THE INFLUENCE OF THE NONCONFORMIST RELIGIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT 1875 - 1895

A Thesis

by

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Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
McGILL UNIVERSITY
August, 1962.

P R E F A C E

This is a study of the inter-penetration of Nonconformity and Socialism in Britain during the eighteen-eighties and early nineties. It is, primarily, an attempt to clarify the relationship between the Nonconformist denominations and the political life of the nation through a study of the churches themselves: their democratic structure and traditional position of independence from state authority; their historical association with Liberalism and the principles of laissez-faire; their emphasis upon the conception that the moral teachings of their religion touched upon all aspects of political and social life.

The wide publicity given to the condition of the poor during the eighties was in part carried out from below through the activity of the 'New' Unionism - as exemplified by the London Dock Strike of 1889 - and in part through the deliberate advertisement of poverty by philanthropic organizations and the secular press. In this the Nonconformist denominations played a vital part: it was the Congregational Union which issued the pamphlet The Bitter Cry of Outcast London which first sparked public interest in conditions in London's East End; and it was the son of a Congregationalist minister, who, as editor of

the Pall Mall Gazette, gave the first publicity to the facts revealed in the pamphlet.

The importance of the penetration of Nonconformity into the Socialist movement itself has been fully recognized by most historians of the period: little new evidence is presented here. But the creation of a favourable climate of opinion among the middle and upper classes was also vital to the form which the Labour movement should take. I have therefore attempted to trace the channels by which Socialist ideas reached the reading and church-going public, and to discover to what degree these ideas were acceptable to leaders of the Nonconformist community.

I believe that two factors should be emphasized: the first was the remarkable degree of agreement among the leaders of the various Nonconformist denominations on many of the political and social issues of the time; there were differences of opinion, certainly, but these caused division within the separate denominations rather than between them. In the field of social reform, therefore, the Nonconformist community could exert a much greater influence than might be expected. The second factor was the enduring vitality of the original principles of Nonconformity. The response of many Nonconformists to the revelation of the

facts of poverty during the 1880's was highly emotional. It was not, however, irrational. It was based, rather, on the conviction that there should be no contradition between moral and economic law. It was this conviction which forced a number of leading Nonconformists to escape long-standing prejudice, and, in the case of some, to follow new arguments even to unwelcome conclusions.

Two sources of information were of great value in the preparation of this thesis: the Redpath Tracts, a group of essays and short treatises collected by Stuart J. Reid and deposited in the Redpath Library of McGill University; and the Nonconformist and Independent, the most influential of the newspapers expressing Nonconformist opinion during the 1880's.

I am most grateful to Dr. W. S. Reid for his guidance during the preparation of this thesis.

Montreal,
August, 1962

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C O N T E N T S

I

NONCONFORMITY IN 1875

In 1875 the Nonconformist churches were numerically the strongest religious group in England and Wales:[1] out of a total population of approximately 20 million, just over 1½ million were members (as opposed to adherents) of the various Nonconformist denominations. The greater part of their membership came from the middle and upper-labouring classes; the Congregational Church - the largest of the Dissenting groups - had become, on its own admission, an almost exclusively middle-class institution. Of the various sects within the Methodist Church, the Primitive Methodists (150,000 members) and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists (93,000 members) were most closely in touch with the labouring classes.

In Scotland, just over one-half of the population belonged to one or another of the Nonconformist denomonations.[2] During the stormy period following the 'Great Secession' from the Church of Scotland in 1843, when the Free Church withdrew in protest against the domination of the church by the state, all attempts to re-unify the church had met with failure. In 1875 there were no fewer than five distinct branches of Presbyterianism in Scotland: the established Church of Scotland, and

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[1] For detailed figures see Appendix B.

[2] See Appendix A.

four other groups, of which the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church were by far the largest, numbering between them one-third of the population. The other Nonconformist denominations were relatively weak - the Baptists, Methodists, and Congregationalists having a total membership of approximately sixty thousand.

Additional strength was given to British Nonconformity because of its heavy concentration in certain areas: the Free Church in the Highlands of Scotland; Methodism in the mining districts of Northumberland and Durham and in Yorkshire (as opposed to Lancashire where the Established Church predominated); the Congregational Church among the merchant classes of all the great cities and in London itself. Insofar as the masses of the great cities were concerned, however, both the Nonconformists and the Established Church had met with failure: in London, for instance, the number of churches in areas inhabited by the working classes was entirely inadequate.[3]

In the smaller industrial and mining towns and rural areas, however, the Nonconformist sects - the off-shoots of Methodism in particular - were in close contact with the lower and lower-middle classes. This is particularly true of Wales, where approximately five hundred Nonconformist chapels were built before 1832, following the secession of the Methodists from the Established Church in 1811.[4] Although the Established Church gained some new converts in urban areas between 1840 and

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[3]See Appendix C.

[4]"The Church and Dissent in Wales During the Nineteenth Century", the Church Quarterly Review, LVIII (April, 1904).

1870, rural areas remained strongly Nonconformist. The following description, taken from "The Church of the Mountains" by the Dean of Landoff, and published in the Edinburgh Review (October, 1853), would still hold true later in the century:

> You enter the Church, and find perhaps five pews occupied. In one the squire slumbers in the softest corner of the manorial seat. In another the butler's attitude shows that he is sharing the repose, though not the cushions, of his master. The third pew is filled by the rector's family; the fourth by his domestics. The fifth is occupied by the wife and children of the parish clerk bound, by virtue of his office, to conform externally to the Church. But where is the population? A glance at the interior of the neighbouring Zoar or Ebenezer will show you them. There they sit, as thick as bees in a hive, stifling with heat, yet listening patiently to the thundering accents of a native preacher, which you have heard while you were yet far off, breaking the stillness of the Sabbath air. Tan uffern (hell-fire) is the expression which falls oftenest on the ear.[5] The orator is enforcing his far favourite doctrine of reprobation.

Of further significance was the growth of a strong vernacular press in Wales expressing the opinions of the Dissenting Bodies, and strongly supported by them. Originating during the reign of William IV with the weekly Amserau Cymry (Time of Wales), founded by William Rees, other papers, representing the various sects, soon came into existance. Such papers as the Seren, the Tyst, and the Baner became strongly Radical, the Baner, particularly, winning the censure of the Established Church. The Rev. D. Williams described the activity of the press in Wales in a paper read at the Church Congress, Swansea, in 1879:

> By the Year 1870 the Nonconformist bodies of Wales were supporting two quarterlies, sixteen monthlies, and ten weeklies, entirely dependent on peasant writers and peasant readers, which, as might easily have been anticipated, have made the Welsh people a nation of political Dissenters.[6]

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

To this influence there was almost no counterbalance - religious or secular - in the vernacular press. The comment by the Church Quarterly Review (April, 1904) that the Welsh lower classes "had fallen completely under the control of this new propaganda" is probably not too great an exaggeration:

> By means of the Press two distinct movements, one religious and the other secular, came to be so blended as to be practically identical in scope and character, while through the same instrumentality a fictitious unity has been given for a time to the jarring sects of Wales.

Yorkshire also became a stronghold of Methodism. In his Memoirs of a Yorkshire Parish, for instance, J. S. Fletcher told of the impact of Methodism upon his small village of Darrington in the West Riding. Similarly, in his Autobiography, Philip Snowden referred to the work of Abraham Binns in bringing Methodism to the village of Cowling in 1795. Of life in the village in his own time, he added: "The Sunday School and the Chapel, and, I regret to add, the public houses, were the centres of what there was of social life in the parish".[7]

Snowden also mentioned that his father, a strong supporter of the chapel, had taken part in the Chartist movement. This association between certain of the sects of Methodism and radicalism was not at all unusual. Among the leaders of the working-class movement before the middle of the Nineteenth Century were the following: Joseph Arch, a Primitive lay preacher, who formed the National Agricultural Labourers' Union; Joseph Harrison, a Methodist minister, founder of a radical political Society at Stockport; George Loveless, a local Wesleyan Methodist

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[7]Philip Snowden, An Autobiography(London: Ivor Nicholson), p. 22.

preacher, leader of the "Tadpuddle Martyrs"; and John Raymer Stephens, a leader of the Chartist movement, who had been expelled from the Methodist ministry. Richard Oastler's father had been a friend of John Wesley's, and Thomas Cooper, another ex-Wesleyan local preacher, said of the Chartist meetings in Leicester: "We always commenced with worship, and I always took a text from the Scriptures, and mingled religion with politics."[8]

Joseph Arch and the other leaders of the working-class movement before the mid-century were leaders of the unenfranchised. As new groups gained representation in Parliament the Nonconformists among them tended to support the Liberal Party. Indeed, the tie between Nonconformity and Liberalism had become a traditionally accepted part of British political life. The explanation is to be found in the origins of the various Nonconformists groups, their position of inequality, and the very real restraints from which they had suffered in the past. They had had, accordingly, a vital interest in undermining the position of power held by the Established Church. Politics throughout the century had taken on a strongly denominational aspect, and the division of English life into the Established Church and the Dissenters was an important factor in the division of the Conservative and Liberal Parties. It should be remembered that the Test Act, which prevented Catholics and Protestant Nonconformists from holding state and municipal office, had not been

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[8]Wearmouth, Robert, Some Working Class Movements of the Nineteenth Century (London, 1948), p. 182.

repealed until 1828, and that the repeal was, in fact, ineffective until the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 and the Second Reform Bill of 1867 widened the franchise to include many Nonconformists. There were other causes for the inferior position of Dissent: the abolition of church rates was not achieved until 1868; the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church were not brought about until 1869; and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge did not grant degrees to persons who were not members of the Established Church until 1871.

