not Christianity but paganism ; it was Christianity which " saved the world " on the religious view—and, indeed, partly on the agnostic. If we are to make an entirely logical comparison, then, the religion that is apparently going to save us this time will not

be orthodox Christianity, for that is the religion we take lightly, as the decadent Romans did the official paganism. The saving religion will have to be a fresh religion, though owing something to orthodox Christianity, as Christianity owed something to paganism. And this prospect is not likely to please orthodox propagandists, however much it may please Mr. Murry. Those who have made the comparison with the Decline and Fall are really putting themselves, not in the position of the Christian monks and nuns, but in that of the pagan priests and their temple prostitutes who tried vainly to maintain the religion of Apollo. "Our age," writes Berdyaev, "resembles that of the fall of the Roman empire, the failure and drying-up of Graeco-Roman culture. It is a sign of the approach of a new age of religion." If this is true —but I don't think it is—then we can say farewell to Christianity.

Personally I don't believe the position will alter much within the next few hundred years; a large-scale conversion to orthodoxy is the dream of idle minds, as the fears that England will throw the entire Christian tradition overboard are nightmares which come from sharing a late supper with St. Thomas Aquinas. In a sense, what gets the goat of orthodox propagandists like Dorothy Sayers is that people in general have too much Christianity in them; they are Christians without knowing the rules, which to dabblers in the history of heresy is the sin against the Holy Boast. They don't care a damn for damnation, but they try in the main—surely at least as successfully as their predecessors?—to treat their neighbour as they would like to be treated themselves; they have never heard of Original Sin, but to be proud of one's own achievements, appearance, money, is rightly considered by them a folly; they are extremely hazy about "the fairy-story of the three supernatural men" (as Matthew Arnold designated the doctrine of the Holy Trinity) but they believe that love and friendship, in the various forms they naturally take, are the noblest things in life; they don't give a tinker's curse for the pilgrim's progress, but Mr. Talkative, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, my Lord Time-server, and Mr. Facing-both-ways

are by no means favourites in their society. And the overwhelming majority of English people are so bound up with the democratic idea that totalitarian methods, such as the suppression of minorities, the use of torture, the organization of secret police, the stifling of free journalism, are automatically repugnant to us.

Admittedly, as Maritain and Dawson point out, we owe a large part of this repugnance to totalitarian methods to the influence of Christianity. But we need to ask: what *kind* of Christianity? Certainly not Catholicism when it was in undisputed power. For the Catholic mediaeval civilization, for all its undoubted virtues, was the greatest totalitarian system that Europe has ever seen. Professor Berdyaev, in an unguarded moment, has admitted that Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler, etc., represent "a return to the Middle Ages." So they do. And not merely a return to the Middle Ages, but a return to past ages in general, whether Catholic or Protestant, when a powerful creed tried to put down "heretical" opposition with the stake and the sword. It is very significant that Hitler, though a Catholic in theory, once said that a *Cromwell* was "the man needed to-day by Germany."

No country can boast that its history contains no examples of totalitarian methods. The Irish massacres of Cromwell, and his scarcely less vigorous persecutions at home, are a witness that Protestantism in England, for a short time at least, could match the horrors of the Thirty Years' War on the continent. But several countries, including England, can at any rate claim that they have been relatively free from totalitarianism—and therefore relatively free—during the past two hundred years or so. And this freedom has coincided with the growth of liberalism, of toleration, of agnosticism. Conservatives like Captain Jones and Catholics like Mr. Lunn and Mr. Dawson see liberalism and agnosticism as paving the way for Fascism and Communism. This is hardly so. Conservatism, Catholicism, Fascism, Communism are in a sense variations of the same species; even those who angrily deny this will not be able to deny that all these variations of the same species loathe liberalism and all its works with the same disgust.

Mr. Dawson seems to think that the evils of an authoritarian system come exclusively from Russia. "This is the new evil," he wrote in *The Judgement of the Nations* (1943), "that has spread from Russia, westward, into the very heart of Europe. It is no longer necessarily associated with Communism. On the contrary, it spreads by opposition, even more than by imitation. As soon as men decide that all means are permitted to fight an evil, then their good becomes indistinguishable from the evil that they set out to destroy."

But how can this be said to be a "new evil"? It is precisely that age-old combination of enthusiasm, ignorance and conceit which produced the Inquisition and the Wars of Religion, and whose prime enemy is the tolerant, exploring, liberal mind. It is the *religious* quality in Communism and Fascism which makes them so dangerous, as it is the absence of metaphysical assumptions in the morals of democracy which makes them suitable to a non-superstitious society. Sir Ernest Gowers, defending the word "ideology" in his pamphlet *Plain Words* (1948), says: "Now that people can no longer care enough about religion to fight, massacre and enslave one another to secure the form of its observance, we need a word for what has taken its place as an excitant of those forms of human activity." It was the Catholic historian Acton who wrote of the Jesuits of the seventeenth century: "It is this combination of an eager sense of duty, zeal for sacrifice, and love of virtue, with the deadly taint of a conscience perverted by authority, that makes them so odious to touch and so curious to study." The description applies, word for word, to the Fascists and Communists of our time. They, too, are dutiful, they sacrifice themselves for an ideal, and they are honest enough in matters not affecting party interests. But their conscience has been perverted by authority—by the authority of their religion.

VIII.

As long ago as the nineteen-twenties, in an essay reprinted in *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, Mr. Dawson predicted

the rise of Communism and Fascism. He asked his readers: "Will the world continue to 'progress' in the old Liberal sense, or shall we witness a return to older principles which have been falling into discredit for the last few centuries?"

We have witnessed a return to these older principles, a return to authority and discipline. As a natural consequence, we have seen bloodshed and misery on a scale virtually unknown since the seventeenth century. "The triumph of Bolshevism," Dawson says truly, "was the victory of authority and discipline over democratic idealism and individualism." So was the victory of Fascism in Italy and the victory of Nazism in Germany; and so, too, would be the victory of Catholicism in Europe and America, should that most unlikely thing ever occur. Authority and discipline, and a hatred of the liberal spirit, are the key-notes of all three faiths; and the methods of the Inquisition in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are the methods of Communism and Fascism to-day. The only hope for the world is therefore what Mr. Dawson thinks is the root cause of our troubles: that the world, not only India but Russia and Spain for example, should become thoroughly secularized by rational and artistic education. The glimmer of light in the world to-day is the adherence of the average citizen in the democratic countries to the moral principles of Christianity (or of the other high religions) and his complete indifference to theology, whether of the Catholic, Protestant, Fascist or Communist brand. If mankind wishes to survive in the second half of the twentieth century, we shall have to get rid of the authority and discipline of Fascism and Communism, as the eighteenth century got rid very largely of the authority and discipline of Catholic and Protestant theology.

Every evil of modern totalitarian systems has been copied from similar techniques used in the pre-liberal past by clerical or military despotisms. The comparison extends even to details. We have been horrified, for instance, by Hitler's crime against Lidice. But that technique of punishing the innocent for the rebellion of an individual was a common feature of wars and despotisms in the past. We read in Salimbene's *Chronicle* how in 1265 the Count of Flanders "destroyed

the town of Capicolo, and all were slain therein, men, women and children, for that they had hanged one of the aforesaid count's knights."

We are bound to be reminded, too, of the past treatment of religious "heretics" when we read of the Communist trials. In Dante's lifetime, not a century after St. Francis's death, friars were burned alive by their brother friars for no worse fault than obstinate devotion to the strict Rule of St. Francis.

"It is all very well saying 'To Hell with Culture'," says Dawson, "but that is just what has happened, and see where it has landed us! During the last thirty years the natural leaders of Western culture have been liquidated pretty thoroughly—on the battlefield, by firing squads, in concentration camps and in exile." I am puzzled to know what, as an Englishman, Dawson means by "us"; for, leaving aside "on the battlefield" as being irrelevant (because wars have existed before), all the items mentioned have occured in certain countries on the continent. I share Mr. Dawson's sense of shame and horror, but the significance of the Nazis, etc., seems to me to be other than the distinguished historian indicates. I see great hope for future civilization in the very number of people such men as Hitler had to eliminate in order to feel secure. If it had been just one here and there, Dawson's pessimism would be justified, but the Nazi concentration camps held thousands upon thousands of ordinary decent people, as well as "the leaders of Western culture" whom Dawson has mentioned. This in spite of the ruthless propaganda at the Nazis' disposal and the free services given in Catholic quarters which just turned the scale sufficiently to put Hitler into power. As for "us," that word is contradicted by "exile"; for, though the majority suffered and died, a minority did manage to escape to more liberal countries like Switzerland, France, Denmark, Holland, Britain and the U.S.A. Dawson gives the misleading impression that the majority of Europeans favoured totalitarianism, whereas the truth is that a small gang imposed it on the majority by propaganda or conquest, millions of Germans, for example, being ignorant

of Buchenwald, as millions of Victorians remained ignorant of the evils in the industrial areas.

What *kind* of Christianity, then, is behind our automatic repulsion to totalitarianism? If history has any significance at all, it is precisely the kind of Christianity that is Christian almost without knowing it, that is mainly responsible for our democracy. I grant Miss Sayers and Mr. Dawson that the democratic ideal does draw its main strength still from the Christian theory; the *theory* part of the argument is, to my mind, obviously correct, and is what I am anxious to point out. "The chief evils of the totalitarian State," says Dawson, "are due not to its ideals, but to the methods that are used to enforce them." The same is true of the Christian past: by their fruits shall ye know them. The fruits of Christendom up to modern times were not democratic fruits; they had their own virtues, but they were not the virtues of democracy. All too often is "conscience perverted by authority" the verdict passed on Christian culture by the historian—whether he be Catholic like the great Acton, Protestant like Coulton or agnostic like Professor Tawney. It was Christianity when the ideas of the Reformation, of the Renaissance and of liberalism had borne full fruit that is responsible to-day for our rejection of totalitarianism. It is not St. Thomas Aquinas we have to thank: it is the finer side of the Reformation, of Nonconformity, of the liberal, humanist tradition.

The majority of people don't read great literature, or look at great painting, or listen to great music; but while this moral basis of democracy exists in the hearts and minds of most of us, it is as rash to talk of a collapse of Christian tradition as it is of a total disappearance of popular culture. The vast majority of these non-Christian Christians are in a religious position exactly contrary to that of T. E. Hulme: it is not that they put up with the sentiment for the sake of the dogma, but that they may possibly swallow the dogma for the sake of the sentiment. Writers like Miss Sayers, Mr. Lewis, M. Maritain, Mr. Eliot, Brother Every, Mr. Dawson, Father d'Arcy, Mr. Turnell, Mr. Bethell . . . writers like these who honestly think that the world is panting for a return to dogma and "once

more seeks absolute standards" (to quote Dawson's general introduction to *Essays in Order*, 1931), are to my mind completely out of touch with contemporary reality. (Unless we can congratulate them on their neat forecast of the "absolute standards" the democratic world has recently been fighting against.) The Christian sentiment is the thing that still lives, and will continue to live; the dogma died years ago—for the majority, at least, in England—and personally I don't fear its resurrection.

IX.

It is true that all of us suffer from some of the effects of the Machine Age, and it is impossible not to agree with much of what Catholics and Anglo-Catholics have written on this matter. But I fail to see its relevance to the religio-cultural diagnosis. In theory, Catholicism may be against the machine; but in practice Catholics are as much of the machine age as the rest of us. Catholic schoolboys are as enthusiastic for the cinema and the dogs as are their Protestant and agnostic friends; and while it is true to say—with L. H. Myers—that the modern age is distinguished by its vulgarity, it is not the fact that we are particularly noted for our lack of morals.

Mr. Dawson, agreeing with most Catholic and a good few other Christian writers, thinks we *are* noted for our lack of morals—or, rather, that we are faced with the alternative between a rigid Catholic morality and a complete abandonment of moral tradition. Contrasting us with the Victorians, he once said: "The attack on tradition has shifted to the sphere of morals, and men no longer believe that it is possible to throw over the religious doctrines of Christianity and yet preserve the moral and social traditions of European civilization intact. Consequently, our civilization is now faced with a definite issue. We have to choose between two contradictory ideals—on the one hand, that of the traditional Christian morality, which finds its most complete expression in Catholicism—on the other, the ideal of a purely hedonist morality, which involves

unrestricted freedom in sexual relations and the reorganization of marriage and the family on the model of the new Russian legislation. Faced with these alternatives, the ordinary Englishman is in a difficult position."

Here again we have Mr. Dawson's principal weakness, a weakness surprising in a very distinguished historian. Once again he postulates a rigid " Right-Left " alternative which bears not the slightest relation to the facts. It is true that the Victorian and Edwardian Agnostics kept usually to the moral principles " of Christianity " as learnt at their mother's knee ; but these principles, they said and proved, are only called " Christian " by tradition and affection. An almost exactly similar code of behaviour is taught by all the great religions, and was taught before they came into existence in their present form.

" Present form " begs a question, of course. For " the ordinary Englishman " mentioned, instead of finding the most complete expression of the traditional Christian morality in Catholicism, thinks, and rightly so in my opinion, that much of the " morality " of the Catholic faith is very immoral indeed. He is particularly disgusted at the celibacy imposed on priests (this idea is Roman only, for the Greek Orthodox Church agrees with the Protestant) ; at the chief " reason " for that imposition—the confessional (based entirely on one ambiguous passage in the Gospels) ; at the useless and frivolous existence led by many monks ; at the *Index* which forbids Catholics—not always successfully—to read some of the greatest achievements of past and present literature ; and at various other things.

Dawson takes far too much notice of rules, and not enough of how people in different ages actually behaved. We know from Salimbene, Chaucer, Rabelais and Boccaccio what a " pagan " standard of behaviour actually existed beneath the Catholic camouflage ; we know from Fielding, Hogarth and Smollett what was the actual standard of conduct in the England of the eighteenth century. It is not until we reach the Victorian period that we find actual English conduct bearing any strict relation to the rules laid down by orthodoxy ; and,

while the Victorian family atmosphere had much more to its credit than Samuel Butler believed, it will not be denied that its attitude towards sexual morality was unhealthy and narrow-minded. All that has really happened since then to the ideas of the bulk of the population is that the ordinary decent girl of to-day admits a sexual freedom approaching, though not nearly reaching, the freedom of the eighteenth century; the freedom of Mr. Dawson's favourite century, the thirteenth, would be absolutely abhorrent to her. The chief difference, in the mental sphere, lies in the degree of honesty involved.

