

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MODERNISM AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

A study of their common premises in the writings
of Ernesto Buonaiuti and Walter Rauschenbusch

by

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PREFACE

Roman Catholic Modernism in Europe and the Social Gospel in America, are two movements within the Christian Church, developing almost simultaneously, at the dawn of the twentieth century, with many affinities in aims and thoughts. This thesis proposes to investigate their developments, their characteristics, and their eventual relation and common premises, by considering similar aspects of their sociology and of their theology.

These two movements have always been studied and considered separately. A new interest in the values of their history appears at the present time in such work as The Social Gospel of Walter Rauschenbusch and Its Relation to Religious Education, by Vernon Parker Bodein, and Ernesto Buonaiuti e L'Italia Religiosa del Suo Tempo, by Valdo Vinay. But as far as the author of this thesis knows, a comparison of the two movements has never been considered, or even thought possible. It is precisely such an approach that is the concern of the following pages in order to inquire about the common theological content of both the Social Gospel and the Roman Catholic Modernism. An indirect, though no less valuable, importance of such a study is the discovery

of a very interesting example of the movements of ideas and their undergoing changes from one continent to the other, at the interdenominational level.

The plan of the thesis is to consider first of all, in two separate chapters, the characteristics of each movement and then proceed in a third chapter to a comparison of their affinities in order to let the common elements appear for proper consideration. Once the common ground is identified, a final chapter will examine the whole matter in the frame of development of Christian thought and draw the implied conclusions and evaluations.

Due to the extent of the argument and of the material concerned which involves many personalities, denominations and countries, only the most representative works of the movements can be considered. For this reason, the whole approach is based on the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch and Ernesto Buonaiuti, both regarded as leaders in their respective movements.

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CHAPTER I

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MODERNISM

Summary:

Roman Catholic Modernism brings to a climax the political and intellectual aspirations, germinating within the Church in the nineteenth century. It understands the social function of Christianity as an attempt to give a sensible soul to the movements of the working class. It endeavours to re-interpret theology pragmatically according to the modern view of life.

A. THE BACKGROUND OF THE MOVEMENT

The French Revolution and the strong reaction to it, left the European intellectual atmosphere profoundly disturbed and unsatisfied. The intention of the Congress of Vienna, (1814-1815) to restore the international situation as it was before the French uprising, was an unfortunate and unnecessary anachronism. In all branches of human endeavour, the need of a new beginning was felt and expressed: the age of the enlightenment was over and was followed by a religious revival. This revival had its influence and consequences on the Catholic Church. Rene de Chateaubriand and other French writers started a Christian apologetic based on "a return from the cold and artificial abstraction of the intellect to romance and emotion".¹ Two movements were to be the outcome of

¹ Alec R. Vidler: The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church, (Cambridge, The University Press, 1934) p.18.

these developments: a new Ultramontanism and a Liberal Catholicism.²

New Ultramontanism

Joseph de Maistre (1754-1821) was the original exponent of this novel ultramontanism in France. A social order was to be built on a central and powerful authority: the Roman papacy was regarded as the ideal answer to the aspirations of a romantic age.³ To the ultramontanists, this suggestion appeared to be the solution for all the ills of Europe. But their outlook was wider and deeper than a mere social improvement, since they aimed at the ultimate renewal of the structure of religion itself.⁴

One of the outstanding personalities in this changed atmosphere was John Joseph Ignatius von Döllinger (1799-1890) professor of Church History at the University of Munich. Although he was not able to subscribe to papal infallibility as set forth at the Vatican Council in 1870, he was a strong supporter of the primacy of the Pope as the best guarantee of the freedom of the Church vis à vis the State. For this reason, he had

² Ibid. p.19

³ Ibid. pp.20 ff.

⁴ Ibid. p.21

been a supporter of ultramontaniam. But after the proclamation of the infallibility of the Pope, he resigned his professorship and became, through his writings, an active opponent of ultramontaniam.⁵

In Italy the cause of ultramontaniam was upheld by Vincent Gioberti (1801-1852). Even though he was a strong supporter of the Italian Risorgimento as the best means of unifying the country, nevertheless he discouraged any form of revolution, since he still felt that the papacy might play a useful role in uniting the small states of the peninsula. It was his hope that the Roman Pontiff might not only serve the immediate problem of Italian unification, but also bring about a confederation of European states.⁶ In general, the new ultramontaniam was presented as the answer to the quest for a peaceful solution to the political aspirations of Europe in the nineteenth century. But it was only one of the developments following upon the Congress of Vienna and one of the important aspects of the background of the Roman Catholic Modernism.

⁵ V. Vinay: Storia del cristianesimo (Sec.XIX-XX) (Unpublished course of Church History, Rome, 1951-1952) pp.82 ff.

⁶ Ibid. p.69

Liberal Catholicism

The other aspect is found in Liberal Catholicism. This movement is best illustrated in the work of Felicite de Lamenaïs (1782-1854) a French theologian who, at the beginning of his career, was a disciple of de Maistre. In time, however, he became suspect to the Roman See for his apologetic works and his liberal ideas, and found himself an excommunicate, after which he became a socialist. As editor of the L'Avenir he supported the freedom of conscience, of the press, of education and association. The papal encyclical Mirari vos (1831) condemned the policy of the L'Avenir, marking the first defeat of liberal Catholicism.⁷ In Germany, Liberal Catholicism was represented by the School of Tübingen where it came under the influence of nineteenth century Protestant theology. "The Tübingen theologians agreed with Schleiermacher, for whom they did not conceal their admiration. . . ."⁸ This school opposed the separation between revelation and reason, considering the formulation of dogmas an evolving process paralleling the development of education. They also emphasized strongly the validity of experience.

⁷ Ibid. pp.62 ff. Vidler: op. cit., pp.22 ff.

⁸ A.R. Vidler: op. cit., p.34.

Their criticism of the New Testament was largely determined by Hegelian presuppositions, but they affirmed vehemently that Catholics have nothing to fear from Biblical criticism; in point of fact, they considered that they were on much firmer ground than the Protestants. This courageous undertaking was never condemned by the Vatican, not even when the opponents of the infallibility of the Pope appealed to the teaching of the Tübingen theologians.⁹

In Italy Antony Rosmini (1797-1855) was won over to Liberal Catholicism. This founder of special congregations dedicated to study and to the practice of charity, adopted the philosophy of Descartes in dealing with such problems as moral consciousness, the education of the clergy and social justice, and thus found himself opposed by the Jesuits. In 1887 Leo XIII, thirty-two years after Rosmini's death, condemned forty statements in his works.¹⁰

Liberal Catholicism was chiefly concerned with culture, and therefore contributed scientifically to the awakening of the social consciousness, brought about by the new ultramontanism. In point of fact, these two lines of development cannot be examined independently without ignoring their rich cross-fertilization. In spite of their diversity, they have a similar origin which coloured

⁹ V. Vinay: op. cit. p.76 - A.R. Vidler: op. cit. pp.34 ff.

¹⁰ V. Vinay: op. cit. p.66 - A.R. Vidler: op. cit. p.40

their future development. The Catholic Church was understood by both of them to be the answer to their respective political and cultural quests. But in order to fulfil their hopes, the church must reinterpret her rich tradition and experience in terms now imposed by the progress of civilization.

The Roman See

Leo XIII (1878-1903) was admirably fitted to handle this optimistic hope with delicate forethought. He was a statesman and a diplomat who took care to create the impression that Catholicism was capable of a fresh orientation. It was he who opened the Vatican archives to Protestant as well as Catholic students of history, conceding that history ought to be pursued by its own methods and without regard to the needs of Catholic controversialists.¹¹ In 1892 there took place in Grenoble (France) a meeting of Protestants, Catholics and Jews for a common moral action. Pope Leo XIII gave his approval and wrote in a letter that non-believers are naturaliter christiani in their pursuit of individual and social good.¹²

¹¹ Vidler: op. cit. pp.61 ff.

¹² James Hasting, editor, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (to be referred to hereafter as "E.R.E.", New York, Charles Scribner s Son 1913) art: Modernism.

But at the same time, he was said to use modern liberties to get rid of them. With the encyclical Aeterni Patri (August 4, 1879) he enjoined a return to the traditional metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas. With the Providentissimus Deus (November 18, 1893) he expressly condemned the "disquieting tendencies" in biblical interpretation. On the other hand, with the publication of the Rerum Novarum (May 15, 1891) he became the father of Roman sociology and created a premature enthusiasm in those who had been secretly hoping for a social reformation to balance the success of socialism. It is in this atmosphere that Modernism developed and began to draw the consequences of its predecessors' undertaking.

B. THE HISTORY OF MODERNISM

Modernism, according to A.L. Lilley, is a "complex of movements within the Roman Communion all alike inspired by a desire to bring the tradition of Christian belief and practice into closer relation with the intellectual habits and social aspiration of our own time."¹³ None of these movements was organized in any way and they were quite independent in their beginnings. "Il y a

¹³ E.R.E. art. cit.

autant de modernisme que de modernistes"¹⁴ was the popular saying to indicate their separated and distinctive growths. If later they became known under one name and as one movement, that is due, in part at least, to the official critique of Rome which assembled them under the same principles. One of the characteristics of Modernism, which has been continually stressed, is the refusal to acknowledge any relationship with other movements either Catholic or Protestant. Modernists knew that the heritage of liberal Catholicism was condemned and they considered any similarity to it purely coincidental.¹⁵ Liberal Protestantism seemed to them a reduced Christianity to be fought with all the power of their scientific and historical methods.¹⁶ Old Catholics had nothing to offer to Modernists who considered their apologetic as retrogressive.¹⁷ But they did not hesitate to regard Cardinal Newman as a precursor of Modernism. He was found useful, since to invoke the authority of such an illustrious personality was safe and precautionary.¹⁸ Their profound desire was to remain and work within the Roman

¹⁴ A. Vidler: op. cit. p.8

¹⁵ A. Vidler: op. cit. p.10

¹⁶ Ibid. p.235

¹⁷ Ibid. p.236

¹⁸ Ibid. p.50

Catholic Church, consequently they had to prove their loyalty and the purity of their Catholicism. It was this attempt that shaped their protest and left open to question the objectivity of their claims.

Modernism in France

Alfred Loisy (1857-1940). One of the consequences of the Catholic revival of the nineteenth century was the establishment in Paris of the Institut Catholique in 1878. Louis Duchesne was appointed professor of Church History and in 1881 Alfred Loisy occupied the chair of Hebrew. Both Loisy and Duchesne contended that it was necessary to apply a rigorously scientific method to their researches. But Loisy was forced to resign in 1893 when the Papal encyclical Providentissimus Deus condemned his principle of Biblical interpretation.¹⁹ But through the Seminary, his influence had already spread widely and it also had its effect on the lay world. In 1902 Loisy published L'Evangile et l'Eglise which had an unexpected and tremendous reception. This was an apologetic work counterattacking the influence of liberal Protestantism as expressed by the works of Adolph Harnack. The latter, appealing to history in his work "What is Christianity", (published in German in 1900) expounded a line of thought

¹⁹ E.R.E. art. cit.

congenial to the modern mind. Bible infallibility, miracles, traditional dogmas were sacrificed on the altar of science, and Christianity was reduced to Divine Fatherhood and human brotherhood. Confronted by such a presentation, Catholicism and its doctrine appeared as non-essential.²⁰ Consequently, Loisy accepted the challenge and in his above-mentioned book attempted to prove that Christian history, rather than being a progressive degeneration of the Christian message, has been a continuous evolution of it adapting the notion of the Kingdom to the ever-changing times. This adaptation of the original element to our changing historical conditions constitutes the richness of Christian tradition. The book was condemned in 1903. Loisy tried to justify his thesis with another publication: Autour d'un petit livre; in this work he emphasized the distinction between the results of historical critique and the mystical interpretation of faith. However, Loisy did not regain favour and in 1908 he was excommunicated. As a result, he felt liberated and continued his career as historian at the Collège de France, where he gradually drifted into positivism.²¹ Other French Modernists were Edward Le Roy, a philosopher who suggested a pragmatic interpretation

²⁰ A. Vidler: op. cit. pp.104 ff.

²¹ V. Vinay: op. cit. p.133

of dogmas, and Maurice Blondel who formulated a philosophy of action.

Modernism in England

George Tyrrell (1861-1909), born in an Anglican family, accepted the Catholic faith when he was eighteen and two years later entered the Society of Jesus. He was a great admirer of Newman, whose theory of evolution favourably impressed him. F. von Hügel, a good friend of his, introduced him to the writings of Loisy and from that time on, Tyrrell felt compelled to abandon the scholastic tradition of orthodox Catholicism. In 1906 he was dismissed from the Society of Jesus and suspended as a priest. This decision was taken after he was discovered to be the author of an anonymous "Letter to a Professor" in which he supported the practical value of dogmas. Excommunicated in 1907, he died two years later, refusing reconciliation with the Roman Church. Among his works were: Nova et Vetera (1897), Lex orandi (1904), Lex credendi (1906), Medievalism (1908) and Christianity at the Crossroads (1910). Medievalism was hastily written in answer to the Pascendi's condemnation of Modernism. In a vigorously controversial style, Tyrrell pointed out the pretensions of papal absolutism and made an historical critique of their development.

Christianity at the Crossroads, published post-

humously, contains the mature and positive thought of Tyrrell. In these pages, he is a prophet of revolution, but never of revolt; the eschatological element is considered as a distinctive point of difference with Protestant liberalism. Christian faith cannot be satisfied with the idea of evolution and progress toward a perfected human society on earth; the universal religion of the future will accept the scientific method; Catholicism will have to undergo a radical transformation, but because of its preservation of the value of the past, it is the best qualified among existing Christian institutions to become the body out of which the Church of the future will grow.²²

Modernism in Italy

The history of Italian Modernism has only recently been brought to light by the intensive research of V. Vinay of the Waldensian Seminary in Rome. It is easy to understand the difficulty it had to face in a Catholic country like Italy even at the dawn of the twentieth century. In order to continue their work, the Modernists had to conceal their identity and to refrain from coming into the open. This fact certainly misled scholars of

²² A. Vidler: op. cit. pp. 143 ff.
Cfr. V. Vinay: op. cit. pp. 136 ff.

other countries who by and large remained uninformed of the existence of the Italian movement.²³ Modernists in Italy gave birth to ten literary reviews, three of which dealt with social and political problems and seven with their philosophical and historical positions. A political party came into being as a result of this awakening; it was later dismissed by Leo XIII. In 1907, a congress was organized in Molveno near Milan, but as this was a time of crisis, it was not a success.²⁴ Ernesto Buonaiuti (1881-1946) one of the leaders of the movement, used at least six pseudonyms to conceal his identity. In 1905 he was forced to resign from his chair of Church History at the Pontifical Seminary because one of his articles on the philosophy of M. Blondel contradicted scholastic teaching. He met personally Loisy and Tyrrell and in 1907 wrote Il Programma dei modernisti. This official answer of the movement to the Papal condemnation was translated into English by George Tyrrell. In 1915 Buonaiuti was named Professor of History of Christianity at the University of Rome and taught there until 1932 when he was forced to leave for refusing to submit to

²³ Cf. Herbert Leslie Stewart, M.A. Ph.D. Modernism Past and Present (London, John Murray Albemarle St. W., 1932) p.310.

²⁴ V. Vinay: op. cit. p.150

the fascist regime. Meanwhile, his continuous activity on behalf of Modernism resulted in his excommunication in 1924. He taught at the Protestant Faculty of Lausanne and was welcomed by many Protestant institutions, but he never expressed a desire to accept the Protestant faith. Like all Modernists, he strongly desired to remain within a Catholic fold. After World War II, he gave himself to the political reconstruction of the country by publishing the "1945, Sestante per la realta' in costruzione". He died in 1946 expressing his admiration for the Ecumenical Church toward which he had seen the evangelical denominations working with sincere enthusiasm. He was the editor of three magazines and many historical works in which he applied the scientific methods proposed by Modernism.²⁵ Among the many works of Ernesto Buonaiuti his "Lettere di un prete modernista" (The letters of a Modernist Priest) have been considered the most clear, complete and final expression of Italian Modernism.²⁶ With his The Programme of Modernism which was translated into French, English and German he became the outstanding exponent of Modernism. This work was negative in its content, stating the reason for dissenting

²⁵ V. Vinay: op. cit. p.152 V. Vinay: Ernesto Buonaiuti e l'Italia religiosa del suo tempo, (Torre Pellice, Claudiana 1956) pp.11 ff.