In answer to the statement made by the editor of the Spectator that Dissenters were the "non-commissioned officers" of the Liberal party, the editor of the Nonconformist and Independent (November 1, 1883) expressed surprise that anyone should be puzzled by the "consistent and almost unbroken Liberalism of Congregationalists." He explained his point of view in the following:

> They [the Dissenters] belong to a subject race; and a subject race naturally gravitates to the party which is most willing to remove the inequality . . . the Establishment does relegate Dissenters to a political inferiority which they rightfully resent and endeavour to remove. As a matter of course, they take their place in the party, one of whose main objects is the abolition of all class privileges . . .

That Disestablishment was still a hot issue by the last quarter of the Century is illustrated by two pamphlets issued in 1869 and 1873 respectively. The first article, entitled "Disestablishment and Disendowment the first steps towards Revolution: Words of Warning Addressed to All" was published anonymously.[9] In it the author took the position that the disestablishment of the Church in Ireland would rock the

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[9] In the Redpath Tracts 1800 - 1900, (Montreal: McGill University), CXLI (1), (1869).

foundations of the Established Church in England. He expressed his dismay at the stand taken by the Liberal party in undermining the strength of the Church. The second tract, the printing of a lecture given by Henry Richard, M. P., under the auspices of the Nonconformist Association of Manchester, traced the history of the association of the Church of England with despotism; the Church's history alone, he claimed, justified its disestablishment.[10]

There were other reasons, however, for the political attachment of Nonconformists to the Liberal Party: since their numbers came, largely, from the middle and working classes, the ideas of Liberalism appealed very strongly to them; as an economic group, the members of the middle class were convinced of the truth of laissez-faire and other theories advanced by the Manchester School. And finally the ideals of Liberalism - as a movement which emphasized the tearing down of old restraints and outworn institutions - were in complete accord with their own religious beliefs:

> They are taught to think for themselves, are nurtured in habits of self-reliance, and their societies are based on the principle of equality. Naturally, they are not unduly affected by the tradition of the past . . . In their Church life they have faced and are compelled continually to face, the difficulties of liberty . . . They have, therefore, been attracted to the party of progress.[11]

There were signs, however, that the association between Liberalism and Dissent might eventually be broken: after 1875, with the removal of the more glaring distinctions between the Church of England and the

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[10] In the Redpath Tracts, CLI (1), (1873).

[11] The Nonconformist and Independent, IV (November 1, 1883).

Nonconformist Churches, the movement for Disestablishment became less aggressive. With the extension of the franchise after 1867, there was also increasing evidence of a split between the conservative and more radical elements within the Liberal Party. In 1879, for instance, the editor of the Nonconformist disagreed with the "senile forebodings" of the Edinburgh Review that there was great danger to Liberalism in leaving the choice of candidates to the party caucus. After criticizing the writer in the Review of wanting a "Parliament of well-to-do, comfortable Whigs, masters of the art of letting things alone", the editor continued:

> The whole scope and purpose of the Birmingham plan of organisation is to secure for the voters at large this preliminary power of choice, in addition to the right of voting they already possess . . . without some arrangement, the poorer members of the party have no chance of making themselves heard in the preliminary stage. The selection of candidates is left wholly with those who wield the power of the purse.[12]

It should be remembered that Nonconformist ministers justified their active participation in politics on the grounds that, without the influence of religion, Liberalism would degenerate into a dangerous nihilism. "They believe," wrote a Congregationalist minister, "that the determined assertion of their principles is the best service they can render to Liberalism itself."[13] Since politics would always have a party aspect, it was the duty of the church to preserve parties from corruption through its emphasis upon Christian principles, and individ-

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[12] The Nonconformist, XL (January 22, 1879).

[13] J. Guiness Rogers, "the Nonconformist Uprising", the Nineteenth Century, LIV (October, 1903).

ual members or ministers of Nonconformist congregations might give full support to any political or social movement which did not run contrary to these principles. Middle-class Nonconformists generally continued to identify themselves with the Liberal party which, during the time of Gladstone, appealed not only to their economic interests, but to their sense of moral values as well. During the late 1880's however, when the middle and upper classes became more familiar with the actual facts of poverty, completely new questions of state responsibility in the social field were raised. Some Nonconformist leaders took the initiative in pressing for new legislation. Still others were converted to the ideals of a modified Socialism and later, abandoning Liberalism, became supporters of the Labour Party.

As for working-class Nonconformists, their association with the Liberal Party was to be severed slowly, after years of attempting to gain concessions from its party leaders.[14] But they carried over into the Labour Party the same emphasis upon moral principle which made it, in the beginning, more of a religious fellowship than a political movement:

> As followers of the great Mr. Gladstone, they had been nourished on moral inspirations and high-sounding phrases; they were gradually finding out that these phrases meant nothing in terms of their everyday material needs. They were ready to be weaned from a Liberalism that had discarded Chamberlain's social Radicalism . . . they were not ready to do without the feeling of virtue with which Gladstone had held them comforted . . . they were in many cases still closely attached to one or another Nonconformist congregation; and even when they became sceptical of the dogmas of the Churches they were apt to feel cold and uncomforted unless

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[14]See Chapter VI.

they could find some spiritual substitute.[15]

There were, however, other obstacles which prevented the Nonconformist churches from exerting any real influence over the development of any new working-class political movement. One of these was the very practical problem of church organization: The 'circuit system' of the Methodist Church was ideally suited for the country; it meant that usually three churches were entrusted to two ministers, who were assisted by local preachers. But the practise of having ministers change their circuits every three years meant that many churches had no strong tie with any one minister. Therefore, although the circuit system was of value in linking poor churches with rich ones, deserted chapels had become a particular problem of Methodism - especially in large centres.[16] In both the Congregational and Baptist Churches there was the real problem of the almost complete autonomy of the individual congregations. Writing about the organization of the Baptist Church, for instance, Leighton Williams stated:

> They do not constitute an organic body capable of giving a united authoritative expression of opinion on either social or religious matters, or of taking formal and concerted action thereon. While

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[15] Sidney Webb, British Working Class Politics 1832-1914. Quoted in William D. Morris, The Christian Origins of Social Revolt, (London: George Allen, 1949), p. 221.

[16] Charles Booth, "Religious Influences", Life and Labour of the People in London. 3rd ser., (London, 1903), p. 136.

> exhibiting a remarkable unity of doctrine and polity, they are, nevertheless, simply local societies, self-governing, and independent of one another.[17]

Similarly, in a review of the deliberations of the International Council of Congregational Churches in July, 1891, the Rev. J. Guiness Rogers wrote:

> The Congress will have no authority. It may help to form opinion, or, what is of not less importance, to create an intellectual and moral atmosphere; but it can make no changes of creed; it can lay down no regulations for the government of the Churches; and it may be doubted whether it will make any attempt to formulate in resolutions the results of its own deliberations.[18]

The creation of an intellectual and moral atmosphere among the middle classes, was, however, one of the most important contributions of the Nonconformist churches to the progress of the Labour movement in Britain. Their basic conviction that religion was not simply a matter of private virtue made it difficult for them to withdraw from active participation in public affairs. Thus, the bringing of politics into the pulpit, and the political activity of many Nonconformist preachers was explained by one of their number in this statement:

> There is no truth in which we Nonconformists are more bound by our deepest convictions and our most sacred traditions to bear emphatic witness, than this - the direct bearing of spiritual principles, not on ecclesiastical only, but on social and political affairs.[19]

The 'Nonconformist conscience' was not confined to Nonconformists alone - it was one of the essential ingredients within the Evangelical movement of the Church of England - but it was to be found to a marked

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[17]Leighton Williams, "Baptists in Relation to Social Reform," the New Encyclopedia of Social Reform, 1908

[18]The Nineteenth Century, XXX (July, 1891).

[19]The Nonconformist and Independent, I (January 29, 1880).

degree within those churches which descended from British Puritanism. Thus Congregationalism - by 1875 almost entirely a religion of the middle classes - was responsible for the wide publicity given to the evil effects of poverty in London. It was also through its newspaper, the Nonconformist and Independent, through its pulpits, and at its Union meetings that many of the principles of the modified Socialism of the rising Labour Party were to be made acceptable to a large section of the middle and upper-labouring classes. Similarly with Calvinism - the religion accused of emphasizing individualism at the price of sensitivity to the needs of the community at large - there was, as an integral part of its theology a counterbalancing emphasis upon democracy, a principle of equality which placed tremendous importance upon the value of human life. In the various sects of Presbyterianism, therefore, philanthropy had always played an important role.