What Mr. Dawson has done is to take the ideas of Bloomsbohemia for the conduct of the nation. Admittedly, the ideas propagated by Hollywood might seem at first glance to lead in the same direction; but here again we must face the facts. What is the chief ideal of the vast majority of young women who visit the pictures twice a week? To become an amateur prostitute? No. To have a reasonable amount of amusement and then to settle down and raise a family? Yes. And how does this ideal differ, save in point of detail (and the details are certainly very important from the non-moral point of view), how does this ideal differ from the ideals of similar people in previous generations? The answer is that it doesn't differ at all.

The truth of the matter is that Catholicism to-day, at least in England, is the last gasp of the Victorian puritan bellows. It is simply not the fact that we are faced with an alternative between a rigid Catholic scheme of morals (which has never been accepted in practice in predominantly Catholic countries) and a Bloomsbohmuscovitch anarchy. Nor is such an alternative likely to face us in the future. "The modern generation seems none the happier for its emancipation," continues Dawson. For "emancipation" read "honesty," and you get a truer picture. Even in England in the nineteenth century the more harsh side of Puritanism affected only a minority, though a very powerful minority; many a poor woman must have echoed the reply of the labourer's wife to the interfering old maid from the manor: "Lor, mum, that's the only pleasure me and my o'd man got." The normal habit of people in previous generations, particularly under Catholicism, was to

preach one thing and practise another. The *Canterbury Tales* show us a more complete emancipation from sexual restraint than any modern person dreams of, under cover of a rigid code of behaviour. Many Popes, Cardinals, priests, monks and nuns in the Middle Ages preached continence but practised fornication. Friars, vowed to chastity, were so licentious that they became a serious menace to family life; contemporary literature and legal and clerical documents are full of references to this problem. The more respectable Popes had natural sons, called "nephews," some of whom achieved high rank in the Church; the less respectable were simply whoremongers, like many of their subordinates. They may have been happier for having it both ways, but the modern world—recovered from the harsher aspects of Puritanism but still puritan compared with the thirteenth century—is certainly the more honest. We have, in fact, become responsible for our actions, no longer naughty boys spending our lives between the whorehouse and the confessional. Prostitutes and priests may begin to lack custom, but the remedy lies in their own hands: they can turn over a new leaf and become ordinary decent men and women.

Speaking of the early monks, Dawson says: "They built up a new social life outside the state—a life of the simplest possible kind, without private property, without personal independence, without marriage; a communism founded on poverty, chastity and obedience, which is the only true communism that the world has known." I wouldn't call this life simple: it seems to me an extremely artificial and sophisticated existence, scarcely tolerable save in the reflection of one's self-esteem. What could be less simple and more artificial than the monastic life? Their whole rule is as elaborately drawn up as the programme of a court. Like kings and courtiers, the inmates have hardly a moment to call their own. Their meals are taken in an unnatural silence; their sleep is broken artificially by prayers; their very "recreation" is bounded on all sides by etiquette. It is the sort of life which makes absolutely no appeal to lovers of simplicity; it is only suitable for those who have an exaggerated respect

for ceremonial and convention. As Cyril Tourneur truly remarked: "Ceremony hath made many fools."

X.

It would be foolish, on the other side, not to welcome the co-operation of the Catholic Church in "putting our wave of progress in its place." It goes without saying that intelligent Catholics are as much alive to the dangers of this Cinema Age, as Dawson calls it, as are intelligent non-Catholics. Having regard to their numbers in this country, it might even be said, with a deal of truth, that the Catholics and Anglo-Catholics have done more than their fair share of spade-work; their contribution certainly shows up favourably, in comparison with the meagre contribution of the Nonconformists and Low-Churchmen. But to say that the Catholic Church, or the Churches in general, have made a particular point of this subject is untrue. The Church Assembly report, *Towards the Conversion of England*, recommended high-pressure advertising to convert the population! They would have done better to preach—yea, in season and out of season against these modern, "American" methods of publicity, which are one of the chief factors making for cultural decline.

All the Churches, to take a similar instance, were full of praise for Miss Sayers's radio play-cycle, *The Man Born to be King*, despite the sensational manner in which the sacred theme was presented there. Do the clergy really think that to modernize the Gospel story in the schoolgirl's-slang style of Miss Sayers (by which the fisherman Andrew is made to say, "Simon's always very independent. And *frightfully positive* about everything") is to do a lasting service to Christianity?

Such instances could be multiplied. So far from the Churches in general having made war on the machine, they are as full of machine-culture as ever they can hold. They may make war on the cinemas, because the bulk of the youthful population prefer that form of entertainment to the Church's form of worship on Sunday nights, but while they continue to make so

much fuss about the formality of going to church, while ignoring the subtler forms of modern vulgarity, or going in for this vulgarity themselves in a big way, they can only be said to share in the general cultural decline—which is not, in the strict sense of the word, a moral decline—and not to be our leaders in the effort to check it.

I can understand the Church Assembly wanting to commission orthodox writers to compose even more books and pamphlets, contradicting " the mass of cheap scientific books, written on atheistic principles " ; I can even understand their enthusiasm for Miss Dorothy Sayers and Mr. C. S. Lewis ; what I cannot understand is the Assembly's willingness to place the Christian Church—the Church of Dante and Bunyan—on a level with Bile Beans, Littlewood's, Players Please, and other celebrated laxatives. I am sufficiently a Christian myself to be horrified at the mere suggestion.

I know the argument in favour. It is (presumably) this : that the Christian Church has to adopt the methods of conversion normally used at a particular place and time—and this is high-speed advertising at the present moment in Britain and the U.S.A. This strikes me as being a specious argument. Christianity at its best—and this means the sentiment, which has never done anyone any harm, not the dogma, which has caused the death and mutilation of millions—Christianity is a noble thing, a tradition which has, like the humanist tradition, nothing whatever in common with the mechanical, commercial habits of some parts of modern civilization. One minute the Church tells us it is fighting for its life against these trends, the next moment it is contemplating wearing the shoddy armour of its adversary.

It is true that there are some things in the religio-cultural diagnosis with which everyone can agree. As it is a fact that most men in factories and offices to-day have jobs less interesting, if less strenuous, than many a labourer in the old rural order, so it is a fact that in the past religion was bound up with culture in a way that it is not now. But some of the conclusions drawn by Christians from this latter fact are clearly untenable. For instance, Berdyaev writes in *The Fate of Man in the*

Modern World (Chapter IV: "Culture and Christianity"): "In the past the masses participated in culture by way of religion, and the culture of the broad masses was almost exclusively a religious culture. Religion was the meeting-place of the masses with the aristocratic cultural class. Only religion is capable of making such a combination: neither philosophy nor science, nor enlightment, neither art nor literature can do this. Deprived of religious basis, any high-qualitative culture inevitably becomes separated from popular life and an isolated cultural élite is produced, which keenly feels its uselessness to the people. Humanist culture was never popular: it was the culture of an upper, intellectual class which had no real social foundation."

Here again we see the dangers attendant on abstract theorizing, divorced from anything remotely resembling the concrete. I am aware, of course, that Professor Berdyaev is a cosmopolitan author and suffers from the disadvantages natural to such an unnatural position; but, as he speaks so largely, we have to take him as having pondered the cultural situation, past and present, in each of the principal countries of Europe, including England. And we must ask ourselves: is his diagnosis true of English culture? Partly it is: the story of two books, and two books only, the Bible and the *Pilgrim's Progress*, being found in every cottage in the land till quite recent times, is an old story but true in the main. And some of the old popular culture, the culture of the illiterate, had a religious basis, though pagan-and-Christian rather than Christian alone. Having regard, however, to the popularity with all classes of the Elizabethan-Jacobean drama and of the novels of Dickens later on, the last sentence of Berdyaev quoted above is clearly not true of England, whatever truth it may have of Russia. The plays of Shakespeare, the novels of Dickens, certainly had a religious aspect; but so has humanism this religious aspect, despite the nonsense talked by Berdyaev elsewhere—in *The End of Our Time*—about Leonardo being "responsible for the mechanization and materialization of our life, for its deadness and for the loss we have suffered of its highest meaning."

Berdyaev wasn't thinking of Leonardo's painting when he

said this, nor primarily of the great artist's dabbling in mechanics : he was taking Leonardo as a typical representative of the Renaissance philosophy. Arnold's meaning of the word " machinery " was rather different : machinery was opposed to culture, in his view, not because it denied orthodoxy but because it represented the mere outward side of things, the dead letter as opposed to the spirit. With that meaning, the Renaissance, and in part the Reformation, can be said to have been a reaction against the machinery of mediaeval civilization : the Renaissance a reaction against the rigid machinery of Catholic thought, the Reformation against the machinery of clerical control. No one who reads his Chaucer will doubt that the pre-Reformation Church had become a colossal machine for the manufacture of hypocrites and the amassing of money. It was against this state of affairs that the more cultured side of the Reformation movement protested (even Luther first took his stand on the issue of bogus Indulgences, which were so profitable to the papal exchequer), though Protestantism degenerated into a machine of only slightly better character later on. Arnold recognized that all worship of the dead letter, whether it be of the mediaeval Church or of some aspects of nineteenth-century Liberalism, works against culture, works against humanity.

He was no optimist, and he was too closely in touch with life to be an infallible philosopher ; but for all its imperfections *Culture and Anarchy* is the complete answer to the theorizing of Berdyaev and his followers. It is extremely foolish of these people to ignore the common sense of such Humanists as Arnold, George Eliot and Dickens, while seizing avidly upon the extravagant notions of such fanatics as Neitzsche and Kierkegaard. I am aware, of course, that common sense is uninteresting to those fond of melodramatic notions like Original Sin, " the end of our time " and " the parting of the ways." But before you can be seriously interested in culture you have to drop melodrama and concentrate, as Arnold pointed out, on " seeing things as they really are." As Cobbett and William Lovett faced the problems of industrial society without resorting to Evil and other capitalized abstractions, so did Arnold

face the problems of culture. He was wise at the time, while the followers of Berdyaev are foolish after the event.

XI.

I don't see that the religio-cultural diagnosis is very helpful to us, except in the elementary reminder that " man does not live by bread alone." It doesn't seem to have much to say on the problem of culture in a democratic society. The Catholics put down the decline of culture to the account of the Renaissance, the Reformation and secular Humanism ; Peter Wust, for instance, in his *Crisis in the West*, speaks of " Mankind's fall from the lofty spiritual height of the Middle Ages." In other words, most Catholic writers prefer a hierarchical society to a democratic, and so cannot be said to be genuinely interested in the cultural problems of democracy at all—since their solution would mean a return to hierarchy and since they believe, with Berdyaev, that " the principle of equality is one of envy." As Eric Gill once said that Giotto was the last great painter of Europe, not the first (a statement more remarkable for its philosophical consistency than for its artistic sensibility, for it is even more mistaken than the view denied), so most of his co-religionists think St. Thomas Aquinas the most helpful guide to contemporary problems. It is true that, while Berdyaev puts down the mechanical nature of our society to the account of Leonardo, M. Maritain is inclined to stress the progress in humanity in recent years, a progress which he feels must ultimately go to the credit of the Catholic Church, however much the visible portion thereof fought against it.

Pre-Renaissance culture is not to be despised, but in comparison with Renaissance and post-Renaissance culture, it is clearly the lesser part. I refuse to follow Eric Gill into believing that Dante was the last European poet of any great importance. " It was a victory for physical science," Dawson says. Only for that ? Were not Shakespeare, Montaigne, Cervantes as typical of the Renaissance as Galileo ? Did not Leonardo create something else besides catapults and flying-

machines? "What point of contact is there," asks Berdyaev, "between St. Francis and Dante and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?" Contrast the view of F. R. Leavis: "The seventeenth century is at one end in direct and substantial continuity with the world of Dante . . . "

Both these eminent persons—the Russian theologian and the English literary critic—agree, it is true, that there was much to be admired in the world of St. Francis and Dante. No one will deny the achievements of that age, but before we can agree with Herr Wust's opinion of its "lofty spiritual height," we have to observe how in fact the great men of the age were treated by their contemporaries, above all by the Church itself. St. Francis and his early missionaries were treated with brutality. Florence would have burned Dante alive if she could have taken him: and his *De Monarchia* was indeed burned as heretical by the Papal Legate eight years after his death. Aquinas was poisoned (so at least Dante believed) by the King who had been the special creation and particular champion of the Church; and within a few years of his death some of his doctrines were solemnly condemned at Paris and at Oxford. Roger Bacon was all but quenched in prison, and it is only by a miracle that we possess his writings.

It is clearly as mistaken to take Bacon, Aquinas, Dante and St. Francis as typical of the thirteenth century as it would be to take such men as Einstein, Sibelius, Yeats and T. F. Powys as typical of the twentieth. Such people, in the past and in the present, represent the genius of their age, the highest point reached, and certainly they also represent—as Shakespeare and Bunyan represent—the better side of the contemporary common man. Where many Catholics go wrong is in contrasting, say, Dante with the *Daily Comic Cuts*; this is as false as would be a similar contrast of the Inquisition with the freedom of worship and opinion granted to the citizens of modern democratic countries—false, that is to say, as a contrast between the *complete* culture of the thirteenth century and that of the twentieth. It would be very nice, indeed, if the position were as the less sensitive Catholics and Rationalists alike see it: if all the good were on the one side, and all the bad on the other.

Nothing is gained by denying the obvious facts that much of thirteenth-century culture was primitive and barbaric and much of twentieth-century culture vulgar and mechanical.

Catholic believers in the religio-cultural diagnosis—having the benefit of that post-mediaeval humanitarian culture which they combat vigorously on abstract grounds—don't often defend the Inquisition of the past. But they do defend the Inquisition of the present. For the Congregation of the Holy Office hasn't disappeared: it has simply changed its character, being now as great a handicap to the free development of the mind as formerly to the free development of the spirit. Its jurisdiction is limited now to the suppression of "heretical" literature. Catholics are forbidden to read the masterpieces of such authors as Bunyan, Gibbon, Montaigne, Francis Bacon, Locke, Mill, Stendhal, Flaubert, George Sand, Balzac, Richardson, Hobbes, even the great Catholic historian Lord Acton. It is true that intelligent Catholics treat the *Index* with contempt, at least they disregard it altogether in England, France and the United States. From one point of view—which I don't stress—this is the modern Catholic version of the mediaeval trick of preaching one thing and practising another, for not only do you find no mention of the *Index* in the cultural works of Dawson, Maritain, d'Arcy, etc., (and therefore silence gives consent), but where it is mentioned from time to time in the Catholic press, as in the *Universe* a year ago, it is warmly defended.