²⁶ Ibid. pp.43 ff., 145 f.

from the critique of Rome, but the need for a positive presentation of the Modernist position was felt and expressed in the Letters. At the beginning, the Letters were considered rather radical and even shocked most of the Modernists. Buonaiuti himself in 1945 considered them as peccatum iuventutis meae, but his thought as a whole might be traced to the Letters. This apparently radical position developed in Nova et Vetera, a review published in Rome, to which G. Tyrrell gave a generous contribution. Buonaiuti, like Tyrrell, remained loyal to the movement up to his death. He spent almost forty years of his life defending and supporting a cause that was lost at the moment of papal intervention in 1907. He saw his books gradually condemned, but was able, due to the device of anonymity, to delay his excommunication until 1924. Modernism became an underground movement because that was the only possible way it could survive, but little by little Buonaiuti remained alone in his work.

On the basis of these considerations, E. Buonaiuti will be considered in the following pages as the typical representative of Modernism in the Roman Catholic Communion, and his book Lettere di un prete modernista as the positive programme of the entire movement.

The Vatican Reaction

The reaction of the Roman See started under Leo XIII, but Pius X (1903-1914) gave the final blow to the growing and developing movement. On the third of July 1907, the decree Lamentabili sane exitu condemned sixty-five propositions regarding the Old Testament exegesis taken from writings of Loisy and Tyrrell.²⁷ On the eighth of September, the Encyclical Pascendi dominici gregis condemned Modernism describing it as "the synthesis of all heresies".²⁸ The remedies suggested against this danger within the Church were: the study of scholastic philosophy, careful selection of teachers and professors, Episcopal vigilance over publications, censorship, the avoidance of congresses, diocesan vigilance committees to watch over every trace of Modernism and a triennial report by the bishops to the Pope on the matter. Although such severe measures were unusual, and the suggested controls left little room to evade them, it was not felt enough to counteract the danger represented by Modernists. On the first of September 1910 with the "motu proprio" Sacrorum antistiticum, Pius X prescribed an antimodernistic oath to be taken by all persons holding any position of responsibility in the Roman Church. Even this action was not enough to destroy completely the followers of Modernism.

²⁷ V. Vinay: E. Buonaletti op. cit. p.31

²⁸ G. Tyrrell translator: The Programme of Modernism and the Encyclical Pius X, (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1908) pp.214 ff.

In the same year, there came into being a secret organization called Sodalitium Pianum which expanded rapidly all over the Roman world to check and track down any trace of underground revival.²⁹ These are the difficulties that men like Buonaiuti had to face for their ideals and, strangely enough, for their true love for the Church of Rome.

C. THE SOCIAL TEACHING

It is difficult for a movement so severely attacked in its early stages to have a definite and clear social programme. But Modernism was a quest for a fuller life both on the intellectual and on the social levels of existence. The scholars who have studied carefully the growth of Modernism have not only been aware of this fact, but also amazed that the highly scientific problems discussed by the Modernist could bear so directly on social life.³⁰ Buonaiuti himself knew the importance of this special feature and discussed it in his Letters.³¹ The common basis for both intellectual and social aspects was the religious experience which does not recognize any distinction

²⁹ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti op. cit. pp.30 ff, and 61 ff.

³⁰ H.L. Stewart: op. cit. p.309

³¹ E. Buonaiuti: Lettere di un prete modernista, (2nd edition, Rome, Universale di Roma, 1948) pp.155 ff.

among men. Loisy considered Tyrrell more interested than himself in the social problems.³² So, among the Italian Modernists, each one had his own characteristics and dealt with particular problems. Of course, the social problems of Italy at the dawn of the twentieth century were quite different from those of England or of the United States since industrialization did not create a revolution of the same gravity and extent as in other western countries. That is why the Italian Modernists were more concerned to influence the existing socialist party rather than to provide original solutions for particular problems. Questioned about their ethics and their specific Christian social action, they answered:

"Moral ends direct our engagement against clericalism, our endeavour for a religious culture and particularly our greatest ideal: the possibility of giving to socialism the consciousness of its religious and Christian content."³³

Clericalism

This was the real social problem of Italy and in particular of Rome, where there was little industrial development. The Roman clergy were extraordinarily rich, with very few exceptions.³⁴ A large bureaucracy governed and protected

³² A. Vidler: op. cit. p.179

³³ Nova et Vetera II (1908) p.101 as quoted from V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.55.

³⁴ E. Buonaiuti: Lettere... op. cit. p.16

the interests of ranks, which bound together a host of persons without enthusiasm and without conviction.³⁵ The episcopacy had too many common interests with wealthy families.³⁶ A situation like this could not help turning the Catholic Church into an "Institute of Insurance for the blessed of the earth and the feasters of every rank and land,"³⁷ or into a "Society of mutual assistance among patrons."³⁸ The disappointment of Modernists was that the chief authorities in the Church did not even realize that such an organization of the social life could not satisfy the need of a changing age. To the modern eye this was nothing but Medievalism - as Tyrrell suggested in his book bearing this title. The Latin saying, hic manebimus optime appeared to Buonaiuti as the perfect description of the Roman satisfaction with the status quo.³⁹ Therefore, it was not surprising that Leo XIII, formulating in the Rerum Novarum the social doctrine of the Church, bound the destiny of Catholicism to the interest of the predominant class.⁴⁰ Furthermore, in 1901 the Encyclical Graves de communis

³⁵ Ibid. p.41

³⁶ Ibid. p.66

³⁷ Ibid. p.67

³⁸ Ibid. p.19

³⁹ Ibid. p.33

⁴⁰ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti op. cit. p.227

reaffirmed the old conservatives position against any possible interpretation of the Rerum Novarum in a progressive sense.⁴¹ The Modernists felt that the Church should never have compromised herself with those who use her to cover their privileges,⁴² and did not hesitate to associate themselves with anticlericals. The working class had no interest in the policy of the Church and felt that she could not be trusted. Loeppert reports⁴³ in his work Modernism and the Vatican about a controversy that broke out between the Vatican and the Mayor of Rome who attacked the Roman See, denouncing the moral and spiritual tyranny of the papacy. On that occasion, Modernists became sympathizers of the Mayor and wrote him a letter saying: "The best part of the Church in Italy does not want to be an accomplice of the Vatican . . . against the evolution of thought and liberty of conscience." To them, true anticlericalism meant renovation, and a distinction between pure religion and its deteriorated forms produced by prejudices and considerations of rank. Modernism wished to be a redemption

⁴¹ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere... pp.64 ff.

⁴² V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti p.227

⁴³ Adam J. Leoppert D.D.: Modernism and the Vatican (Cincinnati, Jennings and Graham, 1912) p.62

of religion, and turned to the working class, sure of its understanding and favour.⁴⁴ Buonaiuti could not conceal his admiration for President Wilson of the United States and his great ideals of freedom. He later expressed the same admiration for Roosevelt's proclamation of the four liberties and was grieved that the Roman See was not capable of such leadership in guiding humanity to a better destiny.⁴⁵

Nationalism

Nationalism develops late in the particular period of this inquiry, but it is helpful to understand clearly what the Modernist wanted on the international scene. Buonaiuti noticed that the entire pontificate of Pius XI was animated by an almost maniacal urgency to making concordats with more and more nations. While complaining of spiritual decadence, he failed to see that those concordats were based on common interests and not on common faith.⁴⁶ The Church should have said most vigorously that there are no more differences between nations and races, and in so doing, taken the lead in the League of Nations and later in the United Nations.⁴⁷ These organizations needed a soul to

⁴⁴ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, p.197

⁴⁵ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, p.75 and 224

⁴⁶ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.229

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.76 and 246

animate them and the Church should have considered this situation as her particular responsibility.

Christian Democracy

The Christian Democracy, as a political party, came into being as a consequence of the Rerum Novarum. Romolo Murri, a Modernist priest, was its founder; his intentions were oriented toward a closer co-operation with the Socialist party. A letter was sent to Filippo Turati to this purpose, but without success.⁴⁸ Buonaiuti and other Modernists were suspicious of the destiny of such a party and from the outset they discouraged its organization;⁴⁹ they felt that it would never create enthusiasm among the masses and that it would remain an unacceptable compromise. When the Pope condemned it, they knew that Christian Democracy was already dead.⁵⁰

Socialism

The Modernists held the same ideal of economic equality as the Socialists. In this sense, they considered themselves to be in the tradition of the French Revolution,

⁴⁸ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.70

⁴⁹ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.40

⁵⁰ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.73

which stood for political equality.⁵¹ Along with the working class, Modernists were against clericalism and exploitation and were conscious of fighting the same battle.⁵² The notion of labour as it had been set forward by the Soviet Union seemed to Buonaiuti to be a solemn public recognition of the Pauline doctrine: "if any would not work, neither should he eat." (Thess. 3:10)⁵³ With the Socialists, Buonaiuti and his friend shared the delusion about Russia's transformation of economics into a religion, and suggested to the Church the opposite view, i.e. understand religion as economics.⁵⁴ The social function of Christianity at this particular time was understood to be a leaven within Socialism. They realized that Socialism was lacking in aspiration toward the good and the practice of brotherhood and that the working class needed to be animated by a religious and ethical conscience.⁵⁵ As Christians, the Modernists considered it their duty to

⁵¹ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, p.150

⁵² Ibid. p.182

⁵³ v. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.77

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.78

⁵⁵ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, p.41

provide this moral side to Socialism in order to prevent its brutalization.⁵⁶

In 1924 Buonaiuti wrote an article on the occasion of Giuseppe Matteotti's death. He spoke of him not only as a Socialist leader but also as a champion in the social endeavour against egoism.⁵⁷ In spite of the past, there were some signs of a reciprocal respect between the two movements and the Modernists greatly desired to overcome all misunderstandings in the views of a Christian socialism or a Socialist Christianity.⁵⁸

As for Romolo Murri, he became a Socialist and was elected a member of the Italian Parliament,⁵⁹ indicating once more the very important place that Socialism always had in the heart of every Modernist.

D. THE THEOLOGY OF MODERNISM

The Papal encyclical Pascendi was the first attempt to consider the various and independent work of Modernists as a unity and to bring them together as a systematic

⁵⁶ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.40

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.80

⁵⁸ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.73

⁵⁹ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.57

doctrine.⁶⁰ Of course, this aroused the protest of the scholars concerned who managed to prove that they had no common philosophical presuppositions but only a sincere desire to understand and accept the general development of scientific knowledge.⁶¹ In setting forth this argument, the Modernists won many supporters for their claims. A. Vidler said that the Pascendi reversed the fact and that in his study he would not admit any presuppositions, but considered the movement in its concrete reality.⁶² Other theologians were able to suggest and point out a common philosophical presupposition for the Modernists. Van Loo made an approach between Modernism and Kantianism,⁶³ and it might be added that F. von Hügel, a Modernist, towards the end of his life maintained that the Pope's analysis was justified and correct.⁶⁴ Buonaiuti wrote in The Programme of Modernism: "No one can evade the results of scientific history and so we shall start from them."⁶⁵

⁶⁰ The Programme of Modernism, op. cit. pp.153 ff.

⁶¹ A. Vidler: op. cit. pp.1 ff.

⁶² Ibid. p.6

⁶³ Ibid. p.9

⁶⁴ V. Vinay: Storia del Cristianesimo, op. cit. p.152

⁶⁵ The Programme; op. cit. p.21

But it might be asked: is the historical criticism neutral in itself, or is it determined a priori? In taking into consideration the theological teaching of Modernism, the writer of this thesis feels compelled to agree with the Pascendi that the Modernists' notion of immanence is the vital a priori of their theology.⁶⁶

Experience

This religious phenomenon involves a positive act of faith which answers man's questions about the meaning of life and the existence of an over-ruling power.⁶⁷ The subject is not merely passive in this context, "but brings forth from its own spiritual nature both the witness to a higher reality, intuitively perceived, and the abstract formulation of the same."⁶⁸ This process of knowledge and experience is presided over by the inferential sense (Newman) which is a power in the human spirit for attaining the truth, contraopposed to the practical reason of Kant.⁶⁹ It must also be noticed that BuonaIuti was the enthusiastic translator into Italian of Rudolph Otto's Idea of the Holy in which the German theologian described

⁶⁶ Ibid. p.156

⁶⁷ E. BuonaIuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.165

⁶⁸ The Programme; op. cit. p.99

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.98

religion as "the apprehension of the numinous which manifests itself to men who can know it only by religious insight."⁷⁰ This was in perfect agreement with Buonaiuti who also included in the idea of numinous the notion of man as essential to the process of communication with God.⁷¹ This experience put man in direct contact with God⁷² and included in itself the dogmas, and even a new kind of philosophy which once formulated, will have expressed the stand of Modernists.⁷³

Faith

A definition of faith cannot be found apart from that of experience. Indeed, it is the experience that, once acquired, turns man into a believer,⁷⁴ and is therefore described as a true act of faith.⁷⁵ The mission of the movement is to originate new religious experience and enthusiasms which will provide the needed material for the social and intellectual renovation of humanity.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1955)
sub voce: OTTO

⁷¹ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p. 171

⁷² Ibid. p.202

⁷³ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. pp.156 ff.

⁷⁴ Cf. The Programme, op. cit. p.167

⁷⁵ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.165

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.161

Sin

In some cases sin is regarded as the regrettable heritage of medieval theology and as the expression of an anthropological pessimism out of date in the twentieth century. The Reformation of Luther was certainly a protest against this deformation of the spirit, but the Reformer was not yet able "to proclaim that nothing there is to be justified where nothing is sinful."⁷⁷ In other cases, sin is identified with the misery of our human condition ever longing for happiness and joy, and coloured with sufferings, remorse and death.⁷⁸ Sin might well be described as the condition of the isolated man.

Salvation

Salvation is the liberating experience of the encounter with man; the experience of the associated life in the spirit of brotherhood and love, as communicated by the teaching and example of Christ.⁷⁹ Salvation comes to man as a word of consolation, of forgiveness or of remembrance after death.⁸⁰ The industrial revolution developed a growing sense of brotherhood and gave birth to great hopes for

⁷⁷ Ibid. p.138

⁷⁸ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.137

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.138

⁸⁰ loc. cit.

well being. Consequently, the Modernists felt naturaliter christiani in this atmosphere. To them, everyone who hopes for the intervention of a higher cause to alleviate the evils of life is a Christian. "It does not matter that this cause be God, or humanity considered as a collective force."⁸¹

Ethics

For Buonaiuti, Christianity is an original ethic which expresses the experience of the numinous. This ethic consists of the inversion of the values of the world, not for ascetic reasons, but for the greater spiritual joy of man. It is, therefore, a conversion from egoism on behalf of our brothers,⁸² while the Father in heaven remains the model of such a behaviour: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) There is an affinity between the goodness of the Father and every good action, even before man, through experience, realizes it.⁸³

Immanence

Modernists agreed with Kant's criticism of pure reason and did not deny that their postulates were inspired

⁸¹ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.149

⁸² V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.134

⁸³ Ibid. p.135

by immanentism.⁸⁴ They contested nevertheless the Papal critique which accused them of giving priority to philosophy over critical methods and of submitting the Church to the opinions of the philosophers.⁸⁵ But since they accepted as a postulate man's religious experience,⁸⁶ and implicitly adopted the philosophy of immanence, their defence is questionable. Buonaiuti himself felt that in experience there is an implicit philosophy that waits to be properly formulated.⁸⁷

Furthermore, the Modernists proposed a new criterion of truth over against that of scholastics, for whom the relation between thought and reality was the notion of truth as expressed in the dogmas. To them such a solution could not be maintained any longer and the problems of knowledge had to be formulated in a pragmatic way in order to become of vital concern. They taught that truth was the conformity of thought to the "sane instincts and wills" which determine our experiences.⁸⁸ The criterion of this philosophy of immanence remains, therefore, strikingly within man's reach.

⁸⁴ The Programme; op. cit. p.99

⁸⁵ Ibid. p.93, 175

⁸⁶ Ibid. p.77

⁸⁷ E. Buonaiuti, Lettere, op. cit. p.160

⁸⁸ E. Buonaiuti, Lettere, op. cit. p.165

Revelation

As it is difficult to separate the notion of faith from that of experience, so it is difficult to disentangle the idea of revelation from that of immanence. The word itself hardly appears in the Modernists' writings. However, it could be considered as the religious evolution of humanity,⁸⁹ or the actual process of spirituality.⁹⁰ It might also be identified with natural⁹¹ revelation common to all religions, although in a far less perfect way than in Catholicism.⁹²

Evolution

"What, without prepossession, must be admitted is a progressive development of Catholic theology springing from the ineradicable need of supplying an intellectual embodiment and expression for that religious experience which, once evoked by the preaching of Christ, has remained substantially the same thing under all its successive embodiments."⁹³

So the experience of the coming Kingdom has been embodied in the expectation of Paradise, the vision of Christ-Messiah transformed into the faith in Christ-God; the notion of the Kingdom into that of the Church.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.199

⁹⁰ Ibid. p.200

⁹¹ Ibid. p.201

⁹² The Programme, op. cit. p.121

⁹³ Ibid. p.77

⁹⁴ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. pp.140 f.