Nevertheless, many of the harsher aspects of Puritanism still survived. Although Max Weber's thesis that Calvinism was one of the major sources of modern capitalism is probably too great a simplification of a very complex process, and although the long-run effect of Tawney's study of the relationship between Protestantism and the rise of capitalism has been an over-emphasis upon one aspect of Puritanism, there is no denying that Calvinism became almost exclusively the religion of the middle class:

> By its insistence that Christians show forth the fruits of salvation in energetic activity, by its sanction of economic enterprise as divine calling, by its praise of an intra-worldly asceticism which was diligent in production and frugal in consumption, by its nurture of an individualistic temper which

> became capable of revolting against the authority of the state as well as of the hierarchy, Calvinism did much to foster the growth of the middle classes. . .[20]

Similarly, although Wesley had discarded the Calvinist doctrine of pre-destination, he had also emphasized that eternal life was the reward for valuable earthy service, and that personal salvation could be achieved through the exercise of will. Thus, obedience to the Word of God, selflessness, sustained effort and abstinence became the ideals of his movement. His belief in the possibility of the regeneration of the individual through the influence of religion was also reflected in his attitude toward economic and social problems. He regarded the evils of his time not as the result of improper political or economic organization, but rather as evidence of the diseased will of mankind. The classes to whom he preached were the fear-ridden, often brutalized factory workers or skilled artisans of the new towns: members of the mob - that "many-headed beast" to whom he felt it unwise to grant a voice in the government of his church. He regarded political power as a trust, the possession of which was evidence of its moral justification. Like many others of his time, he felt that the duties of government should be limited to the maintenance of order and the protection of property: all else was to be left to individual initiative. "It is impossible", he wrote, "to conceive a fuller liberty than we enjoy, both as to religion, life, body and goods".[21]

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[20]H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (New York: Meridian Books, 1957) p. 97-8.

[21]Wesley, Works, Vol. XI, p. 137.

In the economic distress of his time Wesley saw the failure of the community to follow the will of God. Idleness he believed to be incompatible with Christianity; excessive wealth caused men to put love of gain above love of God. His famous appeal to his followers - to gain, save, and give - admirably adapted Methodism to the economic opportunities of the early phases of industrialization in England, when there was great opportunity for the re-investment of saved capital. Wesley himself came to realize the unfortunate result toward the end of his life:

> The Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal; consequently they increase in goods. Hence they proportionably increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and the pride of life. So, although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away.[22]

In the years following Wesley's death Methodism became increasingly the church of the respectable, and its official voice, as expressed through its church conferences, increasingly conservative. The concern of the leaders of the church over the association of some of their members with radical political parties is clearly shown in the Minutes of the Conference of 1819 which ordered the expulsion of members who joined "Private Political Associations, illegally organized". This same attitude is again reflected in later conferences:

> At the Conference of 1842 the activity of "infidels and irreligious men" who "are charging the sufferings of the community upon the selfish policy of rulers" was openly condemned. Six years later the Wesleyans were advised not to run needlessly 'into the arena of political controversey'.[23]

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[22] Quoted in J. H. Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century, Penguin Books, p. 97.

[23] Wearmouth, p. 174.

Throughout the century the conservatism of the movement was strengthened through the ejection of its radical elements and[24] by the adoption, by many of its members, of the economic principles of laissez-faire. Attitudes of self-reliance and diligence hardened, and soured men's sense of charity toward the "undeserving poor". In the face of the social problem of poverty many Methodists tended to look for its causes in slackness of character and drunkenness. It was General Booth, for instance, who made this statement in connection with his work among the London poor:

> I will take the question of the drunkard, for the drink difficulty lies at the root of everything. Nine-tenths of our poverty, squalor, vice, and crime spring from the poisonous tap-root.[25]

Similarly, in an article on "Poverty and Christianity" for the Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine (April, 1886), the Rev. H. T. Smart had this to say:

> That the poor have many wrongs, no one can doubt . . . and Christianity is seeking to redress all these wrongs. But the chief wrong the poor suffer is a self-inflicted one. Mr. S. Morley states that his experience on the Royal Commission into the causes of London poverty has satisfied him that three-fourths of all the poverty we so much deplore is self-inflicted.

In 1887, in an article entitled "The Pinch of Poverty", the Nonconformist and Independent (January 13) reported a Mr. G. H. Sims as attributing much of the poverty of London to "too many children and too much rent". His suggestions, in addition to support from philanthropic societies for better housing, were later marriage and "the

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[24] See Chapter VI for the close association of many of the splinter groups of Methodism with the working-class movement throughout the century.

[25] Booth, William, In Darkest England and the Way Out, (New York, 1890) p. 47.

indoctrination of morality".

Mr. Sims and Mr. Morley did not express the opinion of a minority. During the early 1880's the solutions to the problem of poverty which occurred to most Nonconformists were the conversion of sinners and the spread of thrift and temperance, aided by a policy of sponsoring self-help emigration societies and cooperative organizations. If this seems too harsh an estimate of general opinion, witness this further statement by the Rev. H. T. Smart in the same article:

> What the poor most need is a Saviour who can save them from themselves, who can make bad men good, idle men industrious, and wasteful men provident. Many of the poor are worthless to the community; but the Gospel is able to make them productive, and will do so if they will accept it. The Gospel of Christ saves the MAN, and the man once saved becomes industrious, self-reliant, and thrifty.

These ideas were not confined to Nonconformists. The Spectator, the unfailing supporter of the Establishment, was notorious among reformers for its attitude of indifference and cynicism toward the poor. As late as 1892 its editorial, "Mr. Balfour on Social Experimenting", (December 17) had this to say:

> Even Mr. Balfour does not seem to us to realise at all how very much more terrible to the poor themselves a little over-lenity in this matter has been shown by cruel experience to be, than a little over-hardness. Let us once make the arrangements of the Poor-Law honourable and comfortable for the aged poor, even though we try hard to limit the honour and comfort to those who deserve honour and comfort, and what results we may reap in the shape of relaxed industry, relaxed self-sacrifice among the poor towards each other, falling wages, wasted taxation, and increased municipal indebtedness, only those who have studied the working of the old Poor Law will know.

Because of this strong right-wing opposition to any radical improvement in Social legislation - an opposition which hardened during the last decade of the century - it was all the more necessary that there should

be a revival of the Evangelical tradition among the middle and upper classes. And there is a great deal of evidence that throughout the 1880's and 1890's a remarkable change did occur: within the Nonconformist community a new attitude can be found at first in isolated editorials and sermons, later in local church conferences called to discuss the problems associated with poverty in the great cities, and finally in the official records of the 'May Meetings'. There were examples, certainly, of sheer hypocracy and self-delusion on the part of both churchmen and politicans: class snobbery and the cold giving of alms had taken firm root within the churches and had replaced the earlier ideals of brotherliness and Christian charity. But there remained within the Evangelical Nonconformist religions a healthy emotionalism and desire for service which was still fresh. With the 'advertisement of poverty' during the eighties, and the growth of Socialist movements both within and outside the church after 1850, a new attempt was made to apply the principles of Christian ethics to the problems of modern society. It was this awakening which had the deepest effects upon the course taken by the Labour movement.

II

THE ADVERTISEMENT OF POVERTY DURING THE 1880's

In a speech delivered at his eightieth birthday celebration in May, 1881, Lord Shaftesbury contrasted the care which society was then taking of its needy with the indifference and ignorance of the classes toward each other during the early days of the century. Although he felt that the work done for the poor was still inadequate, "at any rate," he said, "the duty is fairly recognised, and its discharge is attempted year by year with more earnest resolution, more intelligence, and it may be hoped, more success."[1] In making this statement Lord Shaftesbury had in mind the large volume of social legislation which had been passed in the preceding thirty years. The list is an imposing one: as early as 1842 a report dealing with the sanitary condition of the working-classes had been presented, and was followed by the Public Health Act of 1848. Largely through the influence of Lord Shaftesbury the Common Lodging-House Act and the Labouring-Classes Lodging-Houses Act had been passed in 1851, followed by the Nuisances Removal Act of 1855. The 'seventies had seen a whole series of social reform measures - the Public Health Acts of 1872 and 1875, the Mines Act of 1872, the Factory Act of 1875, the Merchant Shipping Act of 1876, and the Artisans' Dwellings Improvement Acts - known as Sir Richard Cross' Acts - of 1875, 1879, and 1882. It was, in fact, this body of legislation which had led Henry Hyndman

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[1] "Lord Shaftesbury", The Nonconformist and Independent, II (New Series) (May 5, 1881).

to write:

> Thus, whilst we are arguing about Communism . . . we ourselves are slowly advancing, without perhaps realizing it, towards the system which when proposed in all its bluntness we denounce as a chimera under the present circumstances of mankind.[2]

The laws had never, however, been adequately enforced. Writing as late as 1885, the Rev. Henry H. Holland stated that the operation of the acts had been hindred by "indulgence, ignorance, self-interest, and collusion."[3] For this reason, many of the men and women who were working among the poor now felt that what was needed was a great public crusade against poverty, and that this couldhappen only if people generally were better informed about the conditions existing in the great slum areas;[4] with the 1880's, then, the deliberate 'advertisement of poverty' began. In this movement the Nonconformist churches were to play a most significant part: not only were their workers to be responsible for the accumulation of many of the facts concerning the problems of poverty, but they were to make these facts known to a large section of the middle and upper classes from their pulpits and platforms and through their own church newspapers as well as through the secular press.