This fortunate hypocrisy does, indeed, remove part of the dangers of the *Index*, and furthermore the Canon Law lays it down that students can get permission to read books prohibited to Catholics in general. Thus a Catholic student at Oxford or Cambridge, who is studying French literature, can get permission from his spiritual director to read the abominable works of Stendhal, Balzac and Flaubert—providing, of course, he takes proper precautions and doesn't leave them lying about to corrupt the innocence of his landlady's daughter. That is the theory. In practice, fortunately, most Catholic students at Oxford or Cambridge would see their spiritual director in Hell before they would seek his permission to read the masterpieces

of literature, whether on the *Index* or not. This shows a laudable, protestant spirit; but observe that we are speaking of heretical countries like England, France and the U.S.A. In those States where Catholicism is in full control—Eire and Quebec are instances—the *Index* is supplemented by an official State Censorship which restricts the import of books considered evil by the authorities. The banned list of Eire includes books by D. H. Lawrence, T. F. Powys, Sean O'Faolain, Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, Sean O'Casey, John dos Passos, Liam O'Flaherty, Theodore Dreiser, James T. Farrell, and other distinguished English, Irish and American writers; the banned list of Quebec is very similar, with the addition of the majority of modern French literature.

One would think that these deplorable facts—equal in cultural horror to the more celebrated totalitarian censorship imposed by the Bolsheviks and the Nazis—would be worth at least a footnote in the cultural writings of Dawson, Lunn, Maritain and Berdyaev. But these admirable writers are so concerned to point out the cultural deficiencies of the civilization which has produced modern French, English and American literature that they find no space to inform us that neither the Congregation of the Holy Office nor the Catholic authorities in Eire and Quebec can tell the difference between serious works of art and rubber-shop pornography.

It is true that a similar confusion sometimes exists in England and America: Lawrence's *Rainbow* and Joyce's *Ulysses* are cases in point. But a difference between free countries and Catholic, Communist and Fascist countries is that in the former there is right of appeal, while in the latter no such right exists. (The blunder about *The Rainbow* was put right after a protest by Galsworthy, Bennett, Sir Oliver Lodge, and others). But what would happen, by the example of Eire and Quebec, if England were converted to the Catholic Church? Dawson, Lunn, and d'Arcy have said that this conversion is essential if English culture is to survive. But converted England would not be under the comparatively enlightened rule of Mr. Dawson or Father d'Arcy or Mr. Lunn, all three of whom have had the benefit of a free upbringing in a heretical environment:

it would be thrown to the tender mercies of men whose skulls are so thick and whose sensibilities so coarse that they perceive no difference between *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* and *No Orchids for Miss Blandish.* Who can wonder, then, that some of us free citizens of England—while acknowledging the cultural merits of Catholicism in the past and of individual Catholics to-day—feel that a conversion to Rome would be as fatal to English culture and democracy as a conversion to Moscow? Luckily for us, neither the one nor the other is in the least likely to occur. Turning to the main part of the Church of England—for the Anglo-Catholics have no more a cultural position distinct from the Roman Catholics than have non-Communist Marxists from the Communists—we find the Church Assembly anxious to sell the Gospel to the nation as one sells a pound of cheese, and advocating even more of the chummy talks of Mr. C. S. Lewis and the vulgarization of the Bible of Miss Dorothy Sayers to combat the spread of agnostic ideas. There are, it is true, two meanings of "vulgarization," and in her extremely interesting introduction to the printed version of *The Man Born to be King* Miss Sayers tells us truly that the Gospels have been "vulgarized" into the contemporary language throughout the ages: our Authorized Version, for example, was translated into the language of the Jacobeans, so that every Englishman could read it or could understand it when read aloud.

But the truth of the Gospels cannot really be separated from the beauty of their language. Whether we see it as historical truth, with Miss Sayers and Mr. Lewis, as theological truth, with modern Catholic and Anglican scholars, or as a sublime version of the general spirit of all religions, with agnostic Humanists, the truth is bound up with the beauty of its expression. The greatest cultural achievement of the Reformation was the provision of the Bible in the vulgar tongue. Our own Authorized Version was not simply in the Elizabethan-Jacobean language, but in that language in its highest form—the language of the common people raised by art to the "n"th degree, as in Shakespeare. Miss Sayers, too, gives us a version in the common language of contemporary society, but not

raised by art, rather pandering to the very worst elements in modern life and literature. It is not merely that her language is sensational and full of schoolgirl slang: she has created a Jesus on the model of a hero in a lowbrow novel. If it were proposed to pull down Salisbury Cathedral and erect on its site a religious building composed of a mixture of Tudor garage, Odeon cinema and Woolworth's, the clergy would rightly protest; yet they not only received Miss Sayers's comparable reconstruction of the Gospels without protest, they warmly acclaimed it. If it were proposed to substitute for *Hymns Ancient and Modern* a jazzed-up score and snappier lyrics, angry letters would reach the offices of the *Times* and the *Spectator* from every vicarage in England; yet not only did letters of approval reach the *Radio Times* from priests, parsons and ministers over Miss Sayers's comparable jazz version of Jesus, Miss Sayers herself was not responsible. As she says herself, she accepted a commission and carried it through with her usual professional competence. The guilt rests with the Religious Department of the B.B.C.; and anyone who has suffered in silence—waiting for the News—the preposterous tone adopted by the regular clerical speakers, particularly at the end of the Children's Hour, will not be surprised that Miss Sayers's version was (in the words of the Department) "exactly what we wanted."

The religious culture of previous ages—that popular Puritanism, for instance, represented by Bunyan—was inseparable in its sensibility from the more secular aspects of the best parts of the contemporary civilization. I have commented on the serious quality of Victorian working-class autobiographies; they were serious—though often humorous enough in detail—whether they were written by men who believed in Christianity, or who partly believed in it, or who were Agnostics. Their serious, responsibile tone was partly owing to the influence of Nonconformist culture; but that's not the full story—the general culture of the age, of all ages previous to the era of Northcliffe and Hollywood, was serious and responsible. It is not the decline of religion, then, which has robbed us of seriousness and responsibility, but the general

decline of cultural standards. Christians in our time have produced works of art comparable to the best work of non-Christians : it will not be denied that in literature, for example, the writings of T. S. Eliot are on the same high level of achievement as those of " pagan " writers like Yeats, Forster, Pound, Joyce, Lawrence, Powys, Myers. But the difference between *Four Quartets* and *The Man Born to be King* is almost as great as that between *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* and *No Orchids for Miss Blandish.* We have seen, too, in the very interesting novels of Graham Greene, how easily a taste for Original Sin can be combined with a taste for Hollywood melodramatics ; and in the much weaker novels of the late Charles Williams, we have seen how religious orthodoxy can come to terms with Black Magic and the mechanics of the more vulgar kind of detective-story. A " conversion " to that type of Christianity would be easy enough for the modern world ; it would simply be adding another mechanical factor to the machine-mind we already suffer from. I hardly think that the Popes of the future, some of whom will almost certainly be Americans, will rest content with seeing Original Sin safely installed in Hollywood ; they will want to go further and to fight against culture wherever it rears its ugly, liberal head.

CHAPTER SIX

PROGRESS AND PAIN

I.

IN the four detailed chapters of this book I have ventured to criticize certain authors because their beliefs seemed to me too abstracted from contemporary reality : the Marxists, because of their failure to recognize the long bourgeois tradition of the English people ; the Conservatives, because of their insistence on the cultural merits of the upper classes and refusal to see the cultural contribution of the lower ; the agricultural enthusiasts for their deliberate blindness to the darker aspect of the rural past and to the compensating lighter hues of the industrial present ; and the Catholics for their concentration on what they take to be the spiritual supremacy of the Middle Ages and the cultural decline that they believe started with the Renaissance.

I can, in fact, take a metaphor from the last criticized and say that I have been acting as a sort of *Advocatus Diaboli* in regard to the various cultural diagnoses put forward ; and it is plainly my duty, in these two shorter concluding chapters, to maintain that attitude as far as possible now that my own theories—which have been hinted at throughout—are in the dock. I have had some amusement at the expense of what I conceived to be the abstract quality of other writers' cultural theories, so I must expect now a good deal of laughter in court when I have to admit that I am a believer in the abstract notion of Progress.

This, of course, is considered by many people to be ridiculously out of date : it is, it seems, a Victorian notion, though it is often dismissed as decadent with the aid of the thirteenth-century notion of Original Sin. Catholics hold that we have been deteriorating slowly ever since the early fourteenth century, and many people who are not Catholics believe that the

twentieth century has returned a dusty answer to the visionary prophecies of the nineteenth. I have to admit that the twentieth century is the Machine Age, the Age of the Cinema and the Atomic Bomb. But the age of Cobbett and Lovett was the age of the Industrial Revolution, and if they did not wholly despair I see no good reason why we should. Why shouldn't we take a tip from Morris, and purge our vulgarity by education as Cobbett and Lovett purged the worst industrial evils by reform? Perhaps it has not been fully understood how nearly unanimous has been the chorus of despair across the centuries, and how that very pessimism is a reason for our optimism. Our problems are, I believe, greater than the problems which faced previous centuries; but that in itself may be an argument in favour of progress. For we must recognize that every step forward, every problem settled, involves constantly a new series of problems which we haven't met before.

It is true enough, as I maintained early in my introductory chapter, that our present pessimism is more universal than any since the thirteenth century. But three points have now to be added: (1) that it is that very thirteenth century which Catholics and Anglo-Catholics and many other modern people look back upon as the Golden Age; (2) that people in all ages, including the Victorian, have been in blank despair about the present and the future, but that there were others who used their dissatisfaction as a spur to action for the benefit of posterity; and (3) that the contempt with the present has usually been fostered by a comparison with an imaginary past. To get the past into perspective, then, may be the first step towards action for the improvement of the future.

Modern praise of the thirteenth century would have been simply incomprehensible to those who had the misfortune, as they thought, to live in it. Anticipating Professor Berdyaev by seven hundred years, they considered, not only that their own time was a sad decline from previous ages, but that the world was growing old and could not possibly last much longer. The greatest of mediaeval historians, Matthew Paris, had no doubt that the thirteenth century marked the last

stage of senile decay; Adam Marsh, one of the greatest of the early Franciscans in England, was never weary of alluding to "these most damnable times," "these days of utter perdition" in which "no man can fail to see plainly that Satan is either already loosed or soon to be loosed"; the learned Bishop Grosseteste complained in a sermon before the Pope at Lyons that, leaving heretics aside, even the Catholic population was, as a body, incorporate with the Devil; Pope Innocent the Third wrote in a Bull of "the corruption of this world, which is hasting to old age"; and Dante shared the common belief that the end of the world was at hand when he left few seats vacant in his Paradise. Roger Bacon anticipated the verdict of modern criticism on the boasted philosophy of his contemporaries, but in the domain of history he shared the ignorance of his time. He did his own age the injustice of placing it on a lower moral level than the Rome of Seneca or the Greece of Aristotle. But he knew nothing whatever of the inner life of ordinary Greece and Rome: he had only spent long years in studying the religious and philosophical writings of their greatest men.

II.

The Renaissance largely shared Bacon's view; it was not until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that men faced the problem of the Ancients versus the Moderns. It is easy to look back upon the Elizabethan period as a time of confident vitality. So it must have been, in part; yet "Our most intimate knowledge of Elizabethan England," wrote Professor Raleigh, "is given us by writers who found in the life and changes of the time matter for complaint and protest." William Harrison, who wrote the *Description of England* in Holinshed's *Chronicle*, lamented the innovations of the time, saw signs of the decay of morality, and discoursed on the degeneracy of English courage; he was writing only a year or two before Drake started on his voyage round the world and not many years before the defeat of the Armada.

The gloomy prophecies of Popes, Bishops and philosophers in the thirteenth century—summed up in the phrase of Bernard of Morlaix: "The times are waxing late: the Judge is at the gate"—were repeated with equal conviciton by many of the religious sects of the Puritan period. A Quaker prophecy of 1658, for example, asserted that "The Lord God of Power is coming with Ten Thousand of his Saints, to judge the Earth, and to make a Desolation." The imminence of the Last Judgment was believed in then, as in the Middle Ages, by thousands of intelligent people; not, as to-day, by a handful of religious maniacs.

The Victorian period is usually considered to have been a time of simple optimism; but we must observe the cautious manner in which some of the most influential writers couched their belief in progress. *Culture and Anarchy* was a grim enough warning; while Leslie Stephen spoke of possible "social catastrophes" and held that "there may be a retrograde movement in the tidal wave which has often advanced so fitfully and irregularly. We have reached the edge of the promised land, but who can tell that the race may not be turned back to wander for forty years or forty centuries in the wilderness?"

But they had the past more in perspective. The Romantic Revival and the Oxford Movement certainly saw the Middle Ages in too rosy a light, but that error was probably preferable to the preceding error, which saw nothing but gloom between the Roman Empire and the Renaissance. Morris took a more balanced view than Newman: he admitted the social and religious miseries of the Middle Ages, while insisting that they had much to teach the modern world in respect of the relation between art and life. What he said about those cyclic views of culture which became popular in Europe after his death, particularly in the nineteen-twenties, seems to me very sound: "No man has any right to say that all has been done for nothing, that all the faithful unwearying strife of those that have gone before us shall lead us nowhither; that mankind will but go round and round in a circle for ever: no man has a right to say that." No, not even Spengler or W. B. Yeats.

The belief in progress can logically have but two alternatives: either a belief in gradual decline from some period in the past or a belief in the rise and fall of successive civilizations. The belief in a decline since Greece and Rome was largely due to ignorance about Greece and Rome, as the belief in a decline since the thirteenth century is due to deliberate blindness—for which there is now no excuse—about the history of the thirteenth century. The belief in progress can only be condemned if it is a belief in progress in every field; for it appears to be a natural law of growth that every gain involves certain losses, that men are apt to concentrate on one thing to the detriment of another. If—as seems likely—we are partly indebted to the believers in decline for pointing this out, that does not mean that we are bound to accept their view of a gradual descent from a certain period which was truly our superior in one or two respects but equally truly our inferior in many others.