Tradition

The process of evolution constitutes the Christian tradition. For Harnack, Sabatier and for all Protestant Liberalism, tradition appeared as a deterioration of the primitive message. Loisy, following Newman's suggestion of the theory of germ, wanted to prove that tradition is but a richer development and a more perfect expression of the original Gospel. Tyrrell ranged himself with the French Modernist, noticing, nevertheless, the absence of "a criterion to distinguish between true and false developments."⁹⁵ Buonaiuti proposed to answer this problem,⁹⁶ and considered the "Christian values" as the required material, capable of judging the ecclesiastical tradition.⁹⁷ The Modernists were, therefore, engaged in a careful work of criticism destined to liberate, in the end, Christianity from all false and relative developments.⁹⁸

Science and Faith

Modernists "make a sharp distinction in the sacred document between the historical foundation and the expression of religious faith. And hence, they examine them with two faculties: the scientific faculty, which by use of proper historical methods, estimates the value

⁹⁵ This observation appears in a letter to F. von Hügel published in Life of Tyrrell II 187, quoted by A. Vidler: op. cit. p.165.

⁹⁶ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, p.139

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.203

⁹⁸ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.140

of the scriptural sources as those of any other documents; and the faculty of faith or religious intuition, which strives, by assimilation and sympathetic self-adaptation, to re-experience in itself that religious experience of which the Bible is the written record."⁹⁹

There is an undeniable alteration of the object of investigation, due to the faith which invests it. But this change is in the order of knowledge and not in the order of ontological reality. Ontologically, it is not something new, but already contained in the fact itself.¹⁰⁰ There is a difference that must be maintained between the Christ of history and the Christ of faith. For the Pascendi, this was simply a deformation of history and a temporary dualism destined, in the short run, to submit faith to science.¹⁰¹

Eschatology

Modernists felt that the eschatological element was the peculiarity of their theology. It was to overthrow Catholicism while it made clear that the Protestant liberal faith in humanity was doomed.¹⁰² For Buonaiuti, religion was nothing but optimistic and joyful hope,¹⁰³ containing

⁹⁹ The Programme, op. cit. p.125

¹⁰⁰ The Programme, op. cit. p.116

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p.159, 172

¹⁰² A. Vidler: op. cit. pp. 176, 238

¹⁰³ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.142

in itself the totality of the revolutionary power of Christian ethics.¹⁰⁴ It was hope for a Kingdom of justice, goodness and love, already anticipated in moral actions,¹⁰⁵ and pertaining to this world according to the expectation of Israel.¹⁰⁶ The Kingdom will mean the liberation from the misery and tyranny of the present organization of life, even a liberation from the dogmatic system of scholastic speculations.¹⁰⁷

The Church

God's congregation expresses the present embodiment of the eschatological expectation. There Christ, the mystical Christ, survives in the associated body,¹⁰⁸ almost amalgamated with the Kingdom. A change in the understanding of priesthood is suggested in order to emphasize the urgency of a mission for the consolation of humanity, in view of the approaching perfection.¹⁰⁹

Sacraments

For a fresher understanding of the Church, a new

¹⁰⁴ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.141

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p.140

¹⁰⁶ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.148

¹⁰⁷ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.141

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p.142

¹⁰⁹ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.74

conception of rites is needed, capable of symbolizing the marvelous things of life and the light of progress.¹¹⁰ Baptism represents the reception into the life of the Church, which ultimately is the life of Christ and the expectation of the Kingdom.¹¹¹ The Eucharist symbolizes human brotherhood¹¹² or expresses a supernatural sanction of human solidarity and harmony.¹¹³ Of course, it has always an eschatological meaning in view of the banquet of the Kingdom.¹¹⁴

Trinity

God the Father represents the transfiguration of the experience of the numinous which is the discovery of fellowmen who have the same moral and mystical visions.¹¹⁵ Christ becomes identified, after the resurrection, with the Christian spirit,¹¹⁶ or with the "human genus".¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ loc. cit.

¹¹¹ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.143

¹¹² Ibid. p.48

¹¹³ Ibid. p.143

¹¹⁴ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.141

¹¹⁵ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.172

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p.145

¹¹⁷ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, op. cit. p.198

Every religious man is a Messiah.¹¹⁸ The divinity of Christ has been asserted as the outcome of the experience of his teaching,¹¹⁹ while the Holy Spirit is understood as the spirit of love and goodness.¹²⁰ Its divinity has been affirmed in order to guarantee and distinguish the religious experience from illusions and the trials of the devil.¹²¹

E. CONCLUSION

For Modernism, there is no contradiction between human spirituality and God's revelation; these two terms are considered as the foci of an ellipse, perfectly related to one another.¹²² The fact is that whatever is maintained as belonging to the divine term excels its counterpart only in so far as it is the model or the example of it, sharing still the same essence. Christianity is indeed understood as an ethic which is the repetition of Christ's experience.¹²³ However, the suggested dualism cannot be supported successfully because the concept of immanence conceals the inherent tendency to eliminate it and turn the

¹¹⁸ E. Buonaiuti; Lettere, p.144

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p.172

¹²⁰ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, p.146

¹²¹ Ibid. p.172

¹²² Ibid. p.175

¹²³ Ibid. p.145

ellipse into a circle. The religion of Modernism pertains to the phenomenon of human spiritualism, and as such, incurs the severe judgment of the theology of Reformation. It is the associated experience of men which creates, by way of transfiguration, an image of God, and in so doing, alienates itself from Christian faith. Lydia von Auw spoke of Modernism as "a Messianism without Messiah",¹²⁴ This is certainly an apt description of the movement.

The Modernists' attempt to reconcile Catholicism with present thought gained them the sympathy of those who did not believe in such a reconciliation. Socialists, particularly after the condemnation of Modernism, respected their sincere desire for social renovation. Protestant liberalism felt sympathy for their cause. To idealists like Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, they appeared undecided between religion and philosophy and therefore not to be considered seriously.¹²⁵ But Modernists protested their independence from any past or present line of thought, and wanted to prove it. For this reason, their theology became mainly apologetic, using scientific arguments to defend a Catholic faith, that could not get

¹²⁴ Revue de théologie et de philosophie, N.S. XV, 1927, p.73, quoted at loc. cit.

¹²⁵ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti; op. cit. pp.41 f.

official recognition. For their purpose, they appealed to history and applied to it the best criticism offered by their era, accepting this field as the neutral and universally recognized starting point for discussions. Nevertheless, they did not realize that their approach was vitiated by the postulate of immanence and that, therefore, they were only to find again what they already knew from the beginning of their investigation.

Looking back at the Modernists' enthusiastic acceptance of life and to their joyful and inspiring expectation of the Kingdom of love, justice and goodness, one must concede that they gained an important role as prophets for their generation. Certainly this is not a closed page in the history of thought. It might be too early to speak of a time of reconsideration, but not to hope that western Christendom will find a way to be grateful to Modernism for what it taught and accomplished.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Summary:

The Social Gospel expresses the sensibility of American Christianity to the problems arising out of industrialization. It tries to correct the Socialists' programme by purging it of atheistic elements and suggesting Christian solutions. Theology is consequently elaborated in terms of pragmatic values.

A. THE BACKGROUND OF THE MOVEMENT

The process of industrialization in America developed so rapidly and in such a short time that there is almost no comparison with other countries. In a few decades, the entire picture of American life was transformed and concerned Americans were called upon to face new and urgent problems. In this situation, the socialist programme was the only one ready to offer a well-formulated critique, both philosophically and practically of this technical revolution. Twenty years after the publication of the Communists' Manifesto, the Church was still overwhelmed by the industrial revolution without a clear vision or an adequate social consciousness. Consequently, the Social Gospel movement was the first and immediate response of concerned American Christianity to the uncontrolled growth of industrialization.

The following feature constitute the background of

the movement and the valuable material of its heritage.

Puritanism

In many respects, puritanism had disappeared long before the Social Gospel came into being, but some of the original characteristics of puritanism, and in particular its concept of calling remained, although it had lost its strictly Calvinistic flavour; in place of it we find a stressing of individual conversion and sanctification. "The Story of Puritan Theology in America is really the story of the gradual de-Puritanizing of Theology until it became something new."¹²⁶ This new form of religion, synonymous with "individualism combined with other worldliness",¹²⁷ would not have appealed to the Social Gospel; and as a matter of fact, many scholars deny any relation between the two lines of development. W.A. Visser't Hooft also admits that puritanism as a theological system has little to do with the Social Gospel, but affirms that "as a general attitude toward life, it has a definite relation to it."¹²⁸ The Social Gospel is a new puritanism with changed content but acting on the same psychological

¹²⁶ W.A. Visser't Hooft: The Background of the Social Gospel in America (Haarlem - H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1928) p.97

¹²⁷ loc. cit.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p.99

assumptions. It does not take its standards from ascetic ideals but from science, and yet it demands the conforming of personal conduct to a higher standard. The stress on social discipline is certainly a feature derived from puritanism applied to contemporary industrial problems. The ideal of a Christianized Society can also be traced back to the austere Calvinistic doctrines. A clearly common element is the belief in the calling of Christians to bring all the relationships of life under the Lordship of Christ.¹²⁹

Enlightenment

When the Social Gospel appeared, the enlightenment had already penetrated deeply into the social, political and cultural life of America, so much so as to become its constitutive force. The enlightenment introduced such ideas as the humanizing of religion, the immanence of God and the identification of God with higher social values. It brought about a shift from dogmatic theology to practical ethics, from transcendent elements to the realm of anthropology. As a reflection of the acceptance of progress, the stress came on the belief of human perfectibility and moral values were regarded as the final norm of religion.

¹²⁹ Ibid. p.100

The Social Gospel rejected en bloc any connection with the enlightenment and in particular its laissez faire philosophy. Its literature has only few references to the enlightenment but it must be recognized that there has been a large unconscious influence. The enlightenment, in fact, emphasized common virtues, substituted the good of man for the glory of God as the highest end of life and gave rise to the idea of the perfectibility of man. These features might be considered as part of the heritage handed down to the Social Gospel.¹³⁰

Revivalism and Methodism

Revivalism contained many elements repellent to the modern mind. Pietism, individualism and a spiritual disregard for the ideal of a Christian society came under the severe criticism of the advocates of a Social Gospel. On the other hand, revivalism never ceased from stressing the importance of applied Christianity and in this sense it certainly helped to prepare the way for a social religion. But a greater contribution perhaps is to be seen at the theological level. There is indeed less emphasis on the irrational and, therefore, the essential religious face of communion with God is brought much more within the reach of man. He is now able to become a child of God as soon as he

¹³⁰ Ibid. pp.102 ff.

truly wishes to be. This implies that God's love works almost automatically and is set in motion as soon as man, by an act of free will, repents. The perfectionistic anthropology of the Social Gospel has certainly drawn inspiration from these premises. In particular any development in the notion of synergism can be said to have been prepared by the popular revivalistic preachers.¹³¹

Science

The new scientific outlook had a great influence on progressive American Christianity, which was seeking for a synthesis of all realms of human culture. The Social Gospel is indebted to science for the notion of evolution and its enthusiasm for progress. As a consequence, the old notion of a universe ruled by direct interference of God was replaced by a modern one binding the movement of the universe to natural law. Due to the large place occupied by social science in American culture, theology itself became understood as "ancilla sociologiae", the establishment of the Kingdom of God became identified with the process of human history and sociology became a sacred science understood as a sharing in divine action. Psychology in particular drew the attention of scholars to the inherent potentiality of human nature with an unexpected bearing on the notion

¹³¹ Ibid. pp.126 ff.

of sin and of conversion. Puritanism, enlightenment and revivalism provided certain elements in the background of the Social Gospel, but science dictated its very content. Without any sign of friction, they entered into a close companionship, sharing the fundamental American idea of the unity of reality.¹³²

B. THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Early Days

Between 1865-1880 there appears the first indication of a Christian social movement, inspired by the Christian Socialism of Great Britain mediated to America through the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. The social protest of Charles Kingsley and the social theology of F.D. Maurice received indeed a wide hearing and won much commendation within the churches of America.¹³³ In 1870 Samuel Harris of Andover Theological Seminary gave a series of lectures on "The Kingdom of Christ in Earth"¹³⁴ and the Reverend Joseph Cook, a Congregational minister, deeply interested in social affairs and very sympathetic to those oppressed by the industrial developments, was

¹³² Ibid. pp.145 ff.

¹³³ Charles Howard Hopkins: The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1940) p.7

¹³⁴ Ibid. p.21

accepted by the working class as its defender.¹³⁵ In 1875 the latter organized the "Boston Monday Lectures" while his articles were read all over the country and in England as well. He was not very diplomatic in his presentation and his material was propounded in a rather offensive style; but he did succeed in bringing the social implications of Christianity to the attention of the American people. In 1878-79 he devoted his lectures to a study of socialism and labour. Like most of his contemporaries, he rejected socialism on the ground that it could not be actually realized, but he strongly endorsed co-operation in accordance with Rochdale principles. A Christian Labor Union was organized in 1872 which, two years later, published its own newspaper, Equity: A Journal of Christian Labor Reforms.¹³⁶ Thus the Church was really beginning to face the social problem. Washington Gladden (1836-1918) became the prominent personality of this period and of the following decade. He opposed capitalism, but at first clearly distinguished his own point of view from the socialists. He could not accept the idea that wages are determined by the law of supply and demand and considered this subjection of human beings to uncontrolled forces and laws as a demonic affair. Although

¹³⁵ Ibid. pp.39 ff.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p.42, 45

he regarded co-operation as the ideal solution of industrial problems, he accepted the right of workers to strike on the basis that America is a free country and nobody is forced to work. He never ceased from protesting against the division of society into unsympathetic classes.

In 1905 he refused a gift of \$100,000 from Rockefeller because he felt that the Church should not share in dishonest gain. Little by little, however, the essentially practical mind of W. Gladden was attracted to the political and economic aspect of socialism.¹³⁷

New Orientations

In the decade between 1880-1890, the Church discussed its relation to the socialist party. The fundamental objection was directed against the labour theory of value, regarded as the cornerstone of socialism. Gladden's contention was that value included not only labour but raw material, management and markets. The ultimate dominance of the proletariat was also attacked as tyrannical.¹³⁸ However, certain features of the socialist programme were recognized as in accordance with justice. The concern of the church remained primarily religious and ministers, for

¹³⁷ Ibid. pp.26 ff.