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[2]Henry Hyndman, "The Dawn of the Revolutionary Epoch", the Nineteenth Century (January, 1881).

[3]The Rev. Henry Holland, "The Housing of the English Working-Classes", the Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, IX (Sixth Series) (November, 1885), 836.

[4]This point of view was expressed by the Rev. John Hugh Morgan in the article "Systematic Church Aggression", the Wesleyan-Methodist, VII (December, 1883).

As early as 1851 the first volume of Henry Mayhew's book entitled "London Labour and the London Poor" was published. In his preface the author pointed out that the book was curious for several reasons: it was the first attempt to publish the history of a people from the lips of the people themselves; it was the first inquiry made into the state of the people by a private individual; and it supplied information concerning a large body of persons "of whom the public had less knowledge than of the most distant tribes of the earth - the government population returns not even numbering them among the inhabitants of the kingdom."[5] Mayhew's book was followed, during the 'sixties, by a limited number of pamphlets: one of these, written by Ernest Hart, described conditions in London infirmaries and workhouses "of which," the writer said, "it were otherwise impossible to believe the existence in this century and this metropolis".[6] In London, alone, the extent and depth of poverty was almost unbelievable. According to Charles Booth's inquiry of 1886, some thirty per cent of its population lived at, or beneath, the level of bare subsistance. His figures are as follows:[7]

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[5]Henry Mayhew, "The London Street-Folk", London Labour and the London Poor, (Lond: George Woodfall and Son, 1851).

[6]Ernest Hart, "An Account of the Condition of the Infirmaries of London Workhouses", in the Redpath Tracts, CXXXIII(3) (1866), 14

[7]F. H. Millington, "The Housing of the Poor", in the Redpath Tracts, CXCIX (1891), 15.

Paupers, inmates of workhouses, asylums and hospitals	51,000
Loafers, casuals, and semi-criminals	33,000
Very poor, casual earnings below 18 S. per week; in chronic want	300,000
Poor, irregular earnings 18 S. to 21 S.	222,000
Poor, small regular earnings 18 S. to 21 S.	387,000
	993,000

Similarly, the Rev. and Mrs. Barnett, the founders of Toynbee Hall, made careful studies of living conditions in their district of St. Jude's, Whitechapel. Using sample menus they proved that - even with the simplest and most uninteresting meals - many labourers could not afford to be decently fed.[8]

Of the flood of other pamphlets or books on social questions written during this period, only one will be considered in this chapter. However, a glance at the titles of some of the publications is in itself revealing: Beatrice Potter's "How Best to Do Away With the Sweating System"; Mr. Sherard's "White Slaves of England"; David Schloss's "Methods of Industrial Remuneration"; J. A. Hobson's "Problems of Poverty" - these were only some of the books written on the subject. The innumerable newspaper articles includes a series in the Nineteenth Century, among which were the following: "The Health and Physique of our City Populations" by Lord Barbizon; "The Canker-Worm' - Outdoor Relief" by Lord Lifford; "Servants of the Sick Poor" by Florence Craven; "Distress in East London" by the Rev. Samuel Barnett; "More Air for London" by Octavia Hill. A second series, published by the Daily Chronicle under the title "Death in the Workshop" revealed some of the terrible hazards connected with work in the deadly white - lead industries.

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[8]Rev. Samuel Barnett, "Practicable Socialism", in the Redpath Tracts, CLXXXVI(2) (1888).

Writing in 1889, Miss Octavia Hill emphasized the new sympathy for the condition of the poor which was growing up among the wealthy. This, she felt, was especially true of women. Certainly numbers of articles written at this time were by female authors - and not all by church or social workers. Most of the articles, however, whether written by men or women made their appeal almost entirely through the emotions[9] and were also quite often evangelical in character. This is especially true of the writings and speeches of Samuel Plimsoll, who was responsible for so many reforms in the merchant shipping industry. In December, 1880, in an article on colliery explosions for the Nineteenth Century, Plimsoll wrote:

> It is not like God to bestow upon us such a priceless boon as coal, and to append, as a necessary consequence of our putting out our hands to take it, such dreadful distress and suffering as now accompany its acquisition.[10]

This emphasis upon an emotional philanthropy was the subject of an article by the editor of the conservative Spectator in November of 1893:

> It [philanthropy] is the religion of the hour, in many departments of life no one can rise fast without it, it is saturating literature, and its opponents, if there are any left, are liable to obloquy of the most painful kind . . . half the clergy of all sects are preaching a philanthropic cult; most of the novelists devote their efforts to exciting sympathy for "the disinherited"; and all politicians of all parties declare that in their hearts the one strong sympathy is for the multitude.[11]

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[9] An exception was Beatrice Potter, whose articles of this period were written in a style typical of the later Fabian Essays.

[10] Quoted in the Nonconformist and Independent, I (New Series), December 9, 1880).

[11] "Hypocrisy of Philanthropy", the Spectator, LXXI (November 25, 1893), 743.

Much of this philanthropy had been sparked by the publication by the London Congregational Union of a thirty-two page pamphlet entitled "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London". Revealing some of the worst conditions of poverty in London among the 'sweated' children's trade of match-box making and among the women's trades of sewing and finishing, it caused a great deal of public interest. First published in the early fall of 1883, by the end of October some 30,000 copies had been sold, and a larger edition was planned. On October 25, the Nonconformist and Independent wrote:

> In the presence of the discouraging and saddening influence which the harrowing revelations, given in the "Bitter Cry of Out-Cast London", must exercise there is some little relief in the abundant evidence of the impression which they have produced on the public mind. The Pall Mall Gazette,[12] which has taken up the subject with a heartiness indicating real and intense feeling has been inundated with letters, and expresses the opinion, that for a long time there has been no subject that has so widely and powerfully aroused the sympathies of all classes of men.

The Pall Mall Gazette reprinted a number of the letters it received. The letters are interesting, not only because they reveal a wide difference of opinion regarding the sources of poverty and the measures necessary for their solution, but because several letters emphasized the need for government action, and expressed the conviction that private philanthropy was inadequate. The opinions of three religious leaders were printed: General Booth's answer to the "Bitter Cry" was the

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[12]The editor of the Pall Mall Gazette (1883-1889) was W. T. Stead, the son of a Congregationalist minister, who afterwards founded the Review of Reviews. He later focused Nonconformist opinion upon the laison between Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea. Accused of sensationalism, he nevertheless was responsible for the passing of at least one Parliamentary measure: the Criminal Law Amendment Bill.

conventional one - the root of the evil, he claimed, was not material, but moral. The Rev. Philip Peach, curate of St. Mark, Whitechapel, however, emphasized that clergymen would have to be social reformers as well as preachers; and the Rev. Harry Jones, writing from Bury St. Edmunds, recommended the establishment of a Royal Commission empowered to compel evidence.

The "Bitter Cry" was also the subject of a number of sermons in the metropolitan area of London. Four of those delivered by Congregationalist ministers were reviewed in the Nonconformist and Independent on October 25. Although the sermons reflect quite different views about the causes of the poverty in East London, they are alike in their assertion that all church members should feel a sense of personal responsibility toward the solution of the problem. Each speaker also chose to make his appeal highly emotional. Of the four sermons, one only laid the blame for poverty upon weakness of character, while two contained radical - if unspecific - demands for state intervention:

The Rev. Mark Wilks, speaking at Halloway Congregational Church, was reported by the Nonconformist as saying that the causes of poverty were economic as well as social and religious. Although he could not offer an opinion on the economic causes, he warned his audience that if the middle classes did not act upon the information revealed in the study, social revolt might result. Of the benefits which he felt would come from the publication of the "Bitter Cry", he mentioned the hightened feeling with which the interest of the lower classes would be regarded, and the renewed work which the churches would undertake among the masses.

The Rev. Dr. Allon of Union Chapel, Islington, pointed out that the conditions described could only be improved by changing individual character: "if you can produce character . . . decisive circumstances will do very little harm to a man: he will conquer the worst circumstances and improve the best." In conclusion, he said that the government should bring about "some reform" as far as overcrowding was concerned, and appealed for funds for the establishment of missions in three districts.

The Rev. Guinness Rogers, speaking at Clapham Congregational Church, stated that the question of political economy "ought not to be suffered to stand in the way of a great moral and social reform". Under the conditions described in the pamphlet there was "an imperative duty resting upon the State":

> Men might call it Socialism, or what they would; but something must be done, if not for the sake of Christian Charity, at least for the sake of social order and Government security. . . above all, Christian people must feel in this matter that there was in it something which spoke directly to them. . . [the law of Christianity] was self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, and we could not forget that law without injuring ourselves or break it without injuring Christianity.

The Rev. G. S. Reaney stated at a Stepney meeting that the evil of poverty was part of "the modern spirit of greed; of a political economy that recons man a machine." He also severely criticized the churches, which, he said, had been too busy with doctrine to take proper care of the poor. He emphasized the need for government action for the improvement of conditions:

> Better homes, better wages, bright circumstances, and earthly hopes, are their first head; and then we may tell them of a better life. . .