A striking illustration is provided by prehistoric art. Many art critics—including Morris, Roger Fry, Eric Newton, Raymond Mortimer—have praised the art of Palæolithic man, the painted animals in the caves of the Dordogne and of Altamira in Spain. These, I believe, date from about 10,000 B.C.; and masterly as they evidently are, it would be exceedingly rash to deduce from that artistry any comparable conclusion about the general culture of the Palæolithic age. The most we can say is that, in the midst of superstition and barbarity, these men did produce these paintings; and therefore not all their activity was concentrated on uncivilized things. We may say much the same of ancient Greece: their art and philosophy are much to be admired and modern European civilization could scarcely have existed without them. Yet the treatment of the Melians, who were the most inoffensive of neutrals, by the Athenians who had listened to Pericles's eloquence, has nothing to be said for it. The adult males were slaughtered and the women and children enslaved by the very generation of Greeks who are constantly held up to us as models of citizenship.

The obvious fact that art never improves, that it is always changing but never progressing, might seem at first glance to be

an argument in favour of cyclicism and against progress in general. But art, while it is very important, is not the whole of civilization ; it is not enough to dismiss the idea of progress with the truism that future poets, painters and composers are not likely to improve upon Shakespeare, Rembrandt and Mozart. I gather from Roger Fry that even the Palæolithic cavemen mentioned were, in certain limited respects, more competent than any of their artistic successors ; they did a certain thing supremely well, as the Greek sculptors and Shakespeare and Tolstoy did other things supremely well. Yet the Palæolithic painters were probably cannibals ; and no modern artist would serve his landlady up for lunch in order to get back into the state of mind of those primitive people. It cannot be denied that the modern distaste for cannibalism indicates a certain superiority in general cultivation over the cavemen who lived in France and Spain about twelve thousand years ago.

This is a not unimportant point, for those who talk so airily of civilizations rising and falling don't ever take into account the twin facts that no historical civilization has declined into absolute barbarism and that every new civilization has owed a great debt to the one preceding. There was truly, for instance, a Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, but much of that Graeco-Roman civilization was continued in the next European civilization, mediaeval Christianity, and both Catholicism and the Renaissance of other classical ideas helped to form the modern world in which we live. So it becomes apparent that, while art does not progress, other things, no less important in human culture, can and often do. As literary criticism is bound to progress from age to age, for the simple reason that each critic has the benefit of the accumulated experience of his predecessors, so civilization in general would be able to progress more quickly if the majority of men in authority were intelligent enough to learn the obvious lessons of history. Sometimes they have learnt these lessons ; it will not be denied that the eighteenth century learnt their comparative toleration from the dogmatic miseries of the seventeenth, and that the conscience of the later Victorians was based upon the social chaos of the 'thirties and 'forties. It is not a foolish optimism to

hope that we, in turn, may learn political toleration from our experience of ideological fanaticism, some form of international government from our experience of national wars, and a more human culture from our experience of commercialized machine-culture. These items of progress may seem supremely difficult to bring about, but each of them has in fact partly existed before, though not all of them in combination. As Rationalists point out, the eighteenth century was remarkable for its religious toleration, by comparison with the bigotry of the previous centuries; but national wars, though not nearly so bloodthirsty as the religious wars of the past, were a blot on the eighteenth century, as was also the condition of the poorer classes. As Catholics point out, there existed in the Middle Ages, not indeed a world united, but a Europe partly united by religious beliefs; that form of spiritual government, though, great as were its merits, was not only intolerant (creating the Inquisition as well as St. Francis) but was not of much use in preventing national wars. As modern lovers of the arts point out, past centuries knew real culture and most of us to-day only machine-culture; but those cultural centuries were centuries of religious and civil strife.

So we are asking for a good deal, and the Bumbledom of fortune may well raise its eyebrows in rebuke. We are asking—not each one of us, but taking our chief begging-bowls in rotation—for a peaceful, tolerant, cultured world-wide democracy. Such a thing has never existed, but most of its parts have partly existed before. To get these parts into some kind of combination is the problem of the future; to get the past into proper perspective may be one of the necessary preliminaries to that end. I propose to consider in this connection three stark realities of our time: (1) War; which will lead me to (2) Nationalism; which has been associated with (3) Machine-Culture.

III.

It is right that the recent horrors of World War II should so stick in our consciences that we exclaim that such evils have

never existed before. The attitude is useful, as a spur to peaceful action; but historically, of course, it is false. When preachers declaim that "the crimes of the Nazis are without precedent in the history of humanity," they are similarly showing a passion for justice that is as admirably strong as their knowledge of history is understandably weak. Peter Slavek, in Arthur Koestler's fine novel *Arrival and Departure*, is only too terribly right when he declares: "Nobody who has not been through it can understand it. Terror, atrocities, oppression—that's all words. Statistics don't bleed. Do you know what counts? The detail. Only the detail counts . . .;" but, if we accept that, as we obviously must, we must also accept the same principle in history. Statistics, cold as they are, can be made to bleed warm blood with the aid of a little imagination; and the sickening details of past horrors should not be dwelt upon for their own sake, still less be used as a salve for our own consciences, but simply taken into account in the comparison of the past with the present. If the terrible detail of Koestler's "Mixed Transport" can disturb the sleep of the imaginative for a month, then I can "recommend" the details of the history of the Norman Conquest, or the records of the Inquisition, or Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, or the histories of the Thirty Years' War, or Mrs. Forbes's recent biography of the pirate Morgan, or the documents concerning the Slave Trade . . . as an easy method of getting a fresh nightmare every night for a year.

Applying, then, Koestler's principle, not only to the recent past, but to the past in general, we find that Belsen, Buchenwald, the Bolshevik purges, Franco's prisons, the Atomic Bomb . . . are not "without precedent in the history of humanity," but that such crimes have never been committed on such a gigantic scale since the seventeenth century. The ideological warfare of the first half of the twentieth century is the worst since the religio-political warfare of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: that is the historical truth, and I admit that it is quite terrible enough. Not that we need assume that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were periods of peace. The Slave Trade in the eighteenth century, the Red

Terror in the French Revolution, the White Terror which succeeded it, the social distress of the Industrial Revolution, the many wars between the Peace of Ryswick and the end of the Rhodes-Chamberlain-Northcliffe commercial-militarist adventure . . . such episodes must give us pause before we describe the two centuries of comparative rationality as periods of humanitarian calm.

But, while "statistics don't bleed," it is certainly the statistical side of misery, the sheer weight of horror, which connects the twentieth century with the seventeenth and makes the interval relatively humane. New weapons, of course, are constantly being invented, but usually—the atomic bomb is the chief exception at present—methods of defence and medical skill manage to keep up with them, so that the casualties in war (relative to the number of men engaged) haven't increased so enormously as the "improvement" in arms might suggest. What connects the twentieth century with the seventeenth is not so much the casualties in actual warfare as the atrocities committed upon civilians for "religious" or ideological reasons. There is nothing approaching such wholesale murder and torture in the records of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; to get a parallel we have to turn back to the seventeenth century: to the Thirty Years' War, to the struggle of the Spanish, the English, the Dutch and the French for the spoils of America, to the career of Cromwell in Ireland, and to similar events. And we must surely hope for a similar reaction, because when men had grown weary of religious dissensions—and it was certainly religious fanaticism which made the Thirty Years' War particularly brutal—and had not yet made a religion out of politics or nationality, during that relatively reasonable period, as Winston Churchill remarks of the wars of his ancestor Marlborough, "the main acceptances of a polite civilization still reigned across the lines of opposing armies." It is evident that we require a certain agnosticism in regard to politics and nationalism, if we are to emulate even the partial peace of the rationalist eighteenth century. The advent of a new Wesley will not disturb that peace; what we have to avoid is the advent of a new Cromwell.

IV.

Catholics combine with cultural-agricultural enthusiasts in thinking that recent horrors are the result chiefly of modern scepticism, science and industry. It is a very human failing to see honour and glory in past warfare and only misery and vice in wars of the present. I have myself read with delight accounts of past battles, and I remember that one of the favourite books of my grandfather—who was a typical peaceful radical of the old school—was Creasy's *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*. It is easy enough to taste the thrill of past warfare: all that needs to be done is to concentrate on the cold, unbleeding statistics and never to allow your imagination to equate these unfeeling numbers with the blood and stench they actually represent. The Inquisitors had nothing to learn in the way of torture from the Gestapo or the O.G.P.U., and this piece of gentility occurred in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, when the pious Spaniards were pacifying the country: "One Le Bas, guilty of an act of flagrant defiance in Tournay Cathedral, was thrice put to the torture to extract information of his associates. He was then dragged on a hurdle, with his mouth closed with an iron, to the market-place. Here his right hand and foot were burned and twisted off between red-hot irons and his tongue was torn out by the roots. With his arms and legs fastened together behind his back he was then hooked by the middle of his body to an iron chain and made to swing to and fro over a slow fire till he was entirely roasted."

Atrocities like this were so regular a feature of warfare and tyranny from prehistoric times up to the end of the seventeenth century—and not unknown afterwards—that all we can properly say of Belsen and Buchenwald and General Franco's prisons is that they signified a deliberate return to the barbarous methods of the rural past. As for the atomic bomb, that appears frightful, as any new weapon does, and is; but the thing to stress and constantly remember is that no new weapon has ever been forbidden by authority. There was a

popular outcry against the villainies of gunpowder in the first half of the sixteenth century, and in the first few years of the cross-bow it was tentatively considered by the Church that the weapon was too terrible to be used against fellow-Christians. It was suggested that it be exclusively reserved for the followers of Mohammed . . But nothing came of the suggested prohibition: English and French used it against each other and it was used extensively to put down the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Human life was cheap in the wars of the pre-Industrial past; it was not only our prime barbarian, Henry the Fifth, who ordered the prisoners he had taken to be killed: it was a common practice, as was also the licence given to an invading army to kill, maim and rape the civilian population. "The fact of the matter," says Murry in the *Adelphi*, "is that total war is an absolute violation of that kind of aesthetic perception which acknowledges a filial duty to mother Earth." But wars in the pre-industrial past were as "total" as the barbarous ingenuity of men could devise; it depended entirely on an army's movements whether a particular farm or village would escape destruction. Before we give the past a cheap congratulation on not having used the atomic bomb, we should be quite certain in our own minds that they would have refused to use it had it been available. No form of barbarity invented at the time came amiss to the pious soldiers of the Thirty Years' War, all of whom came from an organic environment and were closely bound up with the soil—literally in some cases eventually, for to bury prisoners alive was one of the tricks used in the gentle wars of the pre-industrial past.

In his *Critical Essays* George Orwell says that pacifism in England is a by-product of the British Navy; it is much to Mr. Murry's credit, as former editor of *Peace News*, that he admits this, in a review of Orwell's book in the *Adelphi*. But no less true, historically, is the fact that the relative peace of the Old Rural Order in England was due to our island situation. Murry is right in thinking peace connected with the rural order *in England*, but surely wrong in thinking that the one necessarily implies the other. As we know from our boyhood reading of Conan Doyle's *White Company*, it was

common for the mediaeval counterpart of a recruiting sergeant to tour the English villages to get " the peaceful craftsmen " as volunteers for the French campaigns. And what did " the peaceful craftsmen " do when they got to France ? According to Doyle's romance, they won eternal glory, etc. ; but according to history, they devastated the soil of France for generations, they prevented their opposite numbers across the channel from pursuing those ancient rural labours about which Messrs. Murry and Massingham wax lyrical. In other words, the peace of the English rural order was purely a national peace ; the French village life was not peaceful or beautiful to the English villager-turned-soldier, it was merely an order to be plundered, murdered and raped. And the only reason why the English village didn't suffer a like devastation after the Norman Conquest was the island position of our nation, in which an organized people was perfectly safe. Even Cobbett links the peace of the old English village life with the " greatness of England in the world," conveniently forgetting that the English village would have been similar to the French before the Revolution had not England had those twenty miles of sea. It is easy enough to build up a reasonably good form of society over the centuries if your country is safe from invasion. We were last seriously invaded in 1066; France has been invaded three times in the last eighty years, and as for such countries as Belgium and Poland, when one treads their soil one is not stepping simply upon the remains of native villagers but upon countless millions of soldiers who have fought their bloody battles upon the ruins of village life for as many centuries as we have record of.

It is true that the European soldier came and went, while the European peasant lived on, but it was entirely due to the accident of war whether a particular village would be destroyed. It is most unhistorical to say that the old rural order spelt peace and the new industrial society spells war. Europe fairly reeked with war up to the coming of the industrial age ; the fact that we in England didn't is a cause for thankfulness, not pride. All that Murry's peaceful village life boils down to is the historical fact that often a veteran soldier, having done

his bit in devastating Europe, would retire to his native village and there reflect upon the superiority of the peaceful English scene to the war-racked Continent. Pacifism would have been simply incomprehensible to the average villager in the past; contemporary pacifism is not only the by-product of the British Navy and our island situation, it is mainly the product of urban life, springing from the city radicals and trade unionists at the time of the Industrial Revolution. The old squire and ploughman, who had certainly many other virtues besides courage, were not usually pacifist: up till quite recent times they were considered the backbone of the British navy and army—"the hearts of oak," "the bowmen, the yeomen, the lads of dale and fell." We in Britain, of course, owe them a good deal; but our debt to their prowess in defence should not blind us to the fact that sometimes they were the aggressors.

V.

It is the Middle Ages, of course, which most Catholics and agricultural enthusiasts look back upon as pre-eminently the period of peace. Such an illusion would have astonished the average villager or townsman of the time. It is true that we in England had a period of comparative calm between the worst barbarity of the Norman invasion and the period of distress in the fourteenth century recorded by Langland. The horrors of the Norman conquest must have lingered long in the memories of the English survivors; although productive in the long run of immense cultural gains to this country, the invasion in its immediate effects was an unqualified disaster. William of Malmesbury in his *History of Recent Events* wrote that the Norman knights tortured women, priests and monks to make them tell where they had hidden their money; monks were burned alive in their monasteries; men were smeared with honey and pegged naked out in the sun to attract insects. The English fought back, of course, even after they had lost the decisive battle. A chronicler tells us that "Those English

who were left were wont to lie in wait for the dreaded and hated Normans, and secretly to slay them here and there in woods or secluded places, as opportunity might offer. The kings and their ministers, therefore, did for some years inflict the most exquisite forms of torture upon the English, yet without full effect." The building of the famous castles was only possible by the use of forced labour ; we are told that the barons " cruelly oppressed the wretched men of the land with castle-works." During the reign of the weak Stephen (1135-54) the barons ignored the usual licence from the king to build, and every minor noble, who was desirous of pursuing a career of plunder, built himself a castle, where, we are told, he " tortured the people with unutterable torture."