¹³⁸ Ibid. pp.73 ff.

the most part, stressed the necessity of regeneration of the character as essential for any social reform. In other words, socialism sought to redeem man through society while the church held that society must be redeemed through men. Many churchmen, nevertheless, did suggest practical remedies for glaring social evils. In opposition to the prevalent laissez faire attitude, they conceded the right of labour to organize and endorse co-operative movements; at the same time insisting on the arbitration of conflicts and on profit sharing.¹³⁹

Organized in 1887 in New York, the Christian Association of the Interest of Labor (C.A.I.L.) was described as "the most remarkable organization in the half century of Social Christianity."¹⁴⁰ The principle that God is the owner and man is His steward was firmly established through the work of this Association. On the whole, this was more a period of discussion than of organization, but the Social Gospel gradually began to increase in popularity. Professor Richard T. Ely's book Social Aspects of Christianity published in 1889, affirms the other-worldly conception of

¹³⁹ Ibid. pp.97 ff.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p.150

Christianity to be an "unfortunate error."¹⁴¹

Developments and Evolutions

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the organizational and the cultural aspects of the movement developed considerably. The Episcopal Christian Union, established in 1891, became the most important organization from the cultural stand point. It issued a monthly newspaper, Publication, which also carried articles by the Italian, Joseph Mezzini. "The Dawn", the first paper devoted exclusively to the cause of social Christianity in the United States, commenced publication in 1889. It proclaimed in its first issue - "Business itself today is wrong. . . it is based on competitive strife for profits. . . but this is the exact opposite of Christianity. . . we must change the system. . ." ¹⁴² The movement created its own literature. Charles H. Sheldon's In His Steps, a novel reflecting the purpose of the Social Gospel, was published in 1896 and by 1933 twenty-three million people all over the world had read it. Along the same lines were other novels such as If Christ Came to Chicago and If Jesus Came

¹⁴¹ Richard T. Ely: Social Aspects of Christianity (New York, 1889) p.63 as quoted by C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.106

¹⁴² The Dawn (I, No.1, May 15, 1889) as quoted by C.H. Hopkins, op. cit. p.176

to Boston.¹⁴³

Little by little the Kingdom of God became understood as a developing process in human history and in 1892, the "Brotherhood of the Kingdom" was organized to assist in its practical realization in the world. This was also the aim of the American Institute of Christian Sociology which was founded a year later at Chautauqua with Ely, Strong and Herron as directors.¹⁴⁴ In 1894 Reverend Graham Taylor created and accepted the first chair of Christian Sociology at the Chicago Theological Seminary and published later the Syllabus of Biblical Sociology. At this stage, the doctrine of the immanence of God was emphasized by the leaders of the movement. God was thought of as present in His world, in human nature and society, thereby making the old distinction between the sacred and profane appear almost meaningless, if not blasphemous. Parallel to the doctrine of immanence was the doctrine of evolution, understood as a growing process since the time of creation.¹⁴⁵ The doctrine of stewardship, characteristic of the preceding decade, passed through profound modification, while any form of paternalism was vigorously rejected.¹⁴⁶ George Davis Herron, perhaps

¹⁴³ Ibid. p.142

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p.164

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. pp.123ff.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p.161

the most interesting personality of this period, was professor of Applied Christianity at Iowa College, but became famous as a lecturer all over the United States. His social teachings were officially approved by unionist labour and strongly criticized by business interests. He influenced greatly the Christian Commonwealth Colony, an unique American attempt to realize the Christian communism of the apostolic age. But as he moved steadily in a radical direction, he lost the support of the churches. Later he became a leading figure in the organization of the American Socialist Party, and finally left the United States to establish his residence in Italy (Fiesole, Florence) where he lived for the rest of his life.¹⁴⁷

Maturity

The first two decades of the twentieth century pivot around the personality of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918). Since 1886 he had been pastor of a Baptist congregation in New York.¹⁴⁸ In 1891 he went to Germany to study and on his return to the United States became professor of Christian history at Rochester Theological Seminary (1902). He was fond of emphasizing that as the Reformation had discovered the teaching of St. Paul, so would the social Christianity

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. pp.184 ff.
Twentieth Century Encyclopedia, op. cit.
 sub voce: G.D. Herron.

¹⁴⁸ G. Bromley Oxnam: Personalities in Social Reform, (New York-Nashville Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950) pp.52 ff.

of the twentieth century discover the teaching of Jesus himself. Politically he was never a member of the socialist party, but he was well read in Socialism which influenced his social doctrine.¹⁴⁹ In 1907 Rauschenbusch published Christianity and Social Crisis: this was an important moment for the Social Gospel which looked to him as its most prominent leader.¹⁵⁰ Then he published Christianizing the Social Order (1912) with particular reference to social reforms; and A Theology for the Social Gospel (1917) which attempted to test the theological character of the movement in America. Rauschenbusch's sociology is the most mature and representative of the Social Gospel, and for the purpose of this thesis, the two last publications mentioned will provide the basis for a study of the premises of social Christianity in the United States. Another name to be mentioned is that of C. Stezle, a pioneer Presbyterian in social work who taught the labourer to be naturally Christian. The Labor Temple of New York was built in 1910 as a consequence of his activities and became a centre of social discussions. His preaching most effectively and directly reached the working class.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. pp.318, 324

¹⁵⁰ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.24

¹⁵¹ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. pp.234, 280 ff.

In this period many organizations and newspapers appeared in support of social Christianity and branches of these organizations were established in Paris and other cities on the continent of Europe. Immediately after the First World War there was an intense revival of interest in social matters. In 1919 the International World Movement was founded to reorganize society with the secret aim of Christianizing the world.¹⁵² But in 1920 enthusiasm declined, frustrated by a growing anti-socialistic hysteria;¹⁵³ and the anticipated coming of the Kingdom of God preached by adherents of the Social Gospel was brought to a halt. The darkening situation appeared to many churchmen as proof of the tremendous power of the Kingdom of Evil. The death in 1918 of both W. Gladden and W. Rauschenbusch had already deprived social Christianity of its most capable leaders.

One of the most remarkable events of the entire period was the endorsement of social Christianity by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. At its first meeting in Philadelphia, a Social Creed was formulated and, modified in 1912, remained the official position of the Council until 1932.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.28

¹⁵³ C. Hopkins: op. cit. p.243

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 306 ff.

C. THE SOCIAL TEACHING

Although the Social Gospel had both cultural and theological interests in mind, the problems raised by American industrialization loomed most largely in its discussions. This was due to the extent of the evils related to industrialization. Changes in American life were very rapid and resulted in a deterioration of morals, which stressed the urgency of immediate solutions and pronouncement, and delaying any attempt at systematization. The evolution of time was far beyond the evolution of thinking and created the need of suggesting remedies without discussing their durability. Challenged by an ever growing socialism with a definite programme, the clergy, interested in social action, were forced to emphasize sociology beyond theology. This brought the whole of the movement within an atmosphere of social tension, and theology was not thought to be immediately concerned in this struggle. Therefore, this sense of urgency that brought the Social Gospel into being was certainly both the best and the weakest part of social Christianity. The men engaged in this courageous undertaking felt that the theology of their time was no longer tenable as it was inadequate to attract the working class and to bring forth justice in the proletarian dispute. Once first aid was given to the society in travail, they started to discuss the basic principles of their thinking; namely, the new theological conceptions implied by their sociology.

The importance of their social reforms is underlined by the fact that they must be considered as the birthplace of their theology.

Capitalism

Capitalism cultivates the love of money for its own sake, putting private interests before the common good. "Business, setting profit first, has recklessly used up the life of the worker and impaired the life of the consumers whenever that increased profit."¹⁵⁵ The Social Gospel, detesting any form of compromise,¹⁵⁶ argues that wherever capitalism is strongly organized the life of the Church is impoverished. Nevertheless, individual capitalists with the best will in the world cannot reverse this trend, since they are committed to ruthless competition if they wish to stay in business. Consequently, the entire society must be differently organized. Capitalism, said Rauschenbusch, may be compared to the time when people derived their supply of water from a single well. Today, no city would even think of adopting such a system.¹⁵⁷ And so he arrived

¹⁵⁵ W. Rauschenbusch: Christianizing the Social Order (2nd edition, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1921) p.314.

¹⁵⁶ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.50

¹⁵⁷ W. Rauschenbusch: op. cit. pp.315, 320 ff. 420 ff.
Cf. C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. pp.176, 324

at the conclusion that capitalism is altogether immoral and the opposite of Christianity.

Socialism

Socialists, Rauschenbusch explained, are atheists because they are children of their time and are involved in the philosophy which fostered atheism. But the Church should remember that the monastery was a communistic republic and that "today socialism is seeking to establish on a world-wide scale some of the essential principles of monastic societies; the abolition of rank, the duty of work, the combination of manual and spiritual labor and fraternal property rights."¹⁵⁸ Therefore, the Church would automatically condemn itself in condemning socialism. Many clergymen concerned with social problems went so far as to regard it as the necessary economic expression of religious life, and its utopia was identified with the notion of the Kingdom of God.¹⁵⁹ But Rauschenbusch was more cautious, saying that there will be no Utopian delusion within Christianity.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, socialism

¹⁵⁸ W. Rauschenbusch: op. cit. p.381

¹⁵⁹ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. pp.235, 241, 243

¹⁶⁰ B.Y. Landis: A Rauschenbusch Reader, (New York, Harper and Bros. 1957) p.28

remains "the most powerful force for justice, democracy and organized fraternity in the modern world,"¹⁶¹ even though these elements are fused with an alloy that is repellent to Christians. He urged that there must be a discrimination between economic doctrine and philosophical teaching since "atheism is in no way essential to socialist thought."¹⁶²

Property

Rauschenbusch makes his own, a statement of a German sociologist: "All evils under which civilized society suffer can be traced back to private property in land as their cause."¹⁶³ Private property exists, therefore, for the good of the people; if it is not so used, it becomes dangerous and must cease. The Social Gospel, he warned, must seek for a better understanding of property and not for its destruction because "none can experience a full salvation without it."¹⁶⁴ It must be resocialized and directly made available for the service of all. New forms are suggested along the line of "a share and a right in a collective accumulation which belong to a larger group

¹⁶¹ W. Rauschenbusch: op. cit. p.397

¹⁶² Ibid. p.403

¹⁶³ Ibid. p.392

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p.341

jointly" or, "a share in social wealth".¹⁶⁵ Examples are given with reference to streets, teachers, police and firemen. The industrial worker, he held, should have a vested interest in industry in the form of proper and secure employment.¹⁶⁶

Stewardship

The doctrine of stewardship went through many transformations; in the beginning of the movement, it was recommended as a methodology to bring about an immediate solution to the most urgent problem. Some enthusiasts suggested a consecration of capital to God,¹⁶⁷ but Rauschenbusch brushed stewardship completely aside. For him, stewardship belonged to a former age, it did not come to grip with "institutionalized wrong",¹⁶⁸ and at bottom it could only mean that one who used to be owner would become a manager.¹⁶⁹

Co-operatives

Rauschenbusch was most impressed by the success of co-operatives, since they were started with hardly any capital and experience; and yet despite these serious

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p.372

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p.347

¹⁶⁷ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. pp.29, 90

¹⁶⁸ W. Rauschenbusch: op. cit. p.386

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p.469

weaknesses, they were partially successful. Since they were not based on the profit motive but on solidarity, they gave hope that society could be organized on a new basis. Here was a foretaste of community life, devoid of laissez faire, which could generate a co-operative democracy whose benefits could be seen already in the labour organizations. True, these were brutally commercialized, being concerned with the sale of labour, but they substituted the principle of solidarity for that of competitive selfishness,¹⁷⁰ and trained their members to be loyal to the group. Sympathetic strikes for fellow workers were, in the opinion of Rauschenbusch, the expression of a noble altruism and of the commandment to share one another's burdens.¹⁷¹ It was his belief that co-operative democracy, as practiced by the unions, might become the soul of a co-operative commonwealth,¹⁷² and might well result in the resocialization of property.¹⁷³ Along with this he urged the elimination of the present tax structure, by creating a new one on unearned income and increased land value,¹⁷⁴ and the organization of leisure time for creative purposes.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. pp.388 Cf. pp.386 ff.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p.390

¹⁷² C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.72

¹⁷³ W. Rauschenbusch: op. cit. pp.420 ff., 443

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. pp.393, 422 f.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p.440

Christianizing the Social Order

The immediate task of the church is the christianization of the social order and this does not mean to put the name of the Lord in constitutions, but rather to bring society into harmony with the ethical teachings of Christ.¹⁷⁶

These are some of the suggestions made by Rauschenbusch:

1) to leaven this world with new religious value, 2) to concentrate on the task of redemption, 3) to eliminate ceremonies and emphasize love, justice and good will, 4) to reconsider vocation as the joyful force of our profession, 5) to learn to deal not only with souls but with bodies, 6) to judge our intentions and our actions according to their possibilities of advancing the Kingdom of God, 7) to relate Christian ethics to public life and not to private salvation and morality, 8) to produce meaningful reforms, evoking heroism and not ladylike affairs.¹⁷⁷

Personality

For the Social Gospel, the heart of Jesus' teaching was reverence for personality,¹⁷⁸ which must find a new meaning. In accordance with this reasoning, Rauschenbusch suggested that "our religious personality must get its

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. p.124 f.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. pp.96 ff.

¹⁷⁸ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.209

interpretation from the supreme fact of social solidarity."¹⁷⁹ There should, therefore, be a process of "sanitation" of the class now living on unearned income, which could take place, following the example set forth by the Salvation Army, through the work of redeemed personalities. Redeemed girls should work among prostitutes, redeemed alcoholics among alcoholics, redeemed land speculators should take over the matter of taxation and men who were accustomed to charge monopolistic prices should help to organize co-operatives.¹⁸⁰

D. THE THEOLOGY OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

The problem of a theology was not in the forethought of all the members of the movement, as many thought that such an elaborate system was useless. Even a scholar like Shailer Mathews, who generally represented the cultural side of social Christianity, spoke of religion as "a community of life not a system of philosophy or theology."¹⁸¹ On the other hand, there were those who believed that it was not possible to have a community life without sharing,

¹⁷⁹ W. Rauschenbusch: op. cit. p.465

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.pp.466 ff.

¹⁸¹ Shailer Mathews: The Faith of Modernism, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1924) p.12

consciously or unconsciously, the same ideology; they felt it was necessary to give some systematic expression to their concern for social action. When the time came to introduce into theological formulae the innovations implied or suggested by the Social Gospel, opposition was aroused in the Church and became particularly strong in fundamentalist circles.¹⁸² It was this attempt to formulate a philosophy that brought about the decline of interest in the Social Gospel.

Rauschenbusch was among those who say that a concern for the amelioration of the industrial situation would not have been complete and consistent if left without a fresh presentation of Christian theology. He wrote: "We have a Social Gospel we need a systematic theology large enough to match it and vital enough to back it."¹⁸³ "If our theology is silent on social salvation, we compel men and women. . . to choose between an unsocial system of theology and an irreligious social salvation."¹⁸⁴ Indeed, it is only after such an intellectual effort that Christianity could rest securely upon a rationalistic and autonomous doctrine at

¹⁸² W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.26 f.

¹⁸³ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel (New York, Macmillan Company, 1917) p.1

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p.7

home in a pragmatic world.¹⁸⁵ The method adopted was to deduce a number of principles from the teaching of Jesus and to confront the social order with each of them in turn. In this whole matter, Jesus was seen as an idealist with a vision and not as an agitator with a plan.¹⁸⁶ Rauschenbusch's A Theology for the Social Gospel is regarded as the most significant and representative book on this subject.¹⁸⁷

The Kingdom of Evil

The origin of sin: The Social Gospel opposed the doctrine of the Fall and considered it a product of speculation invented to convince people of sin by pointing out what they are in contrast with what they were.¹⁸⁸ Placing the problem of sin in the past meant to tear away every possibility of remedy and to preach resignation.¹⁸⁹ Social Christianity wished to ignore this doctrine, teaching a pessimistic anthropology, and suggested following the attitude of Christ and the prophets, namely to concentrate on the evil present in the world.¹⁹⁰ As Elliot expressed

¹⁸⁵ Cf. C. Hopkins: op. cit. p.214

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p.211

¹⁸⁷ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.32

¹⁸⁸ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. pp.41, 39

¹⁸⁹ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. pp.42 ff.

¹⁹⁰ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. pp.42 ff.

it, "original nature is really neither good nor bad but has the potentialities of either or both."¹⁹¹

The nature of sin, said Rauschenbusch, is a burden of our consciousness,¹⁹² not due to the rejection of God's will because of our fallen nature, but to the avoidance of our duty;¹⁹³ it comes out of a faulty relationship with our neighbour and it has a social character which consists in setting "our profit and ambition above the welfare of our fellows and above the Kingdom of God,"¹⁹⁴ or in taking "from others their opportunities for self-realization in order to increase our own opportunities abnormally,"¹⁹⁵ The consciousness of sin is derived from the fact that we have wasted time and opposed the Kingdom of God:¹⁹⁶ "A clear realization of the nature of sin depends on a clear vision of the Kingdom of God."¹⁹⁷ Theology ought to be the

¹⁹¹ Elliot: Bearing of Psychology upon Religion, as quoted by W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.168

¹⁹² W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.46

¹⁹³ Ibid. p.47

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p.48

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p.55

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p.37

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p.52

science of redemption by offering scientific methods for the eradication of sin.¹⁹⁸

According to Rauschenbusch, there is also a supernatural sin which is a social evil, like exploitation or parasitism, beyond immediate remedy. For example, within government structures, "parasitic interests are presumably in control of legislation", hence "a parasitic government is sin on a high scale."¹⁹⁹ The Kingdom of Evil springs from supernatural sin or, rather, from its influence on world organizations. Heads of society, acting consciously, affect the destiny of millions of persons for their personal interest, so that laws, institutions and art have secretly been "social means of infections."²⁰⁰

The Kingdom of God

The notion of the Kingdom of God presupposed the co-operation of God and man: "man partakes with God in the creation of the Kingdom or can resist and retard its progress."²⁰¹ In other words, human action is based on the moral power given to every individual.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p.57

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p.75

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p.81

²⁰¹ Ibid. p.141

²⁰² W.A. Visser't Hooft; op. cit. p.182

Such a Kingdom can be defined as "humanity organized according to the will of God,"²⁰³ or as "the organized fellowship of humanity acting under the impulse of love,"²⁰⁴ or again as "the spiritual realm of reason, liberty and justice."²⁰⁵ It is "the sum of all goods, the essential aim of God Himself."²⁰⁶ "In Christ's thought the Kingdom of God was to come from heaven to earth, so that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. So then it exists in heaven; it is to be created on earth."²⁰⁷ "To bring heaven down to earth" is, according to Stelzle, the task of the Social Gospel.²⁰⁸

The realization of the Kingdom of God will come through the law of evolution and progress which means, for Gladden, liberation from prejudice and superstition.²⁰⁹ To Rauschenbusch this process is visible not only in the work of the Church, but also in the fall of despotisms

²⁰³ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.142

²⁰⁴ Ibid. p.155

²⁰⁵ J.L. Neve: A History of Christian Thought, (Philadelphia Westminster Press, 1946) II, p.318

²⁰⁶ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.37

²⁰⁷ Ibid. p.238

²⁰⁸ Stelzle: The Gospel of Labor (New York, 1912) p.81 as quoted from C.H. Hopkins, op. cit. p.282

²⁰⁹ C.H. Hopkins: loc. cit.

and systems of slavery.²¹⁰

The more moderate currents in the Social Gospel have always hesitated to identify the socialist utopia with the Kingdom of God. Rauschenbusch indeed "did not commit the shortsighted error of identifying the Kingdom of God with a specific human program,"²¹¹ but the Christian Socialist Fellowship "equated the Christian hope of the Kingdom with the socialistic dream of economic perfection."²¹²

From the Kingdom of Evil to the Kingdom of God

Salvation has a specific social character conceived in opposition to personal salvation and soul culture which are expressions of a refined selfishness and an egoistic religion.²¹³ "Salvation", according to Rauschenbusch, "must be a change which turns a man from self to God and humanity,"²¹⁴ or "the voluntary socializing of the soul."²¹⁵ When a lost soul is enfolded in a new society, a true humanity, then there is an opportunity for salvation that becomes durable and complete in the measure in which the individual is

²¹⁰ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.146

²¹¹ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.243

²¹² loc. cit.