Finally, he warned that revolution might break out if no worthwhile action were taken.

Just over a month after the publication of the "Bitter Cry", the "Condition of the People" question was the subject of an address by Mr. Robert Griffen, on his inauguration as President of the Statistical Society. This speech, entitled "The Progress of the Working Classes in the Last Half Century",[13] offered a pleasant contrast to the stream of articles and reports which were being presented to the public by commissions and private individuals. Mr. Griffen used statistics to prove that the progress of the working classes in terms of real wages during the preceding half-century was at least equal to that of any other section of the community. Wages, for instance, had risen from thirty-eight to eighty-five per cent over those of the 1830's, while the price of commodities generally was the same. Further, the price of corn was much lower than before the abolition of the Corn Laws, and small luxuries such as tea, sugar, cocoa and coffee were much more easily obtained. Travelling had also been brought within the means of a whole new class and cheap newspapers, free libraries, and public elementary schools had opened up a new world to the masses of the population.

Mr. Griffen's speech was especially praised by Gladstone, who, in a preface written for the publication of the report, termed it the best possible answer to the teachings of Henry George. The editor of the Nonconformist and Independent (Nov. 29, 1883), however, found a

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[13]The Redpath Tracts (CLXXVII) (I) (1884).

great deal to criticize in the president's statistics, and felt he had proved too much - "the repulsive squalor, the miserable poverty, of at least half the population of London" had proved otherwise. Mr. Griffen, he felt, had failed to point out that it was the limited class of skilled workmen who had profited from the rise in wages, and that the increase in wages of the mass of unskilled labour was "altogether incommensurate with the demands of modern life." Also, although he had acknowledged the enormous rise in rents and in the price of meat, he did not mention that "these two items alone were enough to swallow up all the advantages that labour has obtained in the increase in wages." He had also failed to point out that inequality of wealth was much greater than earlier in the century, and that increased knowledge had made the masses "less disposed to contentment with an inequal distribution of the comforts of life." The editor concluded:

> And we cannot keep thinking, that had Mr. Griffen extended his inquiries beyond our own age, he would have found much reason for the dissatisfaction at present existing amongst the million with the distribution of wealth.

This editorial and the sermons quoted above illustrate the uneasiness and dissatisfaction felt by many Nonconformist leaders toward the physical and moral conditions of the masses brought to a head by the 'Bitter Cry'. As a direct consequence of the interest roused by the pamphlet a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the housing of the British working classes: its findings more than justified the statements made in the earlier report. A second result of the publication of the pamphlet was the formation of a Self-Aid Emigration Society, which, under the presidency of the Lord Mayor of London,

remained throughout the decade.

The attention of the churches had earlier been brought to the social question - in a most spectacular way - through the activity of William Booth's Christian Mission in London's East End. Booth's aim was to bring the gospel to the "lowest of the low", as a revolt against the failure of the other Nonconformist bodies in reaching the urban poor. In September of 1878 the mission's official paper, the Christian Mission Magazine, opened with the statement, "The Christian Mission has met in Congress to make War."[14] This war was to be waged against 'the Kingdom of the Devil': against evil in all its forms. To win required a closely-knit and obedient army of ardent men and women, working under a General Superintendent whose powers, granted for life, were to include the authority to confirm or set aside "the decisions and resolutions of any of the Official, Society, or other Meetings held throughout the Mission, which in his judgement may be in any way prejudicial to the object for which the Mission was first established."[15] The powers granted to the General were explained by Booth in the following way:

> If all are to act together all must act on one plan, and, therefore, all must act under one head. Twenty different heads . . . will produce twenty different plans with different methods of their accomplishment . . . Then what next? Differences of opinion, of feeling, of following, of action. Disagreement, confusion, separation, destruction.[16]

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[14]Harold Begbie, Life of William Booth (London: MacMillan, 1920) I, 437.

[15]Quoted verbatim from the Conference Journal in Begbie I, 391.

[16]Ibid. p. 447.

In its war against evil, the only weapon used by the Army in its early years was that of salvation through the miracle of conversion:

> There is a Hell . . . And into that Hell men are departing hour by hour . . . Can anything be done? Can they be stopped? Can drunkards, harlots, thieves, the outcasts of the Church and of society, be saved? . . . Ask multitudes of professing Christians and they will fear it is impossible. Ask the Salvationist, and the answer will be both from theory and experience, that the vilest and worst can be saved to the uttermost, for all things are possible to him that believeth.[17]

The publicity given to the spectacular nature of many of the revival meetings led to a debate in the press and within the churches about the worth of Booth's work. To some he was the "St. Francis of the Modern World"; to others a cheapener of religion, a "Frankenstein Pope", whose organization might prove a monster over which he might lose control. Some even feared that the Army might become the source of social revolt.[18] The growing antagonism of the public was sometimes expressed through the mob. Disturbances at meetings were frequent enough in 1881 for Booth to protest to the Metropolitan authorities - and later to the Home Secretary - of the refusal by the public to protect his movement: in some areas, he said, there seemed a tacit agreement between the police and the organizers of the riots. By March of 1882, in fact, the disturbances had reached large enough proportions to cause discussions in the Commons.[19]

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[17] Quoted verbatim from the Salvationist in Begbie, p. 441.

[18] This point of view was expressed by an "East London Watchman" in a pamphlet entitled "In Darkest England," published in 1890. In the Redpath Tracts, CXCVI (3) (1890).

[19] Begbie, II, pp. 18-22.

During the next two years spectacular reports of the activities of the Army continued to reach the public. In 1882 Booth leased "The Eagle", one of London's most notorious public-houses. There followed a legal case against him for not using the premises as a tavern, and, through a decision of the Court of Queen's Bench, the Army was forced to give up possession of the property.[20] Meanwhile, rumours began to spread that the hysteria roused in the meetings of the Army was leading, in many cases, to sexual immorality. In 1883 charges of immorality were made at the Church Convocation of Canterbury by the Bishops of Oxford and Hereford[21] and widely reported by the press. In 1884, the attempt of the Army to publicize the 'white slave' traffic was aided by an expose conducted by W. T. Stead in the Pall Mall Gazette. Stead's investigation, revealed in a series of articles called "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon", caused a public furor which reached its climax through the account of his purchase of a slum child, Eliza Armstrong, in London's East End. A master petition of some 393,000 signatures was presented to the House of Commons, requesting that the age of consent be raised to sixteen.[22] As a direct result of the petition and of the publicity gained through the Pall Mall articles, Parliament passed the Criminal Law Amendment Bill.

The fear on the part of many that the Army might become a politically radical body was groundless. So great was the emphasis placed upon the power of individual conversion by Booth that the social service wing of the Army was not organized until 1888. And In Darkest England,

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[20]Ibid. p. 13.

[21]Ibid. p. 18-22.

[22]Ibid. p. 43.

which contained his scheme for the regeneration of England's 'three million destitute', he made no mention of state aid. His biographer, Harold Begbie, constantly emphasized both his conservatism and lack of faith in political action:

> . . . he kept his eyes averted from the political problem, he never once was tempted to make himself the leader of revolution, the captain of an angry and avenging democracy; his whole emphasis was on religion, and the only war he understood, the only war for which he had the smallest inclination, was the war against sin . . . his public life was entirely circumscribed to a consistent and an undeviating attack upon the moral causes of suffering and poverty.[23]

Many passages of In Darkest England and the Way Out reveal Booth's emphasis upon individual regeneration rather than upon any programme for the improvement of the masses through legislation, and his distrust of any socialist movements. In an article on the relationship between the Army and the state Mrs. Booth wrote:

> The fact that there is a vast mass of our population entirely untouched by any civilizing or Christianizing influences, left to the mercy of socialist and infidel leaders, daily increasing in numbers and lawlessness, and fast learning the power of combination and organisation, is enough to alarm all thoughtful people as to the look-out ahead of us.[24]

But the work of this amazing organization in making known to the general public the immensity of the social problem was invaluable. By 1883 the circulation of its two publications, "The War Cry" and "Little Soldier", had reached 450,000 per week.[25] In Darkest England, written in 1890 and widely publicized by Stead in the Review of Reviews, sold over 200,000

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[23] Ibid. p. 23.

[24] "The Salvation Army in Relation to the Church and State" in the Redpath Tracts, CLXXVI (3) (1883).

[25] Ibid.

copies during its first year. The "new Ranter-Socialist" movement, so feared by Huxley, never, however, materialized: under the leadership of a man who has been called the greatest individualist of the century, the Army remained, throughout the 'nineties, wholly conservative in character.

Within the Church of England, meanwhile, another leader, very different from General Booth, was laying the foundations of a second most worthwhile movement. In 1872 the Rev. Samuel Barnett had come to work in St. Jude's, one of the worst slum areas in East London. Inspired by the belief that a Christian society could end the evil of poverty as it had previously brought about an end to slavery, Mr. Barnett had begun a careful 'advertisement of poverty' through articles to the Nineteenth Century, a pamphlet entitled "Practicable Socialism", and papers delivered at church conferences. In 1875 he went to spend 'eights/week' at Oxford, and later returned to the university many times. As the "unpaid professor of social philosophy" he kept undergraduates informed of the plight of the poor, and several came to help him during their summer vacations in his parish work at Whitechapel. Among these was a young graduate named Arnold Toynbee, who died in 1883, after working for the last eight years of his life among the people of East London.