Although there were some barons and clergy who were cultured men, others combined cruelty with hypocrisy. The most notorious is the well-named Bishop Odo, who rode into battle against the English at Hastings armed with a flail, a solid iron ball swung on a chain. His argument adhered to the letter of Scripture and ignored its spirit, for he held that the flail, merely breaking bones and cracking skulls, did not inculpate him in the shedding of blood.

After the barbarities of the Norman Conquest, though, the English people did have a period of relative peace and quiet until the new miseries of Langland's time. Thirteenth-century England was a period of comparative calm and prosperity ; but it was not so in Europe. 16,000 Jews were slain in one day at Paris in 1253, and of the seventy-six years covered by Salimbene's *Chronicle* only twenty-one are free from express record of war in the writer's own neighbourhood, while several of the others were years of famine or pestilence. " In those days was most cruel war, which endured many years," records the Franciscan Friar. " Men could neither plough, nor sow, nor reap, nor till vineyards, nor gather the vintage, nor dwell in the villages : more especially in the districts of Parma and Reggio and Modena and Cremona. No man could believe but if he had seen, as I have, the horrible deeds that were done in those days, both by men and by divers beasts. . . . This curse of wars invaded and preyed upon and

destroyed the whole of Romagna in the days when I dwelt there."

"At Cremona," comments Coulton, "Salimbene found himself a close spectator of one of the most savage and prolonged wars in civilized history. The wars of thirteenth-century Italy between Pope and Emperor on the one hand, and jealous cities on the other, have seldom been surpassed in horror among Christian nations. The bitterest period of that struggle began with the renewed excommunication and deposition of Frederick the Second by Innocent the Fourth in 1245 . . . The war speedily degenerated into a chaos of sickening atrocities and reprisals . . . Italy, in short, remained for generation after generation in a state of anarchy and misery which among our own annals can be paralleled only in Stephen's reign, when men said that God and His saints slept . . The brutalities committed on each side were awful. The destruction of houses and crops, orchards and vineyards, went on wholesale . . . Prisoners were killed in cold blood or carried off like cattle. . . In one attack, children were slaughtered in their cradles: at another time, the men vented their spite on the women . . . Neither age nor sex was spared in these civil wars: to Papalist and Imperialist alike, death or bodily torture were not enough for an enemy, whose last moments must be still further embittered by the anguish and shame of his womenfolk."

It is important to stress that these horrors, vouched for by Salimbene, Dante and other contemporaries, took place in the very century which modern Catholics and rural enthusiasts look back upon as a time of general peace and spiritual supremacy. That is apparently the lofty spiritual height from which we in the modern world have fallen. But you cannot fall from the bottom of a well, even if in that well of blood is contained a little truth. That there were many great men in the thirteenth century need not be doubted, but it is also a fact that it is mostly from these great men that we draw the barbarous story of their times. The most noble men of the period, as we have seen, considered that the world was drawing to its end, that God's final vengeance could not long be de-

layed. It would be unhistorical to put all the blame on even the worst aspects of the religious life of the time, for notoriously " pagan " princes were as evil as the very bloodiest of bishops. Nor can much blame be attached to the rustic atmosphere of the century, for in the majority of cases the peasants were the victims of war, not its instigators. It is as foolish to blame agriculture for the wars of the thirteenth century as industry for the wars of the twentieth : the latter accusation is, in fact, levelled only by those whose history is so scanty or whose prejudice so strong that they conceive Dante's infernal period as a time of rural peace.

" Imagine the lot of the ordinary peasant in those times," cries Coulton, " — the class of whom we often speak as the backbone of the country, fretting ourselves nowadays merely because they insist on flocking, like ourselves, to the towns ! Castles and cities being generally too well fortified for attack, the whole story of the war is that of outrages and reprisals upon the peasants of either party."

And what outrages . . . Let us apply Koestler's principle of detail, in so far as the details have come down to us ; let us just sip for a moment at that cup of misery and horror which the unlucky thirteenth century had to drain to the dregs. Bloodstained as is the record of recent times, we have, I think, to turn to centuries like the seventeenth and the thirteenth to get the full measure of man's inhumanity to man.

And these were civilized, cultured centuries, the time of Molière and Rembrandt, Dante and St. Francis and Giotto. What happened in earlier epochs we can only faintly guess ; it is " a task for scholars," say the Hammonds, " to estimate the happiness and misery of the poor under Greek or Roman government ; to calculate how far social amenities compensated for the privations and the cruelties to which they were exposed; to consider all the evils that a society suffers and inflicts if its basis is slavery." A more than iron curtain is mercifully drawn between us and the further past.

VI.

Our chief crow's nest as we approach the thirteenth century is provided by Salimbene—" a poor and most humble brother of the Order of the blessed Francis," as he describes himself. He was actually of noble birth and was deeply conscious of it ; he had many aristocratic friends. So his witness to the complete divorce between the theory and the usual practice of mediaeval chivalry is the more valuable : in all his long chronicle there are only one or two instances of real chivalry, while vulgar barons of prey abound. He tells us, for instance, of one Ezzelino da Romano : " This Ezzelino was feared worse than the devil : he held it of no account to slay men, women and children, and he wrought such cruelty as men have scarce heard. On one day he caused 11,000 men of Padua to be burnt in the field of Saint George in the city of Verona ; and when fire had been set to the house in which they were being burnt, he jousted as if in sport around them with his knights. It would be too long to relate his cruelties, for they would fill a great book."

Imperialists and Papalists committed very similar crimes. What Salimbene writes of Frederick the Second can be compared with the treatment of Imperialists, as recorded by the contemporary *Chronicle of Parma* : " Many Imperialists were caught coming in as spies hidden in hay or straw waggons, or in casks and chests : and such were tortured, confessed, and were burned on the river-beach of the city. And many women were thus caught, put to torment, and burned."

" Every year," says Salimbene, " Pope Martin the Fourth sent against them [the men of Forli] a mighty army of French and of divers other nations, who destroyed their vines and corn and fruit-trees, with their olives and figs, almonds and fair pomegranates, houses and cattle, casks and vats, and all that pertaineth to country-folk . . So when the city had come to the obedience of the Church, all the moats were filled in and the gates razed, and houses and palaces torn down, and the chief buildings shattered to pieces."

Many people think that wars in the past were comparatively

humane affairs, not so much because of the greater restraint then as because of the limited damage past weapons could do. But it has to be remembered, not only that an individual person can only die once (and it is certainly a toss-up whether one would prefer to be pierced in the belly with a plebeian bayonet or with a knightly sword, or whether it is more comfortable to be atom-bombed than to be put to torment and burnt alive), but that the progress in defence and construction kept pace with, indeed often gave rise to, the "improvement" in arms and ammunition. We read in the Italian civil wars between Pope and Emperor, and between Guelf and Ghibelline, in the thirteenth century, and again in the wars of the Renaissance and in the Thirty Years' War in the seventeenth century, we read in the contemporary accounts of these terrible wars of whole regions being laid waste, villages being burnt, cities being completely destroyed—two or three years of severe bombing could hardly have done more damage. The reason lies in the poverty of the defence and in the extreme inflammability of most of the dwellings.

Mr. Dawson is right to stress the importance of the "impersonal" element in modern warfare. George Orwell begins his *Lion and the Unicorn* with a similar reflection: "As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me. They do not feel any enmity against me as individual, nor I against them. They are 'only doing their duty,' as the saying goes. Most of them, I have no doubt, are kind-hearted law-abiding men who would never dream of committing murder in private life. On the other hand, if one of them succeeds in blowing me to pieces with a well-placed bomb, he will never sleep any the worse for it."

It is pretty obvious that this impersonality of modern warfare is a serious matter, because it means that men will commit atrocities, as it were unconsciously, which they would be the first to condemn, not only in private life, but in more personal warfare. With the big exceptions of those people responsible for the atrocities in the Nazi, Fascist, Soviet, Japanese and Spanish concentration camps, it is perfectly true that modern men are, on the whole, much more humane,

personally, than average men of the past. It is partly the exceptions mentioned or mentionable, partly the evils which modern men have committed unconsciously or half-consciously, that has led me to admit, reluctantly, that recent evils exceed in horror any since the seventeenth century. There is no point in ignoring the progress in individual humanity that we have made; the problem is how to use that progress, so great that we can only dimly realize the personal horrors of the past, how to use that individual humanity to check the impersonal evils of our time.

VII.

Some orthodox minds admit the horrors, as well as the beauties, of the Middle Ages, but argue that if such evils could exist within a religious society, whatever would society have been like without the restraint of religion? The argument has a certain force: undoubtedly many of the most noble men of the time were clerics, and society could ill have afforded to lose their peaceful influence. It cannot be denied that some of the teaching of the mediaeval Church was a powerful agent towards peace and order. But there is much to be said on the other side. Consider, in the first place, the popular legends of saints and martyrs. They had inspired many generations of Christians, and the pious enthusiasm with which each martyrologist would outbid his predecessors in describing their "odour of sanctity" and their holy joy under torments might seem harmless enough or even laudable. Yet these pious legends served chiefly to harden the hearts of naturally charitable men against the most devilish cruelties practised on their fellow-Christians—to say nothing of the Jews. St. James of the Mark, when arguing with those Fraticelli whose sect had originated in loyalty to the Franciscan tradition, took it as a convincing proof of uncatholicity that their sect did not flourish, like the early Christians, under the repeated persecutions to which it was subjected.

Again (he seriously argued) when a heretic is burnt "the

odour of sanctity" is entirely wanting: "For instance, when Pope Nicholas the Fifth was at Fabiano, certain heretics were burned there, and the stench of them filled the city three days long; this I know, for I smelt the evil savour all those three days, even in our convent." Etienne de Bourbon tells a similar story; and St. Bernardino of Siena was of the same mind. This is a striking example of the way in which apparently harmless legends, if literally believed in, can steel men's hearts against obvious cruelties. The Inquisition itself, as I suggested in my last chapter, was based on the legends of Original Sin and the terrors of Hell. Secondly, consider the harmful influence, not only of the theory of last-minute repentance, but of the doctrine of predestination. This latter is often considered to be a purely Puritan institution, but the truth is that there were many Puritan features—as well as many features clean contrary—in the orthodoxy of the Middle Ages. The "personal assurance of salvation," which Newman mentions as characteristic of "Calvinism or Methodism," was in fact common among the early Friars. So was the dislike of church ornaments or church music. St. Bernard speaks of the profusion of paintings and carvings in monastic churches as little short of heathenism; and he argues most emphatically, like the Quakers, that the highest religion is least dependent on such extraneous aids to devotion. The tenet of the certain damnation of unbaptized infants, so often charged against Calvinism, is maintained by orthodox mediaeval theologians. St. Bonaventura (following St. Gregory, and in company with Aquinas) reckons among the delights of the blest that they will see the damned writhing below them in hell. To quote a typical sermon, on the last point: "They lie in hell like sheep, and the raptures of the blessed in Abraham's bosom are all the sweeter for the sight of that worm that dieth not, and those flames that never shall be quenched."

It is impossible, of course, for all our natural distaste of such melodramatic barbarisms, to resist a feeling of sympathy for the men of that age. The sorry contrast between theory and extreme laxity of practice was not lost upon the great church-

men of the time—as it was not lost upon Salimbene and Dante, and later on Langland and Chaucer. But all that the noble minds of the Church could conceive of, to remedy this divergence, was to screw the already overstrained theory one peg higher. When that measure produced its inevitable consequence, the only comfort remaining to the troubled saints was—as we have seen—to reflect that the world was obviously nearing its end, that the Last Judgment could not long be delayed.

The early documents of the Franciscans show how the ultra-ascetic ideal defeated its own object. Writers who attempt to contrast the gloomy spirit of the Puritan with the holy joy of the Friar are contradicted by Brother Leo, who assures us that St. Francis himself "did especially abhor laughter." The strict Franciscan was cheerful only in comparison with the ultra-Puritan piety of the other religious orders of the Middle Ages.

Salimbene gives us a good example of the ill results of the common belief in predestination: a certain Lord Guido, murderer of his wife and others, used to say that "If I am predestined to eternal life, then shall I come thereto, whatsoever may be my sins; and if I am predestined to eternal damnation, so shall it be likewise, in spite of all good deeds." This pre-Calvinist Calvinism was common among the nobility and must have contributed to the frequency, not only of their private murders, but of their civil wars.

Of Obizzo of Este, tyrant of Reggio, whom Dante sees in the River of Blood, Salimbene writes: "He caused his own mother to be drowned... Moreover it was reported of him that he violated the wives and daughters of both nobles and commons at Ferrara: and he was ill-famed of many foul and incestuous connections. Many other evils he did, and many shall he receive from God, unless he be converted to Him. He was so intimate a friend of the Cardinal Ottobene, who was afterwards Pope Adrian the Fifth, that he took his near kinswoman for wife."

"Unless he be converted to Him." Surely that was partly the reason for these crimes of noblemen and others? If you

can escape Hell at the last moment, why bother to hold back when you want to kill a person or rape his daughter? Have your amusement, and then confess, and be saved! This, of course, was not the actual tenet of the Catholic or any other faith: the Catholic doctrine lays stress on the honesty of the repentance; without the interior honesty, the outward formality of absolution counts for nothing. But it is not the theory, it is the actual practice, that matters; and certainly the superstition that one could escape damnation at the last moment, by a formal confession and absolution, was widely held in the thirteenth century and has persisted, in various forms, up to quite recent times. No one will blame his ancestors for isolated deeds of violence, caused by bad temper or drink. We must remember that weapons were commonly worn, and who can say what crimes we might have committed had we been living in an age when a sword or a dagger was a necessary article of dress? It is not crimes caused by hot blood that are so terrible to read of in chronicles of the past; it is deliberate cruelty, cold-blooded torture, such as Salimbene records of the thirteenth century.

VIII.

We find a similar cruelty, and a similar pious superstition among torturers, in the records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the age of Galileo, Shakespeare and Rembrandt. The ignorance of the age is almost as appalling as its cruelty. Mrs. Forbes writes in her recent biography of the Welsh pirate-governor Morgan (a farmer's son who became a friend of Dryden and the Duke of Albemarle): "Panama was a rich and lusty town and an ignorant one. The mass of the common people firmly believed that the English were like apes, savage, long-armed creatures, with tails hidden in their pantaloons. Simple British pirates, fresh out of Bristol, 'with all their pasts in front of them,' dreaming of girls at home they would marry when they had taken enough loot from the Dons, imagined their enemies as horned and hoofed,

smelling most evilly of brimstone, belching in moments of fury thick, sulphurous fumes."