²¹³ W. Rauschenbusch: Christianizing the Social Order, op. cit. p.464

²¹⁴ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.97

²¹⁵ Ibid. p.99

embraced into a social organism ruled by justice, purity and love. "A full salvation demands a Christian social order which will serve as spiritual environment of the individual."²¹⁶ For a baby it includes a mother's love, for a working man, a steady job and for a patron humane treatment of the worker.

Conversion and redemption have not only significance for the individual, but also a collective meaning indicating the rupture "with a sinful past of the social group."²¹⁷ "The fundamental step of repentance and conversion of profession and organizations is to give up monopoly power and the incomes derived from legalized extortion and to come under the law of service, content with a fair income for honest work."²¹⁸ People seem to have in themselves this power of redemption since "if people were free, they would stop exploitation".²¹⁹ This process, evolving through an active life of service, corresponds to the Biblical notion of sanctification.²²⁰

Faith is an optimistic attitude toward man and his future and the belief that this world is good.²²¹

²¹⁶ W. Rauschenbusch: Christianizing, op. cit. p.116

²¹⁷ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.99

²¹⁸ Ibid. p.117

²¹⁹ Ibid. p.75

²²⁰ Ibid. p.102

²²¹ loc. cit.

"Theoretically, the Church is the great organization of unselfish service."²²² It is understood as "the social factor in salvation" capable of bringing "social forces to bear on evil."²²³ The importance of the Church in society is due to the presence of the Kingdom of God within it. But the Church is only one social institution among many. "The Kingdom of God is in all these, and realizes itself through them all."²²⁴

Baptism is the "exit from the kingdom of evil and the entrance into the kingdom of God."²²⁵ It is not to be considered as a remedy for the fall, but as an act of dedication to the social cause for the sake of the Kingdom. Catechumenate becomes, therefore, a wonderful opportunity to tell the young people about the illusive situation of the world order and the nature of the coming Kingdom.²²⁶

"The Social Gospel makes the Lord's Supper more fully an act of fraternity and connects it again with the social hope of the Kingdom of God."²²⁷ The aim of this

²²² Ibid. p.12

²²³ Ibid. p.119

²²⁴ Ibid. p.201

²²⁵ Ibid. p.201

²²⁶ Ibid. p.200

²²⁷ Ibid. p.202

sacrament in the early Church was to maintain "the highest loyalty,"²²⁸ so today, it means to renounce selfishness, exploitation and the power of wealth, and to dedicate oneself to the common cause. "In the contemplation of the death of our Lord, we accept the possibility of risk and loss as our share of service."²²⁹

With its teaching on eschatology the Social Gospel should distinguish itself from the Socialistic utopia; instead the movement seems to lack clear understanding. First of all, the doctrine of the Resurrection is found rather embarrassing. It was not important to the religious life of the Old Testament and today the individual should not be satisfied by hoping in the resurrection, but rather in acknowledging himself as a contributor to the wealth and redemption of the race.²³⁰ Then the future life is described as "an unlimited scale of ascent toward God, reaching from the lowest to the highest, within which every spirit would hold the place for which he was fitted."²³¹ "None would be so high that he could not be drawn still

²²⁸ Ibid. p.202

²²⁹ Ibid. p.206

²³⁰ Ibid. pp.212, 228, 229

²³¹ Ibid. p.223

closer to God, and none so low that he would be beyond the love of God."²³²

With regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, "God" is the general term used to indicate the Father, and the development of a Christian social order remains the highest indication that God lives and rules with saving power.²³³

The Reformation removed some obstacles on the way to God, but there still remained others like predestination and election. Now with the doctrine of immanence, the way is free.²³⁴ "God is not only the spiritual representative of humanity; He is identified with it."²³⁵ In so doing, the Social Gospel claims to have proceeded to a democratization of the notion of God. "The worst thing that could happen to God would be to remain an autocrat while the world is moving toward democracy."²³⁶

The concept of Theodicy is replaced by that of solidarity. It is not necessary to explain sufferings and injustices with some kind of dualism; it is sufficient to consider the fact that the sin of one man causes suffer-

²³² loc. cit.

²³³ Ibid. p.178

²³⁴ Ibid. p.176

²³⁵ Ibid. p.49

²³⁶ Ibid. p.178

ings and injustices to others. "These sufferings are not vicarious, they are solidaristic."²³⁷

The divinity of Jesus is not a matter of nature, but of character; it is not due to a physical process of conception, but to a spiritual process of affirmation of His will. The life of Christ must be understood in the light of its purpose: the establishment of the Kingdom of God.²³⁸ "The Social Gospel wants to see a personality able to win hearts, dominate situations. . . and to set revolutionary social forces in motion."²³⁹

Through the atonement Christ did not bear the sin of the individual, but "He did in a very real sense bear the weight of public sins of organized society."²⁴⁰ Among these there are: religious bigotry, combination of graft and political power, corruption of justice, mob spirit, militarism and class contempt and discrimination. Jesus died because of the reaction of the totality of racial sin against Him, and this guilt has spread from those who did it to those who reaffirm the same spirit, in solidarity with them.²⁴¹ The death of Christ was the supreme re-

²³⁷ Ibid. p.182

²³⁸ Ibid. p.150

²³⁹ Ibid. p.149

²⁴⁰ Ibid. p.247

²⁴¹ Ibid. p.259

velation of love, that "is the social instinct of the race,"²⁴² and the only true working principle of human society. God is love, love must build society.²⁴³

"The chief effort of the Holy Spirit in our earthly life was to develop our capacity for love and our sense of solidarity and responsibility."²⁴⁴ To regenerate society there is a great need for inspired men with a mission of prophecy in modern life.²⁴⁵

E. CONCLUSIONS

There is an apparently relative dualism between the present social order and the Kingdom, but the resolution of the difference consists only in creating a better social organization and not an essentially different one. There is no discontinuity of life. The same again is true in the relation of natural religion to Christian revelation. The difference is maintained as a matter of quantity, not of quality. For this reason, the glory of God becomes the glory of man, eschatology becomes sociology and redemption a man's possibility, particularly related to psychology.

²⁴² Ibid. p.270

²⁴³ Ibid. p.273

²⁴⁴ Ibid. p.235

²⁴⁵ Ibid. pp.193 ff., 279

The final choice in this search for truth, remains therefore within the human sphere. The basic element, in this evident deformation from Christian faith, is an a priori acceptance of the doctrine of immanence that almost leads to pure positivism.²⁴⁶ To be pragmatic is generally synonymous with acting in conformity with the suggestions and desires of a certain time; it implies, therefore, a false methodology which is accepted, and not discussed, as the a priori of thought. Therefore, the introduction of immanence into social and theological analysis, according to the wishes of contemporaneous culture, does not offer a surprise when found again at the end of the process. The surprise is rather in the fact that is pointed out as a discovery.²⁴⁷

The intellectual basis of the movement, being mainly concerned with immanence, could very easily find points of contact with any existing rationalistic philosophy and social programme. This was indeed a great opportunity for a positive influence on the reorganization of society. In fact, what at the cultural level might have been called apologetic, at the practical level sought to offer a better

²⁴⁶ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. pp.160 ff, 170 ff., 180 ff.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Ibid. pp. 177 ff.

solution for the problems raised by industrialization. The Social Gospel was sincerely and courageously engaged in this effort, showing a mature sensibility to the immediate necessities of its era. It took the idea of time seriously,²⁴⁸ and claimed to revive the mission of the prophets of the Old Testament in modern life. Today, it can hardly be denied that the Social Gospel has been a voice of prophecy. The reasons for its engagement in society arose out of a spirit of service and obedience within the Christian Church. It remains, therefore, an admonition for future generations while its suggestions must be reconsidered in order not to lose the precious material that was brought to light in fifty-five years of social Christianity.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Ibid. p.43

CHAPTER III

COMMON PREMISES

Summary:

The history of the relation of the Social Gospel and Roman Catholic Modernism is the history of transition of ideas from Europe to the United States and from the Roman Church to American Christianity, through the mediation of the Church of England. Beyond external differences, it appears that the two movements have the same social and theological orientation.

A. BACKGROUND

The particular aim of this chapter is to inquire into the similarities and premises of both Roman Catholic Modernism and the Social Gospel. These two movements apparently lived in different worlds, characterizing different types of Christianity - European Roman Catholicism and American Protestantism - almost without interference and relation.²⁴⁹ But the many common motives are not just casual and incidental, they conceal indeed beyond formal divergences a profound and essential similarity of content.

²⁴⁹ G. Tyrrell and A. Loisy were perplexed on American lack of interest in Modernism.

Cf. J.A. Leoppert: op. cit. p.265

W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.125, and C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.326 considered the Social Gospel as an indigenous and independent American movement.

This kind of relationship may be seen in their background. Behind Modernism was the stimulus of the French Revolution, determining its future features. It was an era of violence followed sometimes by a period of exhilarating political greatness at other times by a tyrannical reaction; both undesired and unpopular. So was the destiny of Roman Modernism. It was a revolt against a suffocating tradition which imposed an alien scholasticism on the aspirations of the modern mind. At its height, this revolt covered England, France, Germany and Italy, and was given expression by university professors as well as scientific publications of remarkable value. Here too the reaction was felt as an act of unpopular and undesired tyranny. What the Council of Vienna opposed, revived in a changed form at the intellectual and social level. For this reason, the Papal encyclical Pascendi dominici gregis and all other official actions based upon it, might be understood as the unfinished work of the Council of Vienna. E. Buonaiuti indeed felt he was continuing the aims of the French Revolution on a different level.²⁵⁰

The Industrial Revolution helped to determine the nature of the development of the Social Gospel movement.

²⁵⁰ E. Buonaiuti, Lettere, op. cit. p.150

The new world of science and technique was manipulated by a few persons who, suddenly acquiring unlimited power, grasped it for their selfish interests without regard for the oppressed working class. Social Christianity came as a protest against this situation and as a vindication of the dignity of labour.

The movements in both Europe and America came into being full of admiration for progress. They wanted the benefits of progress to remain at the disposal of a renewed society, socially and intellectually modern. At the same time, their efforts toward this end required a protest against old methods like laissez faire capitalism, clericalism, and traditional rigid dogmatism. On both continents, their desire for freedom from any kind of yoke brought about a joyful rediscovery of the preaching of Christ himself, and turned them into prophets of the coming age. Any attempt to relate them to previous theological thought was rejected. The Modernists did not want to be identified with Harnack's Protestant liberalism,²⁵¹ nor with the idealism of Croce and Gentile,²⁵² nor even with the Catholic School

²⁵¹ A. Vidler: op. cit. pp.104 ff.

²⁵² V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. pp.41 f.

of Tübingen.²⁵³ Similarly, the Social Gospel refused to be identified with traditional American theology.²⁵⁴ Their common understanding was that, within the Christian Church they had a new task to perform and as prophets of a new era could not make any compromises with previous misinterpretations of the Gospel. In their endeavour they felt they could only rely upon one ally, science. In its name, Christianity ought to be restudied and re-formulated. With the help of psychology, the nature of man would then appear in a different light, delivered from any form of pessimism²⁵⁵ and readjusted to a natural place in society.²⁵⁶

Of course, both movements might be reproached for treating their heritage too lightly. While they desired a new beginning, or at least the establishment of a milestone in historical developments, it must also be recognized that they were indebted to the past for their raw material which was not just passive in their hands, but often dictated

²⁵³ A. Vidler: op. cit. p.10

²⁵⁴ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. pp.97, 114, 140

²⁵⁵ E. Buonaiuti: Lettere, op. cit. pp.151 ff.

²⁵⁶ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. pp.165 ff.

their theme. Their era was in itself a reaction against enlightenment considered as an inglorious period in the history of the Church, particularly for its depreciation of enthusiasm. Accordingly, both Modernism and the Social Gospel rejected the age of the inner light because of its connections with laissez faire policy, and its individualistic nature.²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, such doctrines as immanence and human perfectibility, along with the peaceful reconciliation of science and religion, brought together in a rationalistic atmosphere, were evidently taken over as useful material for rewriting theology. With regard to the form of these two movements, there are a great many differences which are impossible to overlook. Modernism grew up with less acute industrial problems and with more urgent political ones. Continental Europe was at the time troubled by continual uprisings of states and the desire of sensible men was to put an end to this frustrating antagonism. Socialism had more of a political emphasis in Europe than in the United States, where its economic nature was to the fore. The Social Gospel was not disturbed by irrendentism but it had instead to face the extreme deterioration of society due to exploitations of labour. A better economic order was urgently needed. These are differences that

²⁵⁷ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. pp.115 f.

helped shape the formal characteristics of the movements. Strangely enough, and in spite of the insistence of Modernists,²⁵⁸ Catholicism and Protestantism were not such distinctive elements, either in their external form or in their substance. Furthermore, the Social Gospel had every opportunity to organize and to exert a serious influence on American thought. It enjoyed the freedom of action assured by the young American democracy, whereas Modernism suffered persecution and was unable to exercise any notable influence in social development. Even as an underground movement, it could not escape the blow of the Vatican encyclicals.

B. THE HISTORY OF THEIR ENCOUNTER

American Catholicism

One of the reasons contributing to an independence of action and thought between Modernism and the Social Gospel was the fact that American Catholicism was not awake to the innovations proposed by European scholars. George Tyrrell had this to say on this point: "I cannot understand America. With its freedom and its intelligence, its representatives ought to be in the forefront of the Modernists' movement. Yet, Modernism has produced there hardly an echo.

²⁵⁸ H.L. Stewart: op. cit. p.323

The Church in America is asleep."²⁵⁹ Alfred Loisy also wondered at the absence of intellectual activity among American Catholics. They lacked insight in relation to modern problems and so remained blind to one of the most momentous movements of Christian history. This severe judgment was confirmed in 1910 by a Roman Catholic priest who attempted to tell why Americans had taken so small a part in the movement. According to his knowledge, the Church in the United States was intellectually backward. In all the voluminous literature of Biblical criticism, history and philosophy, not a single work of competence was yet produced by an American Catholic and less than a dozen of their books reached the second class. Furthermore, the men sent up to seminaries by Catholic colleges were in a condition of almost scandalous unfitness for prosecuting higher studies of an ecclesiastical nature, and were unable to think for themselves.²⁶⁰ Karl Holl describes as a form of American Catholic Modernism the movement of Father Isaac Thomas Hecker (1819-1888) known as Americanism and condemned as such by Pope Leo XIII. The aim of the movement was to

²⁵⁹ G. Tyrrell as quoted by Adam J. Leoppert, op. cit. p.265

²⁶⁰ Cf. Adam J. Leoppert: op. cit. pp.266 ff.

win Protestant America to Catholicism and it had a certain intellectual emphasis, stressing active virtues and the significance of personality.²⁶¹ While the approach is interesting and contributes something to the background of American social Christianity, it does not seem to have had any bearing on the present subject. A very important development and a turning point in the history of Modernism came at the time of Tyrrell's Medievalism (1908). In those days he was on the verge of returning to the Church of England,²⁶² and in one of his letters in 1909 he expressed the hope that the Anglican communion would answer the question of Modernism.²⁶³ The work of the Modernists, so abruptly overthrown in the Roman Communion, was adopted and reverently cultivated in the Church of England.