Two years later, the Barnetts founded Toynbee Hall in his memory. A residence for some twenty men in Whitechapel, it was open to students of different religious denominations and political views. Writing in

1903, Mrs. Barnett looked back upon the eighteen years the Hall had been in existance, and assessed the gains which had been made. All residents had left behind something of value "... sometimes in the policy of the local boards, of which they have become members; . . . or by busying themselves with Boys' or Men's Clubs, classes, debates, conferences, discussions." "Out of such deep care", she added, "has grown intimate knowledge of their lives and industrial position, and from knowledge has come improvement in laws, conditions or administration."[26]

Other settlements, similar in many ways to Toynbee Hall, were soon founded by the Nonconformist colleges. Mansfield Settlement, for instance, was found by Percy Alden while he was a student at Mansfield College, Oxford. Later, the Robert Browning Settlement was founded in Walworth with Rev. F. Herbert Stead as warden, and supported by Nonconformist students from Cambridge.

Other settlements were established directly by Nonconformist bodies, without having any particular university affiliation: the Wesleyan-Methodist Church, for instance, established a settlement at Bermondsey, with branches for both men and women. Six others were established in connection with the Free Churches: one in Canning Town for women workers; the Ipswick Social Settlement, Lancashire College; the Settlement, Mancher; Women's Settlement, Middleslow; Craft House Settlement, Sheffield; and the United College Settlement in Bradford.[27]

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[26]Mrs. S. A. Barnett, "The Beginning of Toynbee Hall - A Reminiscence" the Nineteenth Century, LIII (February, 1903).

[27]John B. Paton, "Free Churches (of Great Britain) and Social Reform", The New Encyclopedia of Social Reform, p. 509.

Similarly, the "Forward Movement" of the Methodist Church established over forty missions in London and in other cities throughout Britain. The most famous of these was the West London Mission, founded by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, where full-time 'sisters' were employed for social service work.

In all of these university settlements and other church missions many young men and women lived among the poor, shared in their lives, and attempted to teach, through personal example, the Christian principle of brotherhood. But it was often the teachers who were themselves educated, for it was out of these missions that a large group of the educated came to understand and sympathize with the position of the poor. "We are witnessing a process of conversion," wrote the Principal of Mansfield College in 1893, "but it is of the missionaries at the unconscious hands of those they were sent to convert; and this is a process which may have the most momentous results for the future of society and religion in England."[28] The settlements, then, came to have a dual purpose: students came 'to learn of the poor' as well as to teach and work for them.

The effectiveness of the work of the various church missions in reaching the mass of the population of London is another matter. In his articles for the Nineteenth Century, Canon Barnett constantly stressed the immensity of the problem, and Charles Booth, in his famous report on "The Life and Labour of the People in London" bluntly stated that much mission work was totally ineffective in the face of the

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[28] A. M. Fairbairn, Religion in History and in Modern Life (New York, 1893) p. 4.

London environment. A contrast between the hopes of the founders of the university settlements and the work accomplished in at least one of them is revealed in the section of Booth's report dealing with the college missions of the Church of England. In 1899 he entered in his notebook the following description of the mission:

> Mission is rather hidden away. It is a basement church fully half underground, very ill-kept outside, and not smart within . . . I did not get there at night, but in the morning there were only about twenty young people of lower middle class, male and female (units 'got hold of'). There was a considerable body of clergy and choir.[29]

Despite its weaknesses, however, the University Settlement movement must be considered as one of the factors which prevented the growth of any wide-spread hostility between the mass of the poor and organized religion. And there were connected with the movement a minority of men and women among the educated who had a genuine sympathy toward the needs of the poor, and who kept the social problem before the universities and the churches during a period of tremendous importance in the growth of the Labour movement.

Closely allied to the church mission movement was the practise among Nonconformist ministers of giving week-day lectures to working men. This practise was revived in 1873 in Leeds, beginning in a church mission conducted by the Rev. W. H. Aitken, and generally spread to other churches. A number of the clergy and Nonconformist ministers of the city held services in some of the principal factories during the

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[29]Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London, Third Series:"Religious Influences" (London, 1903), VII, 92.

lunch period, and distributed hand-bills inviting the workers to the mission centre in the Town Hall. The movement also included visits by "lady speakers" to the women workers in the clothmills and clothers' work-rooms. By 1883 seventeen services a week were being conducted for women in Leeds; although most of the services were in small work-rooms, at one factory more than three hundred women attended.

One of the pioneers of "Half-Hours with Working Men" was the Rev. H. T. Smart, who felt that in a number of cities the artisans, as a class, were 'untouched by religion' since they felt unwanted in the large churches. Most of his work was tied with the Working Men's Institute of Gravel-Lane Chapel in Salford. Although he openly assigned the reasons for poverty in Salford in part at least to insufficient wages and unjust employers, by 1889 he was alarmed at the practise of blaming society for all social problems. In his report to the Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine (October, 1889) of his conferences with working men, he stated: "Poverty is said to be caused by selfishness, the cupidity, and the inhumanity of society; and none of it is traced to the indulgence, the shiftlessness and the misconduct of the individual."

A second preacher, the Congregationalist minister Dr. Joseph Parker, delivered a series of lectures in London throughout January and February of 1889. Held in the school-room of the City Temple, the talks were highly publicized, yet far from successful. Of the fourth lecture, on unemployment, the Nonconformist and Independent (February 14, 1889) reported:

> The Socialistic element was decidedly strong, some of the men, instead of answering Dr. Parker's questions, going out of the way to indulge in extravagant, not to say violent, language about capitalists, employers, landlords, and anyone unfortunate enough to be in a little better position than the speakers. When John Burns began to speak from the other end of the room, he could not be heard at first for applause and cries of "Bravo, Jack!" and other familiar and encouraging greetings.

Other lectures by Dr. Parker in the same series were also marred by his derogatory remarks about the Catechism of the Church of England and the institution of the Established Church. All in all, they revealed the wide gap in understanding which had developed between a number of the leading Nonconformist ministers and the working classes. The editor of the left-wing Christian Socialist (March, 1889) had this to say of the series:

> Dr. Joseph Parker's "Talks to Working Men" (they were called "STRAIGHT" talks at first until it was discovered that this was a decided misnomer) have not given much information to anyone. But it is hoped the "talks" of the men to Dr. Parker have been the means of adding to his knowledge on social questions. That wanted increasing badly."

Nine months later, however, when the Great Dock Strike aroused the sympathy of most Londoners, Dr. Parker was one of the ministers who attended a special meeting of Nonconformist leaders at the Memorial Hall to consider ways of helping the strikers.[30] Meanwhile, it was left to men like Canon Barnett, who were in intimate contact with the lives of the poor, to inform the middle and upper classes about the true nature of the social problem, and to bring to some members of the working-classes the assurance that they were not cut-off from the services of the Church.

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[30]See Chapter V, P. 106

It was inevitable that with the gathering of information about the extent of poverty in the great cities of Britain, and with the increase in contact between the churches and the working classes brought about through the various branches of Home Mission and University Settlement work, that the churches should attempt to find new ways of making their work among the masses more effective. This led naturally to conferences on social problems. The first of these was called in the spring of 1884, when representatives of the Free Churches of London met in the Exeter Hall to consider the question of poverty in the city. There were no practical decisions reached at that meeting, and no plans were made for any fund-raising campaign. It differed from previous conferences, however, in "its large conception of the duties of the Church towards the poor, as the latter are affected by injurious laws and social usages." Apparently the tone of some speeches went far beyond what the originators of the conference planned. Witness this account of the meeting by the editor of the Nonconformist and Independent (April 10, 1884):

> When . . . Mr. Price Hughes was adverting to the systematic depression of some classes in this country, in order that the privileged few might enjoy leisure for culture, the venerable Earl of Shaftesbury enquired uneasily whether it was necessary to introduce such questions there. But without endorsing every word spoken on that occasion, we will venture the opinion that no meeting to consider the poverty of London would have been adequate to the occasion if no note had been taken of the designed subjection of certain classes to others in this country, and of the necessity of putting and end to it. When Mr. Hughes proclaimed that 'the great need of our time was Christian Socialism,' he laid down a proposition very liable to be misunderstood, and quite certain to be prevented; but he also anounced a truth which every year will make more apparent.

The editor then went on to state his own position: the churches would, in his opinion, have to enlarge their view in relation to poverty. The ancient duty of "considering the poor" was no longer enough:

> The obligations of a Christian man in this self-governing country, where most of us vote, and where political power and responsibility are correlated, are not to be measured by maxims which were adjusted to the status of a Roman citizen under a Nero. The Churches have much to rectify in their attitude to the people, and we take it as a most hopeful sign that this Conference shows that they are beginning to awake to that fact. Let them preach the Gospel, but let them also remember that the measure of that Gospel is the whole character and manifestation of Christ - of Him as much in His equitable judgments and broad sympathies as in His holy precepts and His Divine power.