Religious and national fanaticism had combined to form these ignorant portraits. The bulk of the Spanish nation firmly believed that Drake was the Devil, and truly the English official and unofficial imperialists, both of Drake's time and Morgan's, committed many devilish atrocities. For the English view of the Spaniards, we can turn to the Oxford symposium *Shakespeare's England*: "When Autolycus threatened the clown that he 'shall be flayed alive; then 'nointed over with honey, set on the head of a wasp's nest . . . recovered . . . then, raw as he is,' exposed to the sun and 'with flies blown to death' (*Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 816-25), some among the audience of Shakespeare's day must have shuddered, for they had seen it, or read of it, and knew that the Spaniards did these very things."

And not only the Spaniards, though they and the Portuguese were the first to show the primitive heathen in Africa and America the fruits of European and Christian culture. It is true that there are records of isolated protests: Queen Elizabeth, for instance, is said to have hinted to Sir John Hawkins—who had named his slave-ship *The Jesus*—that his activities might be displeasing to God. Some Spanish priests honestly devoted themselves to the souls of the slaves, while thinking it none of their business to object to the ill-treatment of their bodies. And it is a fact that Drake and Morgan cared little for torture themselves, but merely gave their men licence (as a sort of recreation after the trials of battle and climate) to treat both native slaves and European prisoners as they pleased.

After Morgan's capture of Puerto Bello, the port that had defeated Drake seventy years previously, "The captives starved," writes Mrs. Forbes, "while the pirates feasted and drank. Worse followed. The women suffered most. Wives and daughters, bent and crippled grandmothers, such nuns or novices as remained alive, wished most probably that they had died in battle. For their deaths were slow and awful. Morgan never told a worse lie than when, in his official dispatch,

he boasted of his forbearance and clemency to the ladies of great family who were his prisoners."

John Style, a squeamish pirate, subsequently suffered remorse for the atrocities committed at Puerto Bello, and wrote an account of these Deeds that Won the Empire: "It is a common thing among the privateers," he recorded, "besides burning with matches and such like light torments, to cut a man to pieces, first some flesh, then a hand, an arm, a leg, sometimes tying a cord about his head and with a stick twisting it till his eyes shoot out, which is called a 'woolding'." After Morgan's capture of Maracaibo, there was more torture than usual—according to Style—because there was more time. Morgan's men hung up any citizens of Maracaibo they could find by the tenderest parts of their bodies "so that these were torn off by the struggling weight suspended." At last even Morgan sickened at the smell of burnt flesh, the sound and sight of torture. For five weeks, he reported, there had been "an infinite number of murders, robberies, rapes and such like insolences."

After Morgan's capture of Panama, three thousand prisoners were treated to the ingenious cruelty of the buccaneers. In those days pirates were fond of employing for human torture the hides of oxen, stripped from the carcases. In these, raw and bleeding, they would sew up their miserable prisoners, leaving their heads outside. They would then suspend them over a slow fire, so that, as the hides contracted, the victims would be crushed out of human shape. The effects of the torture could be watched in the expressions of the faces hanging out of the oxen necks. Truly, as Mrs. Forbes says, "Buchenwald and Dachau were kindergartens compared to the tortures inflicted by familiars of the Jolly Roger." The crimes of the pirate-imperialists have, of course, to be considered against the background of general cruelty in the Shakespearean and Miltonic age. Disgusting as are the details of the English pirate atrocities—and the English were no worse than the rest, for the French pirate called l'Ollonais or "the Spaniards' Curse" used to practise his skill with the sabre by lashing off heads each at a single stroke and licking the blade in between; one

of the favourite horrors of another Frenchman, the Seigneur Montbars, was to slit a man's belly, extract one end of his guts, nail it to a post, and then force the victim into a dance of death ; and the Dutch pirate, Roche Braziliano, used to light his feasts of raw meat with Spaniards roasting slowly on spits—disgusting as these barbarities are, we must remember that in London, in the reign of Charles the Second, Titus Oates was flogged through the streets with knotted cords soaked in tar, and that Dangerfield, sentenced to the same punishment, died under it. From the beginning of Elizabeth's reign to the end of the seventeenth century high treason and all felonies, except petty larceny, were punishable with death. In cases of high treason or petty treason by women, the sentence was death by burning. The same fate was awarded freely to the unfortunate women who were found guilty of the imaginary offence of witchcraft.

" The Elizabethan age was pitiless, " concludes *Shakespeare's England*, " and ' the way of the transgressor ' was certainly made as hard as it could be." But this is not a very good summary of the facts given, for what was particularly horrible —both in the Elizabethan period and the seventeenth century—was the harsh punishment, often death, inflicted on men and women, whether " witches," " heretics" or political offenders, who were guilty of no crime at all.

Pirates of all nationalities were very pious men—incredible as it may seem. Their religious faith was often as strong as their courage and their love of torture. Morgan himself was apparently like Henry the Fifth and Cromwell : " He would call upon the God he never ceased to worship," writes his biographer, " —a fierce God of pain and blood, with battle as His mass, victory His last sacrament." In this he was typical of the pirate leaders of his time, for instance the French pirate Levasseur : " Before any expedition which Levasseur led, he celebrated a rough mass. After a successful venture he laid his favourite cutlass, still bloodstained, on the altar and returned thanks with fervour to the God he daily outraged."

Cruelty combined with piety : that sums up, not only the history of the pirate-imperialists, but the darker side of

both the seventeenth century and the thirteenth century in general. Wars are always barbarous, and it might seem foolish at first glance to talk of the " rules of warfare." But it will be agreed that what was particularly horrible about both the Italian civil wars of the thirteenth century and the imperialist struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth was the treatment of prisoners and women and children. It is the normal method of war to kill your adversary by any means possible, and inevitably unarmed civilians, including women and children, get hurt in the process. The moral aspect usually comes in only after a battle has been won, when the survivors of the losing side are at the mercy of the conquerors. It is the deliberate cruelty, the cold-blooded torture, inflicted on helpless men, women and children, both in the Italian civil wars and in the imperialist struggles, which is so sickening to read of: and this cruelty was closely connected, in the thirteenth century, with the torture and burning of Jews and heretics, and in the seventeenth century with the cruel legal punishments and religio-political tyranny. The deliberate cruelty of those ages was all of a piece: law was scarcely less brutal than piracy, and there is nothing to choose between the torture of heretics for religious reasons and the torture of political offenders for reasons of state. When Mrs. Forbes, trying to see in perspective the horrors of pirate history (which she had taken from contemporary records), calls the seventeenth century " an age of appalling cruelty," she is not exaggerating: she is simply stating the historical truth.

IX.

I have compared our ideological horrors with their religious horrors. But the cruelty of our age is not, like that of the seventeenth century, all of a piece; a good deal of contemporary cruelty, as we have noted, is not deliberate, but unconscious or half-conscious: that is the inevitable result of the " improvement " in impersonal machines of war. The penal code in the civilized countries to-day is comparatively humane:

even in Nazi Germany, thousands of people who had put Hitler into power—because they or their priests feared Communism—were ignorant of the crimes committed in the concentration camps. And even some of the younger generation, who had had the advantage of a purely Aryan education, were apparently still visited by secret bourgeois, liberal compunctions in times of actual war. I learn from C. H. Rolph's review in the *New Statesman* of John Cameron's *The "Peleus" Trial* how uneasy were the German submarine crew about the systematic killing of the tramp steamer's survivors, "how, even in the tenseness of the ghastly scene itself, they felt that they were taking part in a criminal and punishable atrocity."

The evidence is not only important for the future of German society—proving as it does that Hitler's deliberate policy of anti-humane education was only partially successful—but is immediately relevant to the argument of this chapter. For it will not be denied that neither the official and unofficial torturers of the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries nor the bomber crews of the recent war "felt that they were taking part in a criminal and punishable atrocity." In other words, the atrocities committed in the thirteenth century were part of the general cruelty of the age, as the crimes of the pirate-imperialists were part of the general cruelty of the seventeenth century; but the crimes and atrocities of to-day are not part of our general cruelty, they are either the impersonal deeds of warriors most of whom are "kind-hearted law-abiding men who would never dream of committing murder in private life" (as Mr. Orwell felt in a London air-raid) or else the shameful product of the power conferred on certain individuals, including Hitler and Mussolini, who so hated the general liberal humanity (comparative humanity, if you like) of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that they deliberately bred up a generation pledged to nationalism, authority, intolerance, persecution and war.

Why did these certain individuals hate this general liberal humanity, and how did it come about that their propaganda was so successful if most people in the twentieth century are "kind-hearted law-abiding men who would never dream

of committing murder in private life " ? These twin questions of the Devil's Advocate lead me from (1) War to (2) Nationalism, which has been associated with (3) Machine-Culture. To answer the Devil's Advocate completely would, of course, mean writing the History of Europe in the Twentieth Century, a task for which I have neither the ability nor the present space. It will be sufficient for the purpose, I think, to reflect upon some of the main connections of War with Nationalism and of Nationalism with Machine-Culture.

The genesis of the Nazi Party is a big subject in itself; whether it would have existed, in a slightly different form, had Corporal Hitler failed to survive the 1914-18 War is a difficult question, but I take it for granted that the Man would have been nothing without the Hour. Hitler's hatred of liberalism must have been shared by a good many Germans of his generation and there must have been something justifiable in that hatred.

I think there undoubtedly was. To keep to our own country: surely the Lloyd George who thundered, like any Northcliffe gutter patriot, " We will squeeze Germany till the pips squeak," surely this Lloyd George was forgetting the human, liberal principles which nearly got him murdered during the Boer War? The metaphor, moreover, was inexact: post-war Germany was not an orange, it was a defeated country, and it contained no pips, except in the Dickensian sense of young boys who might have had Greater Expectations had they not been systematically starved. Liberals are not necessarily pacifists: they mostly believe, I think, that there is one thing worse than war, and that is the passive acceptance of an authoritarian regime; but the liberal rules of war certainly do not permit any revenge upon a defeated enemy, particularly if that revenge is bound to strike at boys and girls whose only connection with the war was having been born in it.

Hitler and other Germans of his generation must have been thinking partly of this truly illiberal treatment of defeated Germany by the Allies when they decided to reverse " the so-called progress " of the past two centuries and return to authority and discipline. National Socialism, as Susan

Stebbing wrote, "involves the denial of those social values that are characteristic of civilized societies: freedom, truth, love, humanity, justice, happiness. In their place it puts discipline and 'character'."

We shall be exceedingly foolish if we take this barbarous doctrine to have been peculiar to Germany or to the Continent. For Nationalism has been the curse of the twentieth century in general, and in England it has been closely connected with one of the chief aspects of Machine-Culture—the Yellow Press.

The new journalism was supposed to fit exactly the new reading public (so far as it was new). But how did the Conservative Party and Northcliffe know what that public's taste was? The new journalism was deliberately vulgar and sensational: are, then, the Bible and the *Pilgrim's Progress*—the staple reading of many of the previous "lower orders"—also vulgar and sensational? Is Dickens vulgar and sensational? The new journalism was deliberately unreliable and sketchy on political affairs: were, then, Cobbett's *Register* and Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian* also unreliable and sketchy on political affairs? O'Connor's *Northern Star* may have been, but that was a paper written by the upper classes *for* the working man. The actual newspapers written and read by the lower classes—Cobbett's, Hetherington's and others—were most reliable on political matters, serious and well-informed, like the best of the upper-class newspapers. The truth is that neither the Tory chiefs nor the future Lord Northcliffe knew anything or cared anything about the literary tradition of the English people. They based their policy on other lines.

First, they honestly thought—as Dr. Joad honestly thinks to-day—that culture is connected with material things: clothes, wine, the right accent, and so forth. Obviously the people were without this "culture" so their tastes must lie in the direction of vulgarity and sensationalism. Secondly, they were themselves non-Dickensian: that is, they were vulgar nationalists and commercial imperialists; and were desirous of turning the Dickensian common people around

to this view. They were so far successful, in their deliberate appeal to primitive instincts, that in 1899 Lloyd George was nearly murdered by the mob at the Birmingham Town Hall. Primitive instincts are, of course, common to all of us: there is one part of our mind, the lowest part, which is ready to listen to appeals to our vanity, our cruelty, our greed, our intolerance. That is why it is so very important that the newspapers and books which we read, the wireless which we listen to, the films and plays which we see, should not be primarily directed to this lowest part of our mind. Pre-Northcliffe newspapers were concerned mainly to appeal to our civilized instincts: this is as true of Cobbett's *Register* as of the *Times*, of Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian* as of the *Manchester Guardian*. Northcliffe, of course, was chiefly concerned with money, and to appeal to our most primitive instincts, our first thoughts, our prejudices, is the easiest way to gain money; the easiest way to gain power, too, as O'Connor had proved before Northcliffe and Hitler was to prove after him.

X.

Northcliffe, like his successors, had the virtues of energy and commercial probity; and he was well liked by his rivals, his colleagues and his subordinates. But, like his successors, he regarded a newspaper as primarily an article of commerce; secondly, as a means to personal political power. "He knew what the mass of newspaper-readers wanted, and he gave it to them," says Mr. Hamilton Fyfe. Nothing could be more false. Some of the lower classes had been illiterate, so their tastes in newspapers and reading could not possibly have been known by anybody; the majority of the others, as we have seen, had been fond of such literature as the Bible, Bunyan and Dickens, were seriously interested in politics, religion and science, and had supported newspapers and pamphlets written by other working men such as Cobbett, Place, Hetherington, Lovett, Watson and Moore. These are the historical facts, and it is not possible for anybody to deny them.

There was nothing very wrong with Northcliffe's first venture, *Answers*: that, in fact, could trace its lineage back at least a hundred years; there were many similar papers, of popularized information, particularly after the Industrial Revolution and particularly also in Scotland. Both Somerville and Cooper refer to them with gratitude. Decent, popularized information, combined with entertainment, has always been one of the leading features of popular literature; it was read chiefly by the middle classes, who were chiefly the Puritan classes, in the Elizabethan age; in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was read chiefly by the lower classes, who were also chiefly the Puritan classes, in England and Scotland. If Northcliffe had simply followed, even in a lower form, this long tradition of popular information, and if he had simply extended the interests of the daily and evening press to embrace more sport and entertainment, then he would have been entitled to nothing but applause. But he had other ideas, ideas as vulgar and sensational as they were—in Britain—revolutionary. I stress "in Britain," because every admirer of *Martin Chuzzlewit* will know that most of these ideas were current in American journalism—the lowest part of American journalism—sixty years before. Dickens, of course, exaggerated; and Northcliffe and his successors cannot be accused of some of the features of the *New York Rowdy Journal* or the double-extra *Watertoast Gazette*. But certainly modern popular journalism in Britain bears a greater resemblance—the exaggerations of comic genius being allowed for—to the "enlightened passions" of Colonel Diver, Mr. Jefferson Brick and General Choke than to the native tradition of Defoe and Cobbett.