Anglican Modernism in England

According to H.L. Stewart, the influence of Modernism has been notable in Protestant Churches and stimulated them to attempt to adjust the ancient Creeds to secular knowledge.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Ibid. p.267

²⁶² A. Vidler: op. cit. pp.176 ff.

²⁶³ Ibid. p.267

²⁶⁴ H.L. Stewart: op. cit. p.331

In England such an attempt was first manifested in the Lux Mundi group (1889) which included Bishop Gore. The aim of the movement, although related to Christian socialism, was rather an intellectual one concerned with the bearing of faith on modern problems. However, none of the clergymen related to it had produced any systematic theology.²⁶⁵ T.A. Lacey (1853-1931) a leading personality in Anglican Modernism discussed in his work Harnack and Loisy the essence of Christianity and was particularly impressed by the thesis of the French scholar Loisy. In 1905, in The Historic Christ Lacey again follows Loisy in stressing the distinction between the facts of history, which are a matter of critical investigation, and the spiritual interpretation, which is a matter of faith.²⁶⁶ The question of Modernism in England was also raised by Archbishop W. Temple when he wrote: "Our theology has been cast in a scholastic mould. We are in need of being gradually forced into a theology based on psychology. The translation, I fear, will not be without much pain; but nothing can prevent it."²⁶⁷ A pragmatic tendency remained

²⁶⁵ Percy Gardner D. Litt: Modernism in the English Church (London, Methuen, 1926) pp.11 ff.

A. Vidler: op. cit. pp.239, 263

²⁶⁶ A Vidler: op. cit. pp.252 ff.

²⁶⁷ W. Temple as quoted by P. Gardner: op. cit. p.12

one of the main features in this form of Modernism, which grew in the Anglican communion and became powerful enough to suggest social reform.²⁶⁸

Modernism and the Episcopal Church in America

The bearing of British Socialism on the development of the Social Gospel in the United States has already been noted.²⁶⁹ A real intellectual influence similar to that of Modernism is not perceptible in the United States before 1891 when the Episcopal Christian Social Union, mainly concerned with culture, was organized. In its Publications there often appeared articles by Bishop Gore relating to theological questions, especially the incarnation.²⁷⁰ It is not within the compass of this work to trace the history of such influences, but only to notice their presence. A fair idea of the entire approach might be seen in the words of Gardner written in 1926: "So far as I am able to judge, the spirit of the movement in the two countries is the same. But when we consider the extraordinary energy and vigour of the American people, we may be sure that Modernists in the United States and Canada will in some respect deviate from

²⁶⁸ P. Gardner: op. cit. pp.35 ff. p.66

²⁶⁹ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.7

²⁷⁰ Ibid. pp.165 f.

those of England, and they are likely to go far."²⁷¹ The characteristics of this Modernism remained unchanged; it suited a few intellectuals and yet proved successful at the parish level. According to Gardner, the outcome of these religious fermentations was seen in the leading role taken by the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, in the organization of the movement Faith and Order within the early Ecumenical aspirations of the twentieth century.²⁷² H.L. Stewart, considering again in 1932 the entire question of Modernism, through history, appeared rather uncertain as to the destiny of the present developments. According to him, the hope of this intellectual renovation had to be transferred into other hands in order to be fulfilled.²⁷³ This was of particular importance because at the same time, the destinies of the Social Gospel shared deeply a similar perplexity.²⁷⁴

Modernism and the Social Gospel

Through the mediation of the Episcopal Church, other denominations became interested in the new ideas and little by little the intellectual position of the men mainly con-

²⁷¹ P. Gardner: op. cit. p.67

²⁷² Ibid. op. cit. p.165, 166

²⁷³ H.L. Stewart: op. cit. p.362

²⁷⁴ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.30 f.

cerned with the Social Gospel changed. This development in the realm of thought ran parallel to the development at the social level. In 1880 and in the following decade, a "new theology" appeared and of it Charles Howard Hopkins said that it was destined to ripen into Modernism.²⁷⁵ When the notion of evolution became a leading feature of the Social Gospel, another characteristic of Modernism was accepted into the structures of the movement.²⁷⁶ Furthermore, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the doctrine of immanence, through the influence of Washington Gladden, became such an important part of the Social Gospel that there was in it a real "incipient modernism."²⁷⁷ During the same period, the understanding of the Kingdom of God as the completion of a present process developed. Gladden claimed that the basic laws of faith could be verified inductively and L. Abbott attempted to trace the growth of revelation from the Old Testament to Christ.²⁷⁸ This aspect of Social Christianity was amazingly parallel to the European developments of Modernism within the Roman Catholic Church.

²⁷⁵ C. Hopkins: op. cit. p.18

²⁷⁶ Ibid. pp.61 ff.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. p.124

²⁷⁸ Ibid. pp.123 ff.

One of the most important theologians of this encounter was Shailer Mathews, Professor of Historical and Comparative Theology at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.²⁷⁹ Since the early eighties he had been supporting the cause of the Social Gospel side by side with Walter Rauschenbusch.²⁸⁰ He was a very prolific writer and therefore occupied a leading position in the cultural aspect of the movement. It is of interest to mention some of his works in order to illustrate his involvement both in Modernism and the Social Gospel: The Social Gospel (1916), The Spiritual Interpretation of History (1916), The Contributions of Science to Religion (1924), The Faith of Modernism (1924), Jesus on Social Institutions (1928) and The Growth of the Idea of God (1931).²⁸¹ Mathews stressed the dynamic aspect of the function of the Church, the necessity of a regenerate society and of groups acting like leaven in this world.²⁸² He regarded Modernism as one movement in Christianity appealing to no particular authority and not forming a new denomination.²⁸³ Its main concern was to put science

²⁷⁹ Twentieth Century Encyclopedia: op. cit. sub voce: Mathews.

²⁸⁰ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.112

²⁸¹ Twentieth Century Enc. loc. cit.

²⁸² C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. pp.138 ff., 210

²⁸³ Shailer Mathews: op. cit. p.21 f., 169

at the service of religion in order to rescue it from the present crisis. Scientists know man better than the theologians of the past²⁸⁴ and so their contributions must be seriously considered. Historical studies, he maintained, "enable us to distinguish the permanent attitudes and convictions of the Christian movement from the doctrinal pattern in which they have been expressed."²⁸⁵ The importance of Mathews consists in the fact that he was at home either with the Social Gospel or with Modernism, and a representative figure of both. Apparently, Walter Rauschenbusch did not give much attention to the Modernists and their claims, but he was sure that the theology set forth in his works was acceptable and agreeable to them.²⁸⁶ It might be interesting to notice that E. Buonaiuti came in contact with Reinold Neibuhr's works during the last days of his life and found himself in complete agreement with them.²⁸⁷

The Succession of Events

In order to investigate the relation between the Social Gospel and Roman Catholic Modernism, it has been helpful to point out different periods in this process, as

²⁸⁴ Ibid. p.29

²⁸⁵ Ibid. p.170

²⁸⁶ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.147

²⁸⁷ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti, op. cit. p.125

mediated by the Anglican Church. But the question of dating does not permit considering these different periods in a successive line. As a matter of fact, Modernism started in the last decade of the nineteenth century whether in the Roman Catholic Church, in the Anglican communion or in the various Protestant denominations, as an independent outcome, on the intellectual and theological level, of the influence of Socialism, either in its Christian British form or in its Marxian formulation. It is the social problem that contains in itself the premises and the germs of these developments in theology.

Nevertheless, the reason for such an order of event might be seen in the intensity of the development of modern ideas. It was indeed the Modernism of Loisy, Tyrrell and Buonaiuti that prompted a scholarly re-elaboration of meanings with regard to dogmas, tradition and immanence. Roman Catholic Modernism was able to enter the theological discussion, attacking the common acceptance of Harnack's influence, suggesting as Buonaiuti did, corrections of Otto's notion of numinous, and pointing out the weakness of the theology of Schleiermacher. The intensity of such a highly cultural movement impressed the Roman See so much that it felt compelled to take extraordinarily severe actions to prevent its development. This profound vitality, seriously challenging the European intellectual framework, weakened

as it passed through the Anglican Church and the Protestant denominations of America. But it would be only fair to say that the voice of Modernism has been echoed back, embodied in the new sociology of American Christianity and, this time, with an intensity and a vitality capable of attracting the attention of any person or group concerned with the industrial revolution. In both movements, there has been a constant concern for the intellectual and the social aspects implied in their renovation,²⁸⁸ but there has been a difference of emphasis according to the difference of environment on the two continents.

C. COMMON PREMISES IN THEIR SOCIOLOGY

Different Environment

It has already been pointed out that the situation in Europe and in America was entirely different at the beginning of the movements. In America the process of industrialization manifested all the evil potentialities of capitalism and of the laissez faire policy. The Social Gospel had, therefore, to deal with the "institutionalized wrong" and with "supernatural evils" like exploitation and parasitism. In Europe the main sources of the dispute were of a political nature

²⁸⁸ E. Buonaluti: Lettere, op. cit. pp.155 ff.
 P. Gardner: op. cit. p.165
 H.L. Stewart: op. cit. p.309
 W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. pp. 1,7

and the strongest - particularly because of ultramontaniam - appeared to be the Roman Pontiff, in spite of his segregation in the Vatican palace. This meant for the Modernists sharing the conviction of the working class that clericalism was the number one enemy. In such varying contests, the two movements had this in common: their awareness, as Christians, of the evil elements determining the social life. They were not only conscious of this, but willing to denounce it, and to propose a new line of action on the basis of a deeper understanding of the message of Christ. They also realized that the Church was in no position to offer a solution because it was involved in the evils of society. For the Roman Catholics it appeared as an "Institute of Insurance for the blessed of the earth and the feaster of every rank and land"²⁸⁹ and for the Protestants it was impossible not to see some truth in the accusation that the Church was "a sort of fashionable club" for the entertainment of the rich, while ministers were "muzzled by their masters."²⁹⁰

Socialism

Since the publication of the Communist Manifesto in 1848, the social reforms and programme offered by the Socialist party were the only ones capable of proposing a solution to the present systems of slavery and exploitation.

²⁸⁹ E. Buonaiuti: Lettere, op. cit. p.67

²⁹⁰ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.87

To the Americans the appeal of Socialism came, through the mediation of the pre-Marxian British developments, almost as the mature conclusion of a long process and the result of long experience. In spite of the rich Christian fertilization of early movements in Great Britain, the Church was now considered among the enemies of the working class. The situation was worse in countries of Catholic background like France and Italy. Marxism was looked upon as the revolt of atheism and formally excoriated by the Church of Rome. There was no chance of a gentle approach or of reciprocal sympathy on the basis of common endeavours in the past on behalf of labourers. Both Modernism and the Social Gospel had to take into account, in facing the evils of society, that a solution had already been proposed and widely accepted independently of the Church if not directly against it.

Toward a Christian Socialism

Certain elements of the Marxian doctrine were repellent to the two movements and created a great deal of discussion, but it must be noticed that Socialism was never rejected entirely and there was always a constant desire to work together. Rauschenbusch declared that atheism was not essential to Socialism and Buonaiuti accepted anticlericalism of the workers as justified, while Romolo Murri tried to come to terms and co-operate with the leader of the party.

The Christian democracy of Murri wished to offer a programme of its own, in order to single out Modernist social reforms, and, similarly, the Social Gospel challenged Socialism by suggesting many innovations and principles, although nothing was ever attempted to embody them into a political party. In fact, the idea of a political party was not the genuine intention of either of the movements. What they had in mind was rather a process of penetration of the Marxian doctrine with Christian values. For the Catholics this meant leavening the materialistic aspect of Socialism and preventing it from being brutalized by providing an ethical consciousness of the good and of brotherhood. For the American Protestants it meant purifying Socialism of its atheistic elements considered to be a detriment to the party itself. If this cleansing had been accomplished, every serious reason for dissent would have ceased, paving the way for a complete co-operation and a common front.

A Christian Socialism overcoming the present misunderstanding was the hope of both movements which directed their efforts to this end. According to their eschatology, the Kingdom of God was to come on earth through the evolution and improvement of society. For this reason, history had a sacred aspect as the ground of co-operation of God and man for the good of the world. The common expectation and desire for a Christian socialism was conceived by both movements

to be one of the most important steps in this forward march of mankind.

D. THE SIMILARITY OF THEIR THEOLOGY

If it has been possible to point out common elements in the sociology of the two movements, it is because their similarity lies in their theology. Away from the immediate influence of their environment and above the urgency of social solutions, their theological positions became more and more identical.

Anthropology

Man concerned only with himself is the expression and the origin of evil in the present world. The notion of homo incurvatus of Luther seems to reappear here with a new meaning, determined by the absence of brotherly communion. Buonaiuti²⁹¹ described the situation as a longing for a word of forgiveness, of remembrance and of consolation; for Rauschenbusch²⁹² it was the necessity "to turn away from the self" or of "socializing the soul". But this understanding is far from the teaching of the Reformation. There is no real despair since there is no doctrine of the

²⁹¹ Cf. V. Vinay: op. cit. p.137

²⁹² W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.99

fall²⁹³ but rather a profound belief in the goodness of man.²⁹⁴ The solution offered, in the process of socialization implies a notion of man as a being with potentiality, ready for a joyful and normal development among his fellow-men. Man needs to be healed from eventual lack of this development, which is regarded as absurdity and as evil. Anthropology follows the pattern of the doctrine of tradition, both being under the law of evolution and progress. The problem of distinguishing between true and false developments in the history of the Christian Church was left open by Loisy, attempted by Tyrrell and elaborated by Buonaiuti in establishing as a norm for control "the sane instincts and wills which direct our experiences," or "the Christian values."²⁹⁵ The same norm can be maintained in relation to the parallel function in anthropology. A characteristic false development of human nature is capitalism.²⁹⁶ There is no socializing of the soul in it, no real experience, but rather an evil reaction or sheer selfishness. What happens in capitalism is of a cancerous nature and therefore, any growth toward monopolies is disqualified in the light of social values, and regarded with horror.

²⁹³ E. Buonaiuti: Lettere, op. cit. p.138

²⁹⁴ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.102

²⁹⁵ E. Buonaiuti: Lettere, op. cit. p.88

²⁹⁶ W. Rauschenbusch: Christianizing the Social Order, op. cit. p.153.

The Human Encounter

The right development of human nature, the central experience of both Modernism and the Social Gospel, is the human encounter: an overthrow of solitude and a joyful acceptance of community life. For Buonaiuti this was the experience of the numinous that he learned from Otto and Schleiermacher, but he corrected it by including in it the participation of man. Liberal Protestants were constantly reproached for being individualistic in their theology. Rauschenbusch meant the same thing when stressing the necessity of turning from the self to society, and describing the dignity of a full personality as determined by its social solidarity. This natural development or socialization remains the central religious experience, which they announced as a gospel and tried to bring about in other men and groups. There is no other revelation, no other liberation and hope for man than this encounter with one's fellowmen. Revelation is indeed natural and universal, common to all religions, although in Christianity it reached its perfect stage. Modernists and Social Gospellers were unanimous in this affirmation. So was Buonaiuti in his answer to the Pope's condemnation of Modernism and so were Gladden and his companions since the early days of social Christianity in America.²⁹⁷ The experience of the

²⁹⁷ Cf. The Programme: op. cit. p.121;
C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.123

human encounter gives substance to the notion of God. For Rauschenbusch the consciousness of God was identified with the consciousness of humanity and Buonaiuti had no objection to equating God with humanity as a collective force.²⁹⁸ The notion of immanence which is implied in these understandings is shared and accepted by both movements as the present interpretation of Christianity according to the findings of modern science. It must be noticed that this notion is slightly corrected by a shade of transcendence concerning what is yet to be expected from an ever evolving humanity.²⁹⁹ Although this colouring of transcendence is concerned more with time and the individual than with the whole human history, it has a bearing on the development of the notion of God, eschatology and the Kingdom on the one hand, and sociology, psychology and the Church on the other.