This editorial reveals that Mr. Miall's thinking was following the same pattern as that of a number of the more liberal churchmen of the same period. Shocked by what he had learned about both the depth and extent of poverty in London, he had come to feel that it was his duty, as a Christian, to help to eleviate the suffering of his 'neighbours'. But the question of how help could best be given led him inevitably to the discarding of private charity - acting alone - as hopelessly inadequate[31] and to the conclusion that state action was imperative. The form that state action should take, however, led him to a consideration of the organization of society itself; and his philanthropy, which he was unable to deny, forced him to a new questioning of economic and social problems. "But the study of these subjects", he wrote in this same editorial, "and the knowledge that results in Socialism - a word in which some good men see the direst evils foreshadowed or summed up."

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[31] In an editorial of November 1, 1883 he referred to the present remedies being practised to "a proposal to cure Cholera by the scattering of a little rose-water in a few infected buildings."

The Exeter Hall meeting was to be the first of a number of similar discussions at the annual meetings of the various Nonconformist denominations at the end of the decade.[32] At these meetings a deliberate attempt would be made to come to an understanding of the roots of poverty and to think out a system of economics "that would give the guidance which the commercial and the working men so much needed."[33]

The weaknesses in the attitude of the churches toward the social problem - and this is true of the Establishment and the large Nonconformist bodies alike - are obvious: there was the ingrained consciousness of class; an attitude of benevolent paternalism toward the poor; an over-emphasis upon the palliative power of the acquisition of the Christian virtues by the lower orders. But churchmen in general now recognized how great a problem poverty had become and were beginning to feel personally responsible for its solution. To the church, social questions were becoming "peculiarly its own, not to be wisely or justly determined without its help".[34] There remained the vital question of the need for a Christian system of economics. The discussion of this problem led church leaders into the field of political and economic theory, which, during the last two decades of the century, was a hotbed of conflicting ideas and philosophies.

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[32]For a full discussion of these meetings see Chapter IV.

[33]Rev. F. H. Stead, "The Need of a System of Christian Economics," quoted in the Nonconformist and Independent, IX (October 25, 1888).

[34]A. M. Fairbairn, "Christianity in the Nineteenth Century", in the Redpath Tracts, CLXXV (1883), 33.

III

THE SEARCH FOR A CHRISTIAN SYSTEM OF ECONOMICS

The intellectual world of the final quarter of the Nineteenth Century was an exciting and vital one. A completely new environment was being created through discoveries in the various fields of pure science, as well as through the improvements being made in mechanics and technology. The field of medicine, similarly, was being revolutionized by the establishment of the relationship between germs and disease and by the principle of immunization. A listing of a very few of the major discoveries and inventions will reveal how momentous these changes were: the decade between 1875 and 1885 saw the invention of the telephone and the phonograph, the introduction of the principle of the internal combustion engine, and the verification of the existence of radio waves; Pasteur's discovery of the principle of immunization against disease in 1881, was followed, during the next three years, by the discovery of the germs causing tuberculosis, diphtheria, and cholera; in 1892 the electron theory was announced by Hendrick Lorentz; in 1895 Marconi invented wireless telegraphy; and finally, two years before the end of the century, Pierre and Marie Curie isolated radium and studied the phenomenon of radioactivity.

Similarly, in the field of/the 'speculative' sciences many noteworthy works were appearing: Darwin's The Origin of the Species (1859) had been followed by Mendel's explanation of the mechanics of heredity; in The Descent of Man (1871) and The Expression of the Emotions in Man

and Animals (1873) Darwin raised the question of the evolution of man's mental powers and of his sense of morality; in the same year Walter Bagehot's Physics and Politics applied the ideas of natural selection to the preservation of social and political institutions; in 1890 Gabriel de Tarde published Laws of Imitation, the first book in the field of social psychology, and in 1895 Freud's first book on psychoanalysis appeared.

If we turn to the study of political philosophy, however, a sharp contrast is immediately evident. With the exception of Marx' Capital, no major works attacking the established doctrines of laissez-faire had appeared in Britain after the publication of John Stuart Mill's Principles of Political Economy (1848) and Liberty (1859) until the publication of Henry George's Progress and Poverty in the United States in 1879 and of the Fabian Essays in 1889. It seemed that British political and economic thought had become frozen within the concepts of the Manchester School. Nevertheless, as Britain was faced with greater competition for trade abroad, and as mass poverty was more recognized at home, the great weaknesses and contradictions within the laissez-faire system were beginning to be more apparent. Numerous critics, among them some of the leading writers and philosophers of the day, had warned about the lack of moral values inherent in the teachings of mid-century Liberalism. Its emphasis upon means rather than ends had secured a great increase in national wealth through maximum production and trade expansion: the question of the use of that wealth remained unanswered. The result was a hornet's nest of controversy as men debated the vital issues of the nature of the responsibility of the state to

its citizens, and of men of property to society at large.

This controversy was conducted within an atmosphere which was deeply religious in character.[1] Many of the leading protagonists were theologians or ardent churchmen, and the reading public was one nourished largely - until the 1880's almost exclusively - on works of a religious nature.[2] It was the interjection of this element which greatly complicated economic and political questions, as men attempted to identify one or another form of social organization with Christian principle.

Between September, 1890, and June, 1896, a remarkable series of articles by the well-known Anarchist, Prince Kropotkin, appeared in the Nineteenth Century. At first glance these articles would seem to be completely unrelated to the problems presented in this chapter; they do, however, illustrate to a marked degree one aspect of a new social philosophy which was beginning to challange the individualistic doctrines of Spencer and Darwin: In his search into the origins of life for an explanation of human society, Spencer had been convinced by the Darwinian theory that the movement of evolution was toward individualism; and in the constant reorganizing of nature into more intricate forms, he

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[1]The religious element in Victorian culture is emphasized by Christopher Dawson in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians (Londo: the British Broadcasting Corporation, 1949) p. 29.

[2]Refer R. C. K. Ensor, England, 1870-1912 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936) p. 159.

foresaw the final state of civilization itself as highly complicated and highly individualistic. In contrast, Henry Drummond stressed in his book, The Ascent of Man, that even in the lowest forms of life - beginning with the division of the photoplastic cell - there had been a struggle by the individual member for the continuation of the race. And Prince Kropotkin, in his 'Mutual Aid' articles, stressed the communal drives of lower animal societies, as well as those of savage and barbarian communities. Like Spencer, he drew upon the principles of physical evolution for an explanation of the ethical development of man; but, unlike Spencer, he concluded that mutual support among the members of a group - not individual struggle - had been the dominant factor in survival. According to this conception of evolution, then, the social and economic principles of laissez-faire were running contrary to the deepest instincts of humanity.

Kropotkin also criticized nineteenth century Christianity, which, he said, had discarded the emphasis which the early church had placed upon mutual sympathy and support and was preaching charity "which bears a character of inspiration from above, and, accordingly, implies a certain superiority of the giver upon the receiver."[3] True morality - resulting from the very needs of life in society - would, he believed, inevitably improve as the condition of social life improved. From this conception he developed his theory of anarchism: "Such a morality," he wrote in 1887, "needs no laws for its maintenance. It is

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[3]Prince Kropotkin, 'Mutual Aid Amongst Ourselves', the Nineteenth Century, XXXIX (June, 1896).

a natural growth favoured by the general sympathy which every advance toward a wider and higher morality finds in all fellow-men."[4] The future Socialist state, then, would make repressive government unnecessary.

Although Kropotkin's articles appeared in a leading periodical, his ideas never really took hold in Britain. There were other writers, however, - and their numbers included some of the leading philosophers of the day - who were seriously disturbed about the conditions of life in their country, and who were beginning to stir the conscience and imagination of their readers: As Slade Professor of the Fine Arts at Oxford, John Ruskin was an acknowledged expert on Gothic architecture. A respected writer in his own field, he turned his attention to social criticism. Under the influence of T. Carlyle,[5] he had rebelled against the materialism of Victorian England, emphasizing in his works that the worth of a society was to be found not primarily in its wealth, but in the quality of men it produced. During the 1880's he wrote a series of widely publicized articles for several leading periodicals. In 1880, for example, he carried on a debate in the Contemporary Review with the Bishop of Manchester on the question of usury. The bishop had taken the position that it was not immoral for him to invest in the London and North-Western Railway Company - a company "absolutely necessary for

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[4]The Nineteenth Century, XXI (August, 1887).

[5]Although Carlyle died in 1881, his writing was still widely read during the last quarter of the century. Many of the leaders of the 'eighties had been reared on his works.

the prosperity of the nation, and which finds remunerative employment for an immense number of Englishmen".[6] Ruskin's answer was unequivocal:

> But observe, my Lord . . . that whether you lend your money to provide an invalided population with crutches, stretchers, hearses, or the railroad accomodation which is so often synonymous with the three, the tax on the use of these, which constitutes the shareholder's dividend, is a permanent burden upon them, exacted by avarice, and by no means an aid granted by benevolence.[7]

Ruskin's interest in the society of Mediaeval Europe led him to attempt a revival of the guild system at Oxford, so that each worker might become a master craftsman. This was the beginning of the "St. George's Guild". He was also famous for his Fors Clavigera, the letters to workingmen which are said to have influenced Kier Hardie. In 1889, a year before his death, the Ruskin Reading Guild Journal appeared. The editor of the radical Christian Socialist (January, 1889) at that time commented on the part played by Ruskin in the rise of English Socialism:

> John Ruskin is not, and probably never will be a Socialist . . . . yet his works have undoubtedly had more to do with the making of Socialists in this country than the writings of any single Socialist author.