It wasn't merely a question of headlines, clichés, crime stories. The idiotic "patriotism" and the deliberate ignorance and contempt of other nations—and these were the features of the Rowdy Journalism which most disgusted Dickens—were an important part of Northcliffe's newspaper revolution. And it would have been a completely successful revolution but for the continued responsibility of some of the older papers (though the *Times* must bear its share of re-

sponsibility for the Boer War), the bourgeois decency of the majority of the local press and the Trade Unions, and the emergence of new educational facilities—and the extension of the old—to offset to some extent the crude notions disseminated by Northcliffe.

The traditional English newspaper, like the traditional English liberalism, had been as individual as it had mostly been pacific. The Northcliffe revolution was not only towards "patriotic" aggression but towards standardization; and this latter aspect was not due entirely to the revolutionary methods of distribution nor to the pressure of advertisement. Dickens had noted the same uniformity in the American Rowdy Journalism of the late 'thirties and early 'forties: any difference between the *New York Sewer* and the *Watertoast Gazette*, or between the *Spartan Portico* and the *New York Stabber*, was—so to speak—purely Occidental, due merely to the varying amount of dollars engaged.

This standardization of the popular press is part of the impersonal machine culture of our time. It goes along with the culture of the cinema, of publicity, of the cheap novel; it also has an intimate connection with the impersonal weapons of modern warfare. We have considered how important is the progress we have made from the personal cruelty of the past; and we have had to make the big exceptions of the men responsible for recent miseries in the totalitarian States. It becomes obvious now that the democratic countries have, in this machine culture, exceedingly dangerous anti-democratic tendencies of their own. We in England, for example, have a penal code which could certainly be bettered, but which nevertheless is astonishingly humane compared with that of our seventeenth century or that existing elsewhere in the world to-day. It is also agreed that there is a personal code of conduct in England which is, on the whole, kindly and considerate, and which extends even to our treatment of animals.

But is our kindly democracy an international feeling; or is it similar to our rural peace of the past—a purely national affair? I don't doubt that an individual foreigner or

" native " is often treated with consideration by us—if usually with self-approving patronage. (After the style of Mrs. Plornish in *Little Dorrit.*) But it would be unrealistic to say that this consideration extends to foreigners and " natives " in general. There is often a deep suspicion of other countries, a suspicion based on that sort of ignorance which the Yellow Press exploits. I may be reminded that Englishmen were always notorious for their insularity, but I believe that in the Dickensian period—despite the stupid boasting of Thackeray and others—our arrogance was breaking down a little and we were preparing to extend our democracy abroad as well as at home. The pre-Kipling, pre-Northcliffe Victorian people were intensely patriotic; but until the 'nineties this patriotism was not a religion. Even Thackeray would surely have regarded it as blasphemous, to say that England or Britain or the British Empire was especially chosen by God.

Inevitably, when patriotism became a religion, it led, like every religion, to war and persecution—war against the unoffending Boers, persecution against those few Britons, such as Lloyd George and Ramsay MacDonald, who had the guts to stand up to Rhodes and Chamberlain, Kipling and Northcliffe. The war of 1914 was similarly caused by the conflicting national religions of Germany and the British Empire, though here I think the Germans were the more to blame. Hitler's Nazism was partly a variation on the older German doctrine of the Chosen People, as Mosley's was of the Kipling-Rhodes-Northcliffe creed. Stalin has revived the Holy Russia of the past. It is plain, then, that these religious wars and persecutions can only be prevented from recurring by a similar agnosticism and toleration to those of the eighteenth century: we must become agnostic in regard to nationalism and politics as the eighteenth century became agnostic in regard to religion. For democracy means consideration for others, and therefore can exist with peaceful patriotism but not with aggressive nationality nor with political creeds, such as Marxism, which rely on force.

We must recognize in Britain that Kipling's doctrine of the Chosen People is as contemptible as Hitler's dogma of

Pure Aryanism: both are as spiritually offensive as they are unscientific. The present Attlee administration—the best Government, in some ways, since the Asquith administration of 1908—has gone a long way towards this recognition by granting freedom to India and by starting a new democratic policy in the Colonies. These liberal measures were supported by the Liberals, and no less naturally condemned by most of the Yellow Press. The enemy of democratic progress is as much in our own machine culture and our own impersonal cruelty as in any totalitarian atavism which may continue to exist abroad.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

I.

"THE story of English education," says a recent writer, "is synonymous with the rise of its democracy." The history of English culture is also, as we have seen, predominantly democratic. It is not simply a question of the Marxist, the Conservative and the Catholic diagnoses being largely mistaken; the reason for their mistakes is very significant: it is partly a reliance upon abstractions, partly a fatal confusion between English culture and European, between English civilization which has been based on Protestantism and liberal democracy and the main part of Continental civilization which has a long tradition—in some countries partly broken—of authority and hierarchic control.

"When I speak of tradition," writes a Catholic critic, Mr. Martin Turnell, "I mean the European tradition, and the European tradition is the continuity of a way of life that was largely destroyed at the Renaissance." But the English cultural tradition is not the European; for better or worse, our English culture has been built upon the Renaissance and the Reformation. There is little difference of opinion among professional historians on this matter. Mr. Turnell's co-religionist, Mr. Christopher Dawson, has written: "The development of a native English culture was checked by the Norman Conquest, and during the best part of the Middle Ages England was under the dominion of an alien culture that had its roots across the channel. England first began to become herself in the fourteenth century, when the mediaeval unity was passing away, and it was only in the three centuries that followed the Renaissance and the Reformation that the English national culture acquired its characteristic form."

Nobody would deny the cultural gains to England of the

Norman Conquest, nor could any Englishman fail to be proud of our mediaeval cathedrals, churches, public buildings, farm-houses, manors, barns. Those that are still in existence —such as Ely Cathedral, Romsey Abbey, the barn at Great Coxwell—are sufficient indication, even to an uninstructed eye like my own, of the virtues of the majority which have disappeared. "Pieces of nature and of history," William Morris called them. The phrase is fine and expresses perfectly what many people who, like myself, know little or nothing about architecture, nevertheless feel about such an obviously lovely piece of work as Salisbury Cathedral. Such a building appears to have grown naturally, like a splendid tree, and I can sympathize with those who feel that here was the true spirit of English culture.

But, as Dawson has indicated, the mediaeval culture of England was a provincial part of European culture, imposed on the English middle and lower classes by the Norman aristocracy. For several centuries three languages were heard in England: in the schools and churches Latin was used by the hundreds of French monks who were brought over by the Normans; lords and ladies spoke only French and had their sons taught in that language or Latin; as late as 1300, according to Robert of Gloucester, "The Normans at that time could speak only their own language and spoke French just as they did at home. They had their children taught in the same manner, so that people of rank in this country who came of their blood all stick to the same language that they received of them. For if a man knows no French people will think little of him. But the lower classes stick to English and their own language."

We have seen how important was this stubbornness: Chaucer's language was framed by rustics; English literature owes more to this lower-class obstinacy than to the enrichment of the tongue by French and Latin—very important also as this enrichment was. It is not an accident that "England first began to become herself in the fourteenth century," when the feudal system was nearing its end, when the Black Death had partly broken down class distinctions, when the

three languages had given place to one, when John Wycliff had made the first complete translation of the Bible into English, when Langland and Chaucer were preparing the way for Shakespeare, Bunyan and Dickens. It is not an accident: many other countries have had two cultural traditions, the aristocratic and the peasant, but we in England have had only one, for our culture has been inseparable from our democracy and both gained in strength as the old feudal Norman-England died away, both owed much to the Renaissance and the Reformation.

That is why, in the body of this book, I have insisted on the cultural importance of Puritanism. That there is much to be said against Puritanism I wouldn't deny, but its importance for us in England, both for good and ill, is scarcely to be exaggerated. "The English Reformation was Puritanism," says Dr. Lindsay: "and for Puritans the real meaning of democracy was the individual's right to live his own life." We have seen how great was the influence of Puritanism upon the lower and lower-middle classes; how, after the strife and misery of the mid-seventeenth century, it tended to make for peace and popular culture; how, in the seemingly aristocratic England of the eighteenth century, with the squire and parson apparently ruling the roost without rival, "The democratic element," as Dawson puts it, "was represented, not by the towns which were dominated by small privileged corporations, but by the religious sects which constituted a number of separate worlds, each with its own ethos and social tradition, but all based to a greater or less degree on the affirmation of spiritual freedom and autonomy."

It may seem difficult enough to decide finally whether the Puritan spirit has been a blessing to English culture or a blight upon it. But the question is really frivolous; for the Puritan spirit is *there*—an impressive fact—in our cultural and democratic tradition, and to reflect what England might have been like without Puritanism is nearly as futile as to reckon the possible achievements of mediaeval Europe without the Catholic Church. There were, indeed, some other contributions to mediaeval culture besides the Catholic; we have glanced, for instance, at the Moslem influence. But

Catholicism was not only the central tradition of the Middle Ages, it was the gate through which other traditions had to pass. Similarly English Puritanism was not restricted in its influence upon those who actually held certain religious tenets: it came gradually to influence the English genius on matters far outside its original province—in politics, in economics, in popular culture, in education, in science, in the freedom and decency of the Press. And as mediaeval Catholicism was itself profoundly modified by the "heretical" traditions it had accepted and purged, so the Puritan spirit in men like Bunyan in the seventeenth century and Dickens in the nineteenth was saner and more civilized than the original Puritanism of Calvin and his English followers.

II.

Our culture, I have said, has been inseparable from our democracy. Where many writers go wrong is in assuming that the machine culture of our time has been a democratic process. I have challenged Professor Berdyaev on this point; and I notice that even Mr. Dawson contradicts his excellent histories by writing: "The new standardized type of mass-civilization found ready acceptance in the United States. It was regarded as an original American creation, and it harmonized well with the needs of an expanding people in the new colonial environment. But in Europe the situation is entirely different. Society is still deeply imbued with the intellectual and artistic traditions of the Renaissance culture. The ideals of the leisured class still preserve their prestige, and the Americanization of European life is regarded by the majority of European writers and thinkers as a wave of barbarism which threatens all that makes life worth living. Nevertheless, the new material culture has the same attraction for the European man in the street as for his comrade in America . . . The new civilization may be, as Count Keyserling thinks, a civilization of the taxi-driver, but it offers the ordinary man opportunities of a richer and more enjoyable life than he ever knew before."

This passage, I submit, has dangerous implications and, if applied to England, is unhistorical. English culture has neither been one of " Renaissance leisure " nor has it had to " harmonize with the needs of an expanding people in a new colonial environment." The Renaissance in England—by which is meant usually the Elizabethan period or (more extensively) the Tudor-Stuart dynasty—was bound up almost from the first with the Reformation movement and passed quickly into aristocratic Protestantism and middle-class and popular Puritanism. The greatest artistic achievement of the English Renaissance was not the product of a leisured class, though the Elizabethan—Jacobean court and gentry lent it their support: the dramatic poetry of professional playwrights, mostly of humble birth, like Marlowe and Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, was appreciated by all classes in London and on tour. We have observed also how the fanatical Puritanism of the Cromwell period passed into the more tolerant popular Puritanism of Bunyan and Defoe. And we have seen the significance in the eighteenth century of the career of Hogarth and how most of the first native school of painting were, like the Elizabethan dramatists, professionals of lower-class stock. That many of the Tudor-Stuart nobility and some of the eighteenth-century gentry were practitioners or patrons of the arts is an unquestioned fact; but it is not a fact that English culture as a whole has been one of Renaissance leisure.

Culture, of course, is above class—and above theology. It is not the theological side of the Puritan tradition in England that is so impressive: it is their lead—sometimes against their theology—towards democracy, towards toleration, towards self-respect, towards popular culture, it is such tendencies as these that make Puritanism the main—though not the only—cultural tradition in post-Renaissance England (and, even more obviously, in Scotland). Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* may seem a character somewhat overdrawn, but the kind of self-respecting steadiness and conscientious restraint that Dickens represents in Stephen did exist on a large scale among the Victorian working-classes, and this is an important historical fact that the Marxists, for instance,

don't often take into account. In the *Pilgrim's Progress* we have a Puritan classic that is primarily a Christian—even a world—classic. Just as Byrd, in a time of acute religious dissension, found no difficulty in writing music for both the Catholic and the Protestant Church, so the fanatic Bunyan produced a masterpiece of literary art which, like the *Divina Commedia* and *Piers Plowman* and Salisbury Cathedral and Handel's *Messiah*, is as much above the frivolities of theological discussion as the English cultural tradition is above and beyond class distinctions.

I cannot accept, even in the tentative form of Mr. Dawson's "may be," Count Keyserling's opinion that the new standardized type of mass-civilization is "a civilization of the taxi-driver." History shows conclusively that this civilization is rather one of the taxi-*driven*, and the fare tears down Fleet Street from the direction of the Stock Exchange. It was not Arnold's Populace or Dickens's Stephen who started the Yellow Press, for instance: it was Arnold's Philistines allied with his Barbarians or Dickens's Bounderby allied with Mr. James Harthouse. Northcliffe and his backers got part of their vulgarity from the lowest type of American journalism which may have "harmonized with the needs of an expanding people in a new colonial environment" but which the representative of English culture and democracy in *Martin Chuzzlewit* found almost too disgusting for words.

Luckily, not quite so; for we are indebted to Dickens for the real answer to those who saddle the lower classes with the responsibility for modern mass-civilization. In Chapter XVI of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the editor of the *New York Rowdy Journal*, Colonel Diver, is explaining to the English emigrant—with the aid of his War Correspondent, Mr. Jefferson Brick—the policy of his paper:—"'They yield to the mighty mind of the Popular Instructor, sir,' said the colonel. 'They rile up, sometimes; but in general we have a hold upon our citizens, both in public and in private life, which is as much one of the ennobling institutions of our happy country as—' 'As nigger slavery itself,' suggested Mr. Brick. 'En-tirely so,' remarked the colonel."