Trinity

For both movements, the idea of the Father was identified with this notion of immanence transcending the immediacy of individual, time and space. The proofs of

²⁹⁸ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.14
E. Buonaiuti: Lettere, p.149

²⁹⁹ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.129
E. Buonaiuti: Lettere, p.165

God's existence, as set forth by the scholastics are meaningless. The real proof is this social experience which will become ever more convincing with the development of social Christianity. It is a problem of life not of philosophy. L. Feuerbach taught a God who is the product of the objectivization of the self. This teaching, stripped of its individualistic element and transplanted into the life in community, expresses properly the conception of God of the two movements. In past history the experience of the human encounter or of the numinous was evoked by Christ and taught by Him in such a way that those men who re-enacted it proclaimed His divinity, significantly distinguishing between the "Christ of faith" and "the Christ of history". And again the Spirit of this encounter was described as divine to assure a right development and avoid the doubt of illusions. It was, nevertheless, the spirit of man identified with "the sane instincts and wills which direct our experiences."

Psychology

In traditional Christianity the religious experience would have been taught in terms of conversion as the product of a supernatural force, but now science offers a better understanding. In fact, the transition from the self to social encounter can be done through psychology.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.166;
E. Buonaiuti: Lettere, op. cit. pp.164, 174

There must be a scientific method for the eradication of sin,³⁰¹ since people have in themselves the power of redemption.³⁰² This brings to light the crudest aspect of their notion of immanence. Psychology can direct the proper social development of personality and therefore becomes deified for this function. It is at this point that synergism disintegrates, becomes unappreciated, and loses any significance. The whole process of Christian life is brought within the narrow limits of human reach. The working class goes through these developments properly and represents a truly socialized group embodying the experience of the human encounter, therefore labourers are to be considered as naturaliter christiani.³⁰³ Members of classes living on unearned income need, on the contrary, to pass through a process of "sanitation" in order to experience a truly social life.

Eschatology

This doctrine embodies the transcendent elements of a true development. Transcendent is, of course, understood in the sense that it concerns what is beyond the narrow

³⁰¹ W. Rauschenbusch: op. cit. p.57

³⁰² Ibid. p.75

³⁰³ Cf. C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.251
E. Buonaiuti: Lettere, op. cit. p.149

limits of the individual, time and space. Such a notion involves a great optimism and animates the hope of the two movements. In relation to it, man may be satisfied and proud of being a contributor to the redemption of the race.³⁰⁴ Eschatology as interpreted by Albert Schweitzer, over and against the teaching of Protestant Liberalism, was considered by Rauschenbusch as an attempt in "sympathy to the bourgeois classes."³⁰⁵

The Kingdom and the Church

The goal of evolution is the Kingdom, "the organized fellowship of humanity." For both movements, it represents the climax of their expectation and of human perfectibility. For its realization, they endured all the hardship involved in their work and they faced in its name every kind of opposition and deprivation. They were aware of their affinity with the Socialist utopia, but the most alert minds like Buonaiuti and Rauschenbusch did not countenance any acceptance of it and remained hopeful of its christianization and insertion in the notion of the Kingdom. Meantime, the Church is to be understood as the vanguard of the Kingdom, the human society where the most active elements

³⁰⁴ W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology, op. cit. p.229

³⁰⁵ Ibid. p.158

and the most appropriate instruments are prepared and sent forth to leaven the world. The Church should find its reason for existence and direct all its activities to this specific task. A renovation of the Church is needed. The sacraments should acquire a particular importance as symbols capable of bringing to the community of men the enthusiasm of such vision, revitalizing the apocalyptic experience of the early church in modern terms. Furthermore, they should mean a public engagement in loyalty to mankind, and an open sharing in the experience once evoked and taught by Christ.

E. CONCLUSIONS

According to the present evaluation of Modernism and the Social Gospel it can no longer be maintained that they must be understood as independent movements. In spite of the differences of continents, environments, denominational backgrounds and the absence of a direct encounter, they developed a similar sociology because they were grounded on a common theological understanding. They must be considered as the form of Christianity of a particular era, that was so conscious of its content to let it appear as a unity overcoming all the above mentioned differences. Their success and influence were assured and gained momentum as long as the nature of a movement was

maintained, but when the need for systematization was felt or imposed, as in the case of Modernism, their life was doomed. They introduced themselves, with their theology, to the officially existing Christianity and they were not granted admission to its fellowship. This crucial moment of their history added a further element to their similarity, even in the external historical events.³⁰⁶ On the basis of the approach suggested by this thesis, the understanding of the Social Gospel as a typical or indigenous American product, supported by C.H. Hopkins and W.A. Visser't Hooft,³⁰⁷ has to be reconsidered or at least modified. Similarly, the fact that Modernism came to indicate Liberal Protestantism, particularly in America, might be historically incorrect as A. Vidler suggests, but it has some truth in it. The real difference consists in stressing the collective rather than the individual aspect of humanity. Once this is established, the rest might be considered as irrelevant. Furthermore, this collective aspect was not repellent to Liberalism and it could even have been considered as a welcome aspect to be absorbed. Therefore, it cannot be

³⁰⁶ Cf. with regard to Modernism: H.L. Stewart; op. cit. p.331, and with regard to the Social Gospel: W.A. Visser't Hooft; op. cit. pp.26 ff.

³⁰⁷ C.H. Hopkins: op. cit. p.326;
W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.125

maintained that this identification is an unfortunate distortion of history, but rather it should be described as an alert sensitiveness capable of reading through events and details the reality of their meaning.

CHAPTER IV

THEOLOGY OF AN ERA

Summary:

The theology of both Roman Catholic Modernism and of the Social Gospel holds a transitory position between Liberalism and Existentialism, belonging with them to a spurious line of Christian thought that goes back to Hellenic culture.

A. SPIRITUALISM

The Greek world that the early church encountered was based on several different thought structures. The church felt an urgent need to give them a new meaning through leavening them with Christian concepts. But the question remained - how far did truly Christian concepts leaven the heritage of Hellenic culture and how far did Hellenic culture compromise Christianity? Of particular concern was the contrast between the New Testament notion of pneuma and the Greek notion of logos. The latter was an essence of divine nature, diffused in the universe, and human souls were considered as sparks of it imprisoned by matter. The Christian notion of pneuma was based on the divine transcendence breaking through into the material world, transfiguring human souls. According to G. Miegge³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ Giovanni Miegge: Protestantesimo e Spiritualismo, (Torre Pellice, Claudiana, 1941) pp.15 ff.

it is the notion of logos that left permanent and ever reviving deformations in Christian theology. Gnosticism, which influenced the life of the Church for a long period,³⁰⁹ was one of the first important manifestation of it. The Renaissance was actually a re-birth of the same concept embodied in terms appropriate to the culture of the Middle Age. This revival was manifested at the time of the Reformation in the thinking of men like Erasmus and Zwingli. Erasmus, with his insistence on free will, praised a liberty that was but another kind of serfdom, a complex of disobedience, pride and despair, which refused to accept any correction from outside humanity.³¹⁰ The Anabaptists, after accepting the Biblical notion of spirit, joined again the main stream of spiritualism by rating a direct experience more highly than an indirect one through the text of the Bible. Here the Scripture became understood as a useful instrument in promoting experiences.³¹¹ The most important representative of this spirit in nineteenth century theology was Schleiermacher, who gave leadership and the material for a full century of studies in Christianity.

³⁰⁹ H.L. Stewart: op. cit. pp.13 ff.

³¹⁰ K. Barth: Church Dogmatics (English edition, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1956) 1/2, pp.667 ff.

³¹¹ Ibid. p.252, G. Miegge: op. cit. p.17

His thought, based on feelings and experiences, transformed his theology into a religious psychology.³¹² Schleiermacher undertook the first serious attempt since the Renaissance to reconcile philosophy and religion with an apologetic indicating the common points and the common ground between the two.³¹³ H.L. Stewart says of Schleiermacher that he is "the herald and pioneer of Modernism in nineteenth century German theology."³¹⁴ The Catholic School of Tübingen and E. Buonaiuti himself acknowledged the profound influence exercised by Schleiermacher on their thoughts.³¹⁵ A. Ritschl, A. Harnack and E. Troeltsch continued to shape the new form of theology according to the foundation laid by Schleiermacher. But the notion of logos has been, through the course of history, the common root of both mystic and rationalistic tendencies. For this reason, the philosophy which developed the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may be considered another important affirmation of Greek culture

³¹² J.L. Neve: op. cit. II, p.115

³¹³ K. Barth: Hegel (Neuchâtel, Delachaux & Niestlé, 1955) p.40. La Théologie Evangelique au XIX siècle, (Genève, Labor et Fides, 1957) p.27.

³¹⁴ H.L. Stewart: op. cit. p.202

³¹⁵ V. Vinay: E. Buonaiuti; op. cit. pp.172, 200

which so deeply penetrated Christianity in the first four centuries of the present era. The mystic enlightenment of the "inner light" was followed by a rationalistic enlightenment which evolved into the romantic mood and modern spiritualism.³¹⁶ With Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, the traditional relationship between religion and morals was discussed and modified. "Contention was that the awareness of duty rested upon a prior basis of religious belief. Kant's view is a significant reversal of this order which was destined to determine the approach to religious problems for several generations."³¹⁷ Every system of dogma was in the end to be judged by ethical elements.³¹⁸ This innovation in Christian theology was to be accepted and welcomed by Modernists.³¹⁹ The philosophy of Hegel then oriented in the most durable way the thinking of the following generation. The structures of his thought were based on the confidence of the identity between reality and sense, which was regarded as the notion

³¹⁶ G. Miegge: op. cit. pp.16 ff.

³¹⁷ Paul Lehmann: Forgiveness, (n.p., Harper & Brothers, 1940) p.36

³¹⁸ H.L. Stewart: op. cit. p.203

³¹⁹The Programme, op. cit. p.99

of God or the Spirit. There was no place for contradictions which were absorbed and resolved in the process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Philosophy and religion, revelation and reason were part of this identity, belonging to a joyful world without dualism.³²⁰ English Christian Socialism, which played such an important part in the development of the Social Gospel in America, was largely under the influence of Hegel.³²¹ The next step, if not the final one, was the pure subjectivism of L. Feuerbach. Another classic expression and result of this process of theological culture was David Frederick Strauss' Leben Jesu (1835-36), which was described as a complex reconstruction of the life of Jesus, obtained through psychological considerations and incipient demythologizations.³²² Christian theology deteriorated through this revival of the hellenic notion of logos reveals the following characteristics:

(1) Revelation: The will of God becomes identified with the religious consciousness, and man is said to acquire the experience of the holy through inwardness. Any religion can share in this interior process of revelation,

³²⁰ K. Barth: Hegel, op. cit. pp.15 ff.

³²¹ P. Gardner: op. cit. pp.3 and 35.

³²² K. Barth: La Théologie, op. cit. p.41

which can be described in terms of intuition or im-
mance and is universal.³²³

(2) History: Any historical fact becomes, in this context, an obstacle and a limitation to be considered as a sign of an inferior religion. Even the historicity of Christ is not adequate to this understanding of religion and must be reduced to a mere symbol. Indeed, history must undergo revision, by distinguishing between the sheer facts, which are phenomena, and the world of ideas involved in them. The latter constitutes the material valuable to the religious man, now asked to believe in the teaching of Jesus and not in Jesus himself as a person.³²⁴

(3) Phenomenology: Although faith was concerned with the spirituality beyond the phenomena, these phenomena were still eligible for some important use within the Church. A way had to be found to relate phenomenon and essence. Hegel's attempt to identify them was attractive to modern minds, but was too easy and therefore not completely satisfying. The world of phenomena, being common to all realms of human thinking became the most promising

³²³ G. Miegge: op. cit. pp.18 ff.

³²⁴ Ibid. p.19 and pp.29 ff.

ground for apologetics. Christ was related to the phenomenal world as the "protophenomenon" and faith too was explained as an historic phenomenon. A. Harnack's What is Christianity is perhaps the classical exposition of this kind of metaphysic. But the question remains: "How is it possible to win to Christian faith the heathen by starting from a pagan point of view?"³²⁵

(4) Sin: The doctrine of sin tended to disappear. It was understood as the inadequacy to the ideal³²⁶ or the sense of finitude.³²⁷ For Schleiermacher, sin was the contrast, within humanity, between self-consciousness and the consciousness of God. For Troeltsch, sin was God's educative purpose destined to disappear gradually with the elevation of mankind. This idea constituted the backbone of the notion of progress so important to Christian Socialism.³²⁸

According to C. Lupo the cogito ergo sum of Descartes remains the synthesis of modern thought. The sum is no

³²⁵ K. Barth: La Théologie... op. cit. pp.27, 39
A. Cochrane: The Existentialists and God, (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1956) p.143.

³²⁶ G. Miegge: op. cit. p.36

³²⁷ K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, English ed. IV/1 pp.374 ff.

³²⁸ Ibid. p.385

longer based on the "I am" of the God of Israel and the Church, but on the "cogito", the idea enlarged to monstrous proportions. This idea was contemporaneously transcribed in dialectical idealism by Hegel and in social economic materialism by Marx, both aspects of which gave birth to the modern revolution eliminating the reality of God from human concern. "Liberalism, Socialism, Romanticism, Enlightenment and the ethics of our own time, are all expressions, in different fields, of an unique reality: the human autonomy manifested in the will to power."³²⁹ Man has become the measure of every thing.³³⁰ Spiritualism in relation to Christian faith might be considered as an hidden heresy of the third article. Its notion of spirit is indeed open to many kinds of idolatry and completely strange to the thought of the Early Church and the Reformation, which unmistakably understood it as the Spirit of Christ. Through the Spirit the believer hears the Word and nothing but the Word.³³¹

³²⁹ Carlo Lupo: Eta' della Crisi e Vocazione Cristiana, (Torre Pellice Claudiana, 1951) pp.8, 9.

³³⁰ K. Barth: La Théologie... op. cit. p.34

³³¹ K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, I/2 pp.256 f.

B. EXISTENTIALISM

The twentieth century philosophy of existence is but another form of spiritualism. While it maintains the same general characteristics, it has some distinguishing peculiarities. If the nineteenth century insisted rather emphatically on the cogito, the existentialists put their stress on the ergo sum. They are concerned with the becoming of man and they regard that becoming as the constitution of the being of man as a real historical event. Rudolph Bultmann accepts the analysis of history handed down by liberalism, but he points out that, as a theologian, his ultimate concern was not the mere reconstruction of the phenomenon of the New Testament, but an enquiry about its meaning for the present time.³³² Historians like A. Harnack had eliminated all mythical expressions found in the Scriptures without realizing that they embodied the kerygma and contained the message and the decision of faith. The fact that Christ is described in mythical terms is not a sufficient reason to disregard the person of Jesus or declare Him a myth.³³³ For Bultmann, existentialism is

³³² R. Bultmann: L'Interpretation du Nouveau Testament, (Paris, Aubier, 1955) pp.40 ff.

³³³ Ibid. pp.151 ff.

therefore a correction of liberalism, moving away from mere interest in the historic Jesus and recovering part of the so called mythical material rejected in the nineteenth century. All this has in view the ergo sum in which the values of the past acquire their meaning and importance for the present.

A second characteristic of existentialism, which distinguishes it from former liberalism, is the re-valuation of collectivism. F. Gogarten says that it is the encounter with the neighbour that leads to existential decisions and gives historicity to the individual.³³⁴ In Bultmann too the Christian community replaces the individual and the New Testament Church embodied the kerygma in such a way that the importance of Christ Himself is almost overshadowed.³³⁵

A third aspect is the re-introduction of the notion of transcendence and eschatology. Transcendence is related to the inscrutable secret of the situation in which the existential decision takes place,³³⁶ and

³³⁴ Ibid. pp.128 ff.

³³⁵ G. Miegge: L'Evangelo e il Mito, (Milano, Edizioni di Comunita' 1956) pp.151 ff.

³³⁶ G. Miegge: Protestantesimo... op. cit. p.21

eschatology indicates the process of becoming implied in it and expresses, therefore, the communion of the Church.³³⁷ It is interesting to notice by way of example some of the main definitions of Paul Tillich's theology as they relate to this subject. "Revelation is first of all the experience in which an ultimate concern grasps the human mind and creates a community in which this concern expresses itself in symbols of action, imagination and thought."³³⁸ "Faith is a matter of freedom. Freedom is nothing more than the possibility of centered personal act."³³⁹ Faith appears as man's awareness of his potential infinity and this awareness as his ultimate concern:³⁴⁰ it is independent of history,³⁴¹ and presupposes reason.³⁴² "The ultimate concern" is the suggested criterion of distinction between a true and a false capability of transcending the subject-object scheme.

³³⁷ G. Miegge: L'Evangelo... op. cit. p.152

³³⁸ Paul Tillich: Dynamics of Faith, (New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957) p.78

³³⁹ Ibid. p.5

³⁴⁰ Ibid. p.76

³⁴¹ Ibid. p.89

³⁴² Ibid. p.76

Ultimacy is the quality which constitutes divinity in the idea of God.³⁴³ Like the existentialists, Paul Tillich makes use of man's despair to build up his theological system. Revelation, therefore, remains an experience related, according to A Cochrane's critique, to the awareness of finitude, which does not surpass the Stoic principle of immanence and identifies the universal logos accessible to reason with Christ.³⁴⁴ It is not without significance that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has practically no place in Tillich's works.³⁴⁵ This reminds one again of K. Barth's observation that this involves a hidden heresy of the third article.

Christian faith is dependent on the "I AM THAT I AM" of Exodus (3, 14); there is no possible knowledge of God other than God's revelation. The God knowable through the world or in the secret of the soul is not the God of Israel, but an idol of a pantheistic conception. The real God is known in the moment He tells His name, then and only then man is faced with revelation

³⁴³ Ibid. pp.10 ff

³⁴⁴ A. Cochrane: op. cit. pp.96 ff.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. p.97

which is an historical event.³⁴⁶ "According to the Holy Scripture, God's revelation occurs in our enlightenment by the Holy Spirit of God to a knowledge of His Word. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is God's revelation. In the reality of this event consists our freedom to be the children of God and to know and love and praise Him in His revelation."³⁴⁷ "The revelation of God in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the judging but also reconciling presence of God in the world of human religion, that is, in the realm of man's attempts to justify and sanctify himself before a capricious and arbitrary picture of God."³⁴⁸

C. MODERNISM AND SOCIAL GOSPEL

Regarding the phenomenon of Spiritualism, ever reappearing in Christianity, and the latest form of it manifested in existentialism, Modernism and Social Gospel occupy a transitory position between the two. In fact, there are many indications that seem to demonstrate

³⁴⁶ G. Miegge: Protestantesimo... op. cit. p.24

³⁴⁷ K. Barth: Church Dogmatics I/2 p.203

³⁴⁸ Ibid. p.280

their affiliation with liberalism which cannot be disregarded in spite of the protest of both movements that there is no such affiliation. Consequently, the way in which they attempted to prove their distinction from any form of liberalism, indicates to some extent how they became orientated towards existentialism.

Transition from the Past

Man still understands his sin as the distress of inadequacy to an ideal, but the ideal is no longer the sublimation of the individual concern. It comes from the society in which man lives, and it is described in terms of communion, encounter, socialization, co-operation and fellowship. The sense of sin is still derived from a confrontation with a higher standard and may still be called selfishness, but a transition in a new direction is already taking place.

Another characteristic element is optimism. It is related to the philosophy of Hegel and its overcoming of contradictions which, in the past had such an important influence on the sense of unity in American life.³⁴⁹ However optimism in the understanding of the Social

³⁴⁹ W.A. Visser't Hooft: op. cit. p.161

Gospel and Roman Catholic Modernism is more dynamic and has a deeper bearing on everyday life. Man is involved in evolution and progress which are becoming meaningful in the good actions of man in society and in every experience of communion and co-operation. The understanding of the labourer as naturaliter christianus must be considered in the light of this optimism, as a heritage of the past which is taking on a new orientation. Indeed, the condition of being naturaliter christianus presupposes belonging to the working class, as a socialized body concerned with the redemption of mankind. Psychology was very highly regarded in the hey days of the two movements but it was not of particular interest to the existentialists. Its use at the level of theological culture could not survive this transitory period. Indeed, the existential decision cannot be directed or forced by any science, it comes rather from the outside independently and unexpectedly.³⁵⁰

These elements are among the main ones that came like a cushion between liberalism and existentialism.

Transition toward the Future

The reality of man in existentialism, as in the case of Bultmann's theology, is the possibility of being,

³⁵⁰ Cf. R. Bultmann: op. cit. pp.180 ff., 211 ff.

which is fulfilled in the existential decision. In other words, man is sheer potentiality.³⁵¹ This understanding is not unfamiliar to Modernism and Social Gospel. They too could maintain the definition of man in terms of potentiality. In fact, their theory of the germ, destined to develop into the tree, that constitute the structure of Christian tradition, could as well express the substance of their anthropology. This is indeed where they broke away from liberalism and moved toward existentialism. Their notion of man has a meaning only in the framework of society. Very significant is Buonaiuti's correction of Otto's understanding of the holy, in which the experience of the numinous remains inseparable from man who conveys it and embodies it. The encounter of fellowmen is almost understood as the conditio sine qua non of such experience. Does not this appear as an anticipation of Gogarten's teaching of the existential decision as an "I - Thou" relation?³⁵² Paul Tillich's notion of faith as awareness of potential infinity, and his concept of

³⁵¹ Ibid. pp.98, 101, 113

³⁵² Cf. Ibid. pp.128 ff.

"ultimate concern" can find more than an echo in the doctrine of man either of Modernism or of the Social Gospel. Similarly, the incipient eschatology of both movements is leading forward to existentialism. Their hope and their longing for a perfect society were progressing day by day toward their goal, becoming more and more visible in the Church which was consequently understood as an eschatological society. This definition of the Church returns in the work of Bultmann, although with his existentialism, the whole of eschatology is limited to the ever-renewing decisions of the congregation.

Theology of Mediation

Liberalism, often reproached for individualism, stressed in its teaching the importance of the individual and understood society in relation to him. In fact, any innovation at the social level must have started from the individual. On the contrary, existentialism stresses the view that the individual is what society makes him, either by way of action or reaction, conformity or distinction. The individual is not a victim of society, but, in perfect freedom, becomes himself, in the existential decision, by taking place in this collective encounter. The two movements dealt within this thesis, are in the middle and would probably disagree with both these ways of understanding such relations, by accusing them of unilaterality.

The same can be said with reference to the notion of history. Liberalism, as from the works of Harnack, was interested in mere facts commonly accepted and completely free from religious presuppositions. Of course, this interest was indirect and only justified in order to prove the validity of the rationality of religious beliefs which remained the real concern of universal value. Existentialism abandons even this indirect approach and does not understand history in terms of sheer fact, but rather in terms of becoming. Presuppositions or prejudices, therefore, cannot be eliminated in the analysis and interpretation of facts.³⁵³ They are indeed important to the existential decision since they contain determining values for its actualization. Tillich, for example, teaches that faith is not dependent on history which is not necessary to the believer.³⁵⁴ Once again, Modernism and Social Gospel occupied a transitory position in between Liberalism and Existentialism. The entire discussion of the nature of ecclesiastical tradition and dogmas is most clarifying in this relation. They felt the constant need of distinguishing between

³⁵³ Ibid. pp.59 ff.

³⁵⁴ Paul Tillich: op. cit. pp.87 ff.

the historic truth and its interpretation through the centuries. Their polemics with Harnack were a defence of the value of dogmas, simply rejected by liberalism, and at the same time, an appeal for a new interpretation of the dogmas now felt to be, as such, inadequate. They proposed indeed a new basis for the understanding of the Church, of the sacraments and of the Kingdom. Nevertheless, they remained a long way from the demythologization suggested by Bultmann. The Christ of history and the Christ of faith had still an equal importance although the former had an increasing tendency to disappear.

In liberalism the ground of apologetic is the fact resulting from critical and historical investigation; in existentialism it is the demythologized value which prompts the existential decision. The Social Gospel and Modernism, as a theology of transition, equally cherished and maintained these two moments in their apologetic although it was not yet a question of existential decision but only of a socialization of individuals.

There are other elements which pass through this process without a very evident transformation. The correlation of reason and revelation, of philosophy and theology, the absence of an adequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Christianity defined in terms of ethics and

sacrament in terms of symbol, are all characteristic teachings which moved unchanged, and more or less with the same authority, from the theology of the nineteenth century into that of the twentieth. The Social Gospel and Modernism offered no resistance, but favoured this transition as a normal process.

D. CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this thesis to enquire into the similarities of the American Social Gospel and of the Roman Catholic Modernism. First of all, the material collected in relation to their sociology has shown an identity of aims and in particular, of hopes for the Christianization of Socialism. Beyond this common engagement and endeavour in society there has been an unique theological understanding, which, once pointed out in its main assertions, and disentangled from the differences of background and form, has revealed its place in the history of the development of Christian thought. It has been the concern of this last chapter to discuss the theology of the two movements as belonging to a spurious tradition in the Church, due to the contamination of the hellenic culture in general, and of the notion of logos in particular. The results of such discussion appear to justify the understanding of the whole matter of

this thesis as a theology of an era of transition between liberalism and existentialism, as far as these latter developed in the Christian fold.

The hope has been expressed in these pages that the future may grant to Christianity some time to reconsider the events, the accomplishments and the teachings of these movements in order not to disregard the prophetic note contained in their proclamation, and to recover the sensitivity of their leaders to the social problem. Such work of revision will have to start from a clear affirmation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, so as to re-enter the genuine line of Christian faith. It might be interesting to conclude the present analysis by indicating some of the developments that call for further reconsideration.

(1) The task of the Holy Spirit: In the Gospel according to St. John, Christ says of the Spirit: ". . .he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."³⁵⁵ If by the words "whatsoever I have said unto you" and "all things" it is proper to understand, as it has been sug-

³⁵⁵ St. John: 14, 26.

gested,³⁵⁶ the once for all event of Christ, known through the apostles and collected by the Church in the Scriptures, then the task of the Spirit must be considered in terms of teaching and remembering this unique event. St. John stresses this point further by adding these words of the Lord: "he shall receive of mine: and shall shew it unto you." There are, therefore, no innovations and no new revelations in the work of the Holy Spirit, but His task consists in maintaining and nourishing the believers with the things accomplished by Christ. The once for all is actualized from generation to generation and from individual to individual, as the permission to live of Christ's mercy and to be ingrafted into His life. Christ is the reality, the Ego sum: the Church is renewed in that reality again and again by the Spirit, and can not but proclaim it. What happens in the Church is a sign of the reality of the event of Christ and does not surpass the significat lest it betray the doctrine of the third article. God's intentions toward man are fully realized

³⁵⁶ O. Cullmann: La Tradition (Neuchâtel, Delachaux & Niestlé, 1953) pp.34, 45.

O. Cullmann: Christ et le Temps (Neuchâtel, Delachaux & Niestlé, 1947) p.122

E. Brunner: Revelation and Reason (English Ed., Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1946) pp.121 ff.

in Christ without any weakness or imperfection; thus the dignity and joy of man consists in expressing this fact, which is the core of history and not just a mere phenomenon more or less perceived by human minds. Since the time of the Exodus, and of the gift of the manna, the people of God know that the food for today cannot be kept for tomorrow, so the remembering and the teaching of the Spirit for the present time cannot be kept for future generations. Tomorrow men will be reminded again of the Lord and allowed to express anew the meaning of such a remembrance.³⁵⁷ The history of the Christian Church is, therefore, the history of those meanings as set forth by the irruption of the transcendence of the Spirit into human life.³⁵⁸

(2) Ecclesiastical tradition: With the above understanding in mind, it is possible to reconsider some of the suggestions of Modernism and of the Social Gospel. Their revolt against traditionalism may have a present value. Shailer Mathews wrote: "Historical studies. . . enable

³⁵⁷ R. Bertalot: Scrittura e Predicazione in Protestantesimo (Review published under the auspices of the Waldensian Faculty of Theology) No. IV, 1958 pp.220 ff. Rome.

³⁵⁸ G. Miegge: Protestantesimo. . . op. cit. pp.15 f.

us to distinguish the permanent attitudes and convictions of the Christian movement from the doctrinal patterns in which they have been expressed."³⁵⁹ There is at the present the need "to re-express the inherited attitudes and convictions of the first Christian group."³⁶⁰ These words revive the whole polemic of Loisy against Harnack and the Modernistic attempt to reevaluate the tradition and the dogmas. Mutatis mutandis and in the content of the above observations on the task of the Holy Spirit, the Reformed faith would probably find itself more at home with the Modernists and their intention of re-expressing again and again the early and permanent value of the Church. The confessions of faith are for this purpose: through all the centuries of the Christian era, they have vitally nourished the Church, in its various denominations; but today Christianity, as in the past, must be reminded again of the Ego sum and be henceforth determined anew in its way to proclaim it. The symbols of yesterday have already enriched the tradition and constituted new meanings in the development of history. Today the Church expects a fresh manna that will keep it

³⁵⁹ S. Mathews: op. cit. p.170

³⁶⁰ Ibid. p.171

spiritually alive and meaningful in the unique root which is and remains the event of Christ. At the present time, the problem of the relation between Scripture and Church is once again brought to the attention of the theologians, especially because of existentialism;³⁶¹ it would therefore be most interesting and profitable to reopen the discussion aroused by Loisy's L'Evangile et l'Eglise, and in general by the theology of the Social Gospel and Modernism.

(3) The Social Encounter: There is no possibility of a proper understanding of social relations either by stressing the individual or the collective, as in the unilateral tendencies of Liberalism and Existentialism. The theology of Social Gospel and Modernism embracing both aspects of the problem is still appealing today,³⁶² and in the light of the suggested corrections still offers stimulating suggestions for the present situation. Christ came to encounter man and to re-establish communion with God. This is indeed the meaning of the incarnation of the Word and of the Atonement, which belong to the once for all

³⁶¹ Cf. J.L. Leuba: La tâche actuelle de la théologie protestante in Verbum Caro (Delachaux & Niestlé Neuchâtel) No. 45, 1958, p.54

³⁶² E. Brunner: The Divine Imperative (English Ed., Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1947) pp.293 ff.

of the message of the New Testament. Therefore, do not men receive the permission to become signs of this reality when they are led toward their fellowmen and inserted into their communion by the teaching and remembering of the Spirit? The encounter of men, the "socializing of the soul" have a definite Christian value in so far as they are reminders of the real and unique encounter undertaken by God Himself. Then, why not reconsider the articles of Bishop Gore and of the group of the Lux Mundi, which had such a great part in the formation of the Social Gospel in order to appreciate their contribution in relating the social problem to the doctrine of the incarnation? It is indeed the incarnation that relates meaningfully individuals and community. However, the method of such a revision should never lose sight of the distinction between the sign and the thing signified, lest they miss its purpose.

(4) The Doctrine of Man: The anthropology of Modernism and of the Social Gospel was permeated by a joyful optimism with regard to the potentialities of humanity. Once it is agreed to pass from immanence, contained in the Greek notion of logos, to transcendence, as seen in the Biblical notion of the Spirit, it is still profitable to maintain a similarly impressive optimism in the doctrine of man. In spite of what man might appear to the historical analysis, can it not be said, once con-

fronted with the reality of the event of Christ, that here are his potentialities? Are not these potentialities the true substance of man that can actually develop in his being, when the Holy Spirit creates him anew and transforms him, to keep him in the grace of the Cross?

(5) The Holy Communion: Modernism and the Social Gospel understood the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as a symbol of loyalty and of solidarity. Certainly it might be so, once it is clear that it signifies the loyalty or the fidelity of Christ and His solidarity with man. It is only passing through Him that the solidarity and loyalty among men becomes significant and acquires value as a remembrance of the Lord.

(6) The Kingdom of God: The signs through which the Spirit keeps the Church within the reality of Christ indicate contemporaneously the fact that such a reality is going to be fully manifested in the time set by God. In this sense, they point toward and anticipate the future. But once again there must be maintained the distinction between the sign and the things signified. In other words, there appear the same relations between the resurrection of Lazarus, who will die again, and the resurrection of the Lord; between the signs that can be produced in a society, which will know a new creation, and the Kingdom of God. This was misunderstood by the theology of the

Social Gospel and Modernism because of their particular doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but between the individualistic hope of Liberalism and the existential eschatology related to human decisions or becomings, it still offers a more sensible understanding of the Christian expectation of the sons of God. Could not their enthusiasm for a renewal of society revive in the present generation a clearer understanding of thirsting after righteousness, and lead Christianity to emphasize the improvement of human conditions as a sign and witness that the earth is going to be created anew? As the miracles of the Lord pointed toward His resurrection, so the signs through which the Spirit keeps man in Christ indicate the Kingdom. Their provisional nature should not be more disturbing than the short period of years of a human life; on the contrary, it should remind man that the Lord is coming soon, and revive in the Church the apocalyptic zeal of the early days.

These are but a few examples of a possible reconsideration of the theology of the Social Gospel and of Roman Catholic Modernism, to prove how unwise it would be to refuse the lesson handed down to generations from their short era of vital existence.

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