The analogy is extremely apt, and it applies not only to the so-called Popular Instructors of New York in the 'thirties and 'forties but to the allegedly democratic journalism of Northcliffe in the 'nineties (and under which we still suffer to-day). Both were in reality as undemocratic as negro slavery; both imposed the will of a small commercial class—allied in England with the landed gentry of the Conservative Party—upon the majority of decent, sober citizens. To be sure, "they riled up sometimes": "The handful of democrats," says Halévy, "who protested against the exploitation of warlike feelings [in the Northcliffe Press in the 'nineties] presented the aspect of a select group of aristocrats, distinguished, but powerless." They may have seemed so to Northcliffe's yellow slaves, but who in fact were these "aristocrats"? They were men like Lloyd George, Ramsay MacDonald, John Burns, Alfred Spender, Herbert Gladstone, Henry Campbell-Bannerman: a cross-section of society representing all that was best in the Victorian, Dickensian tradition. They were, in reality, the democrats; the aristocrats were Northcliffe, the Imperial Party and the Stock Exchange—so far as these three "ennobling institutions of our happy country" could be separated.

Perhaps I should add the British Empire: for, although throughout the Victorian age we were, like the Americans, "an expanding people," we don't seem to have been very much aware of the fact till the 'eighties or 'nineties. When you consider the red on the map during the period when Dickens was writing, his lack of interest in the Empire is astonishing. But I believe it was the common attitude of the age. It was not until the time of Kipling and Rhodes and Baden-Powell that the Empire really sank into the popular consciousness; and if it be true that "the new standardized type of mass-civilization harmonizes well with the needs of an expanding people in a new colonial environment," then I believe we must give part of the "credit" to that imperial propaganda and those rough colonial attitudes which were so cut off, not only from the Catholic and Renaissance traditions of Western Europe, but from the main English tradition of popular Puritanism.

III.

There are three mistakes, closely connected with one another, which are frequently put forward as historical facts by serious writers whose honesty is beyond question. And these mistakes must interfere very considerably with the solutions to problems of modern culture which these writers soberly present, for you cannot find a true solution while your diagnosis remains contradicted by reality.

The three historical errors are so often made that I give the following examples as typical merely; some of the context is obviously sound and helpful. The typical errors I see as these :—

(1) " In the past the arts depended on a small number of very rich patrons." (Sir Osbert Sitwell: *A Letter to My Son:* 1944.)

(2) " A high proportion of our best writers have depended for their bread and butter in their earlier years upon a small private income." (Raymond Mortimer: in an article in the *New Statesman*: 1946.)

(3) " Until the time of Northcliffe most newspapers were run either in the Liberal or Conservative interest, making profits, if they did, as an incidental result of their political activity. They were edited by men whose names were well known to the public and who expressed, through editorial columns (then carefully separated from the news), a definite political point of view. But these political newspapers were only read by those few hundred thousand persons who then ruled England. They did not touch the masses, who were largely illiterate until a generation grew up which benefited by the first compulsory and universal Education Act of 1870. In the Nineties this public wanted to read, but had not learned to think." (Leading article in the *New Statesman*: 1946.)

Now it is clear that these three statements—which come, I would stress, from responsible and well-informed sources—tend to the conclusion that English culture has been mainly aristocratic. We have seen, in this book, that on the contrary English culture has been mainly democratic, possibly the most

democratic in Europe with the exception of Scottish culture. I do not want to repeat any details; I want now to sum up under these three heads, which summary will lead me to the question of education, with which I shall conclude.

(1) Sir Osbert Sitwell is an Englishman, and therefore was probably thinking mainly of England. From the context, he was meaning by "the arts" all the arts, including literature. It is simply not the case that English literature, music, painting, architecture, etc. "depended in the past on a small number of very rich patrons." I would say that Sir Osbert is placing all the stress on merely a part of the whole, even as regards poetry, music and architecture. In drama, fiction, journalism, painting, and in the folk arts, the facts are mostly against him.

(2) Mr. Mortimer's statement gives the erroneous impression—similar to Sir Osbert's—that in the past writers were dependent either on a small private income in their early years or on the patronage of the rich and that the problem facing writers to-day is how to manage without these gratifying encumbrances. But this is not the problem at all: a Johnson might starve to-day, even a Dickens might starve, a Blake almost certainly would; but this would not be due to the lack of patronage or an early private income, it would be due entirely to the general decay of taste. And the word "taste" in this connection has no relevance to material things. Writers like Dr. Joad who claim that artistic taste is connected with taste in food and drink are falling into one of the many traps that lie in wait for the trespasser into philology. If a taste for Bach is connected with a taste for wine, because we use the same word for each, then philologically speaking we must presume that every serf in the Middle Ages was a villain, that every nobleman was and is noble, that you cannot be a gentleman unless you are a gentleman born, that every king and queen is inevitably majestic, that Sir Alan Herbert became knightly a few years ago, while Bernard Shaw and Dr. Joad are still common. All these words come down to us from an aristocratic age and from a period of religion when it was seriously held that serfdom or

vileinage was due to sin and that all authority was of divine origin. The tendency of some Puritans to equate success in business with virtue, and poverty with lack of grace, was merely a pale reflection of the mediaeval attitude. So the problem of the modern writer is not quite what Mr. Mortimer thinks it is. By making a false estimate of the past he is seduced, with Sir Osbert, into believing that the modern writer or artist or composer suffers from a lack of private income or patronage. But a "high proportion" of the best writers of the past, together with some of the best composers and artists, had neither the one nor the other. They were able to stand on their own feet—if sometimes in a state of semi-starvation—until they were able to live by the proceeds of their work. What the modern writer needs is not private income or patronage but simply a public. The public for serious work has lessened, instead of increasing, with the years—though perhaps we reached the lowest level of taste in the 'twenties and 'thirties and have now started the grim struggle upwards.

The decline in the public for serious works has been a general decline, common to all classes, so it has nothing whatever to do with the growth of democratic education. The average public schoolboy prefers Carroll to Orlando Gibbons, P. G. Wodehouse to T. F. Powys, just as does the average garage-hand; and while these preferences can be passed over with toleration in youth (for both Carroll Gibbons and P. G. Wodehouse are excellent entertainers), something is obviously wrong when they extend to maturity and when the University which refused the author of *London* an M.A. in 1738 awarded the author of *Right Ho, Jeeves* a D.Litt. two hundred years later. *Democratic* education has not been at fault, for the Liberal measure of 1870 was almost totally defeated by the commercial-Conservative measures of the Northcliffe revolution in Press and advertising. The two processes were absolutely distinct: the Liberal measure was a sincere attempt at democratic education, later improved on by Sidney Webb and others; but the Northcliffe revolution was as autocratic and authoritarian as the Imperial Party with which it was connected.

"A lot of our fine feelings," says the heroine's husband in *We Have Been Warned*, "are just a very unimportant by-product of too much money." This, the Marxist attitude, is simply the commercial-Conservative attitude in reverse, and it is equally false, equally an uncivilized confusion of spiritual things with material. We have seen the truly "fine feelings" in the life of the Somerville family; it is plainly an axiom in morality that if great riches have any connection at all with civilized feelings then that connection is a disturbing one. "The greatest foe to art is luxury," said William Morris: "art cannot live in its atmosphere." The commercial minds of Northcliffe and his Tory backers evidently did not agree; if they cared for culture at all, they saw it as the privilege of birth or riches. They would not have understood the impulse of Cobbett, who sacrificed his supper, at the age of eleven, to read Swift's *Tale of a Tub*; nor the similar impulse of the twelve-year-old Alex Somerville who missed his evening meal, after a hard day's work, in order to borrow Burns's poems from the hay-stacker James Wilson. They would have been contemptuous of the self-improvement labours of Place, Lovett, Cooper, Watson and their friends. What did such people want with culture? Crime stories, imperial propaganda, headlines, sensations, prejudices: that was the stuff to give them!

This brings me to the consideration of (3). Were most newspapers in the pre-Northcliffe age read only by the upper classes? Dr. Johnson is my first witness to the contrary. In 1772 he had a conversation with Sir Adam Ferguson on the subject of liberty and public knowledge. Sir Adam mentioned the ancient Greeks and Romans. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "the mass of both of them were barbarians. The mass of every people must be barbarous where there is no printing, and consequently knowledge is not generally diffused. Knowledge is diffused among our people by the news-paper." Sir Adam mentioned the orators, poets and artists of Greece. "Sir," replied Johnson, "I am talking of the mass of the people. We see even what the boasted Athenians were. The little effect which Demosthenes's orations had upon them, shows that they were barbarians."

That is plain enough: Johnson was talking of the mass of the English people (and his words would have been even truer of the Scottish people) being superior to the mass of the ancient Greeks and Romans through their reading of well-informed and responsible newspapers. Certainly there were a good many illiterates in the slum areas of London and Bristol, as the great Methodist preacher, the ex-pot-boy George Whitefield, discovered; and there were many in the country, as Cobbett observed of his youth. But the Puritan tradition meant that reading was very widespread; and while Johnson himself appealed in his writings mostly to "the common reader" of the middle classes, the journalism of Defoe and his successors penetrated to the general literate public—including the many thousands whose only regular reading was the Bible, the *Pilgrim's Progress* and an odd "number" from the travelling booksellers.

The Industrial Revolution made a twofold change: in the first place, there was the growing interest in political matters which we have discussed in Chapter Four. Two key quotations can be repeated here: "*During all this time the people were reading,*" said Cobbett; "*and especially the labouring classes.*" "At this time," wrote Bamford, "the writings of William Cobbett suddenly became of great authority; *they were read on nearly every cottage hearth in the manufacturing districts.*"

But, in the second place, the employment of young children in the mines and factories was a serious blow to literacy. It was found, when the public conscience was pierced by statistics, that the proportion of illiterates was far higher in Lancashire and Middlesex than in any other county in England. The Puritan tradition of reading had certainly met with a severe check, which was intensified by the rapid growth in population. Nevertheless we must note the brighter side: the popularity of Hetherington's paper and those of his successors; the cheap periodicals, in which Scotland—as so often—gave the lead to England; the popularity of Dickens, chiefly through extracts in those papers and periodicals (for instance, in *Cleave's Gazette*); even the very wide sale of O'Connor's

Northern Star (though I believe, as I said in Chapter Two, that this paper had a mischievous political influence) shows a tendency to serious reading and thinking among the working classes in Yorkshire and Lancashire. The Hammonds note that in 1850 the libraries connected with the mechanics' institutes and similar bodies contained 700,000 books—roughly a thousand for each of the 700 societies. There were over 100,000 members.

Why should these facts be ignored by so many modern writers on culture? Why should these writers accept as gospel the mere commercial excuses of Northcliffe and his successors? Even had the proportion of Victorian illiterates before 1890 been as high as 90 per cent., that would have afforded no real excuse for Northcliffe's policy of deliberate sensationalism and frivolity. For there is no opposition between ordinary, decent humanity, such as existed in both old villages and new towns in the Dickensian period, there is no opposition between these ordinary virtues and the highest reaches of art; indeed, they are closely connected, as Dickens himself observed. What opposes culture is commerce, commerce and luxury and sophistication. Tennyson once wrote that man loved the highest when he saw it; "but we have learnt," says Dr. Joad, "that he is more likely to heave a brick at it." We have learnt nothing of the sort; what we have learnt, to our sorrow, is what the old German Liberals learnt when they saw the effect of Hitler's creed upon the Nazi youth. From the Northcliffe Revolution onwards, the popular Press, advertising, popular novels, the cinema, have not only been concerned to appeal to the lowest level of the mind, they have conducted a most successful campaign against anything higher—as the Nazi Party deliberately "educated" the German youth towards tribal loyalty and Jew-baiting and against peace, tolerance and culture. So the situation is almost the opposite of that presented by Dr. Joad; there is no spontaneous heaving of the brick, there is no *democratic* protest against the higher reaches of culture, for the simple reasons that culture is closely connected with the ordinary, decent, democratic virtues and that the machine-

culture of our time has been an anti-democratic process. "Culture seeks to do away with classes," wrote Matthew Arnold. "The men of culture are the true apostles of equality."

IV.

The damage has been done, and therefore the only solution, as Morris said before, lies in education. I believe in education partly because it is always, in matters outside the exact sciences, self-education; partly because it is an extremely gradual process. So many writers on cultural problems conceive as solution no less a thing than wholesale conversion to some abstract creed. If I have done nothing else in this book, I hope I have shown that these problems are too complicated for any such dogmatism. The immediate prospect on the cultural front is far from encouraging; I believe we are in for a period of artificial cosmopolitan civilization which may indeed be a slight improvement on the rough "colonial" cultures at present existing but which can only be made genuine in the international field by the same process of self-education, self-survey, as that which created the national civilizations of the past. Our own English culture has been mainly democratic, and it is perhaps typical of the way in which progress in one direction is partly offset by decline in another that our development towards political and economic democracy at the close of the nineteenth century should have been accompanied by a so-called democratic machine-culture which has almost destroyed the genuine democracy of the English cultural tradition.

But the stress, I believe, should still be laid on that "almost." Just as the slum-dwellers at the time of the Industrial Revolution still had those rural and religious traditions which eventually co-operated with the conscience of the iron-masters to prevent a violent remedy, so have we, in our cultural slums, the vestiges of our democratic cultural tradition which may yet prove stronger than commerce. Although the immediate prospect is no more cheerful in culture

generally than it is in politics in particular, I see several signs in English history in the last twenty years which lead me to be more hopeful than the situation would otherwise warrant. I don't think it is possible to over-estimate the cultural significance during the past decade of the refusal of our citizens in the distressed areas to fall for the revolutionary bait offered them by the Marxist upper classes. Another heartening sign is the continued interest shown by the majority of English townsmen in their gardens and allotments, despite the accusations of recently "converted" husbandmen that such urban dwellers are completely cut off from the soil. A third reason for hope is the continued reverence for the Christian sentiment in the majority of English hearts, in spite of the insistence of dogma-lovers that we are completely cut off from the spiritual traditions—not to mention the spiritual persecutions—of such sublime ages as the thirteenth century and the seventeenth.

It is very easy to disparage the present if you take our worst aspects as typical and compare them with the best aspects of the past. It is equally easy to find a clear-cut solution to contemporary problems of culture if you concentrate on just one feature and ignore the rest. If you try—as I have tried in this book—to see the problem as a whole, the true present in relation to the true past, then you must forfeit a rhetorical conclusion and hope for compensation in the gratitude of your readers.