To Matthew Arnold, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, the England of his time was unspeakably ugly: a society in which materialism and bad taste were evidence of a deep-seated moral and spiritual disturbance. Writing in connection with the social problems of poverty in London, Arnold revealed his disgust in the following outburst:

> We call ourselves in the sublime and aspiring language of religion, Children of God - Children of God; it is an immense pretention and

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[6]The Bishop of Manchester and John Ruskin, "Usury", the Contemporary Review, XXXVII (February, 1880).

[7]Ibid.

> how are we to justify it? By the work which we do and the words which we speak - and the works which we, collective children of God, do, our grand centre of life, our city which we have builded for us to dwell in, is London.[8]

It was in the drawing out of the religious element at the expense of developing a sense of beauty and harmony, that Arnold found the fatal flaw of the English character. The Protestant churches, he felt, while helping man to subdue the 'grosser animalities' had starved the best in human nature. Liberalism, the political creed supported by the Nonconformist churches, had overemphasized political liberty and free trade at the expense of greater equality:

> Not until the need in man for expansion is better understood by Liberal statesmen - that it includes equality as well as political liberty and free trade - and is cared for by them, but cared for not singly and exorbitantly, but in union and proportion with the progress of man in conduct, and his growth in intellect and knowledge, and his nearer approach to beauty and manners, will Liberal government be secure.[9]

The nature of liberty and equality was also the preoccupation of T. H. Green, one of the leading political philosophers of the time. In his 'Principles of Political Obligation' Green stressed the necessity for a new emphasis upon more positive freedom: ". . . the mere removal of compulsion", he wrote ". . . is in itself no contribution to true freedom." In clarifying his position he drew upon illustrations from economic conditions in Britain:

> In the hurry of removing these restraints on free dealing between man and man, which have arisen partly perhaps from some confused idea of maintaining morality, but much more from the power of class

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[8]quoted in the Rev. W. Moore Ede, "The Attitude of the church to Some of the Social Problems of Town Life", (The Hulsean Lecture for 1895)in the Redpath Tracts, CCXVIII (1896), 4.

[9]Matthew Arnold, 'The Future of Liberalism', the Nineteenth Century (July, 1880), 18.

> interests, we have been apt to take too narrow a view of the range of persons - not one generation merely, but succeeding generations whose freedom ought to be taken into account, and of the conditions necessary to their freedom . . . Hence the massing of population without regard to conditions of health; unrestrained traffic in deleterious commodities; unlimited upgrowth of the class of hired labourers in particular industries which circumstances have suddenly stimulated, without any provision against the danger of an impoverished proletariat in following generations.[10]

The 'conditions necessary to freedom' received, then, a new emphasis in Green's philosophy. He also openly attacked the 'unrestrained landlordism' which had developed from English feudalism. He confined his attack on property, however, to property in land; and, as a fellow of Oxford, he lectured even in public in an academic and highly logical style which successfully hid the radicalism of much of his argument.

In the year of Green's death, however, an American orator made a tour of England, and drew crowds of people from all classes to hear him by the fervour with which he attacked the questions of poverty and land ownership. The impact of Henry George's message - that the moral implications of the system of private ownership were tremendous - can scarcely be overestimated. After listening to one of his lectures, George Bernard Shaw reported that "he spoke of Liberty, Justice, Natural Law, and other strange eighteenth century superstitions; and . . . he explained with great simplicity and sincerity the Creator who had gone completely out of fashion in London . ."[11]

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[10]Quoted in Adam B. Ulam, Philosophical Foundations of English Socialism, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1951) p. 38.

[11]Quoted in Godfrey Elton, England, Arise! (Lond.: J. Cape, 1931) p. 22.

During the years immediately following his tour of 1882, George's "Progress and Poverty" was widely read in Britain. Writing in 1889, Sydney Webb claimed that it was the enormous circulation of this book which "caused all the seething influences to crystallize into the popular socialist movement,"[12] and that its popularization of Ricardo's Law of Rent became the dominant note of the later Socialist party. To many others who were unprepared to accept the bulk of George's teaching, there seemed enough truth in his theories to cause them to question the moral basis of absolute ownership. In 1889, for instance, the editor of the Nonconformist and Independent defended George's position on absolute ownership in the following statement:

> There is no such thing as absolute ownership in this country, and never was; and when once it is recognised that the rights of the community are prior to those of the so-called "owner" something will have been done to prepare for a great and long-delayed act of justice . . . that increased value (caused by population growths) belongs on very principle of equity to the community which has created it, and should be appropriated by means of taxation. A suggestion of this kind is sometimes met by raising a cry of "confiscation". That word, however, is a two-edged sword which landlords would do well to leave where they find it.[13]

Despite the criticisms of the British industrial system made by her leading moralists and philosophers, however, and despite the widespread publication of material revealing the immensity of the social problem, the great bulk of ideas associated with the philosophy of laissez-faire were very slow in dying. The reasons for this are many.

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[12]Sydney Webb, "Socialism in England", American Economic Association Publication, Baltimore, in the Redpath Tracts, CXC(2) (1889), 18.

[13]The Nonconformist and Independent, X (April 25, 1889).

For most men, belief in the laissez-faire system rested in a deep-seated optimism - quite natural in the leading industrial nation of the day - that although a society which relied upon a system of free enterprize might suffer temporary set-backs, it would, in the long run, provide the greatest opportunity for all - wage-earners included. In 1873, for instance, Thomas Brassey, a Liberal M.P. and factory owner, deplored the recent strikes in South Wales:

> . . . the wage-earning classes may rest assured that, in the long run, and without the assistance of Trade Unions and the disasterous interruptions to their business occasioned by protracted strikes, the competition among employers, to secure the services of workmen, will infallibly lead to a rise of pay, proprotionate to the amount of profit, derived from the particular industry, with which they are connected.[14]

Trade Unionism continued to receive criticism from a number of writers, not only because unions acted in "restraint of trade", but because they were completely useless and even immoral when employed against current economic laws, which were identified with the "laws of nature". This point of view is illustrated by a particularly angry letter to The Times written by Sir Edmund Beckett, Bart:

> . . . what does it matter, in an inquiry as to the general and inevitable effects of unionism and strikes, whether they are the sole cause of the present depression? It is enough to prove that they do and must tend in that direction. And when many large firms declare that they have stopped their works on that account, and thousands of men are put out of work, and millions of money lost, by order of the unseen authority of the union, and whole districts pauperised thereby, the matter is past argument to all reasonable beings. . . . But it is time the truth should be told even to the British Workman, who has been so sprinkled with the rose-water of flattery for some years by politicians, and deluded by the general prosperity of the country, that it is hardly to be

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[14]Thomas Brassey, "Wages in 1873". Address read before the Social Science Association at Norwich, in Redpath Tracts CLI (1), (1873).

> wondered that he neither knows his own importance against the laws of nature nor is recognised by others as a proper object of censure when he does wrong.[15]

A further step was taken in the justification of the laissez-faire system through the concept of natural law as a reflection of the "Will of God" and of the "Divine Plan" which governed the universe. Thus, in repudiation of the theory that land belongs to mankind at large, Lord Bramwell made the following assertion:

> . . . we have that stupid - I know not what to call it - argument, assertion, that God has given some things, land in particular, to mankind at large . . . these people are wonderfully familiar with, and speak most jauntily of, God and His intention. I draw a totally different conclusion. I say, if God meant a general and not particular ownership, He would cause it, what? Would He not? Is He not able? Are the landowners too much for Him?[16]

Again, we find the same argument, more succinctly expressed, by the Duke of Argyll:

> . . . the solemn declaration that 'there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God' is a declaration which places on the firmest of all foundations the presumptive authority of very established organisation.[17]

The identification of absolute ownership with the working out of a "Divine Plan" led inevitably to the need for some moral justification for the prevalence of suffering and poverty connected with the practise of the laissez-faire system. To this problem, there were, as H. H. Champion put it, a "multitude of counsellors". From the nobility, from the conservative press, from the clergy of the Established

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[15]Sir Edmund Beckett, "Trades Unionism and its Results", in the Redpath Tracts, CLXII (1) (1878).

[16]Lord Bramwell, "Property", Nineteenth Century, XXVII (March, 1890).

[17]The Duke of Argyll,"Christian Socialism,"the Nineteenth Century, XXXVI (November, 1894).

Church as well as of the various Nonconformist sects, even from the ranks of the more liberal philosophers, came a flood of articles on the uses of poverty. A number of these arguments will be quoted, for they illustrate how deep was the attachment of most informed persons to the old principles, and how unanalytical their arguments were as a result. As late as 1895, for instance, Lord Norton wrote:

> If there were no poor there would be no scope for the highest virtue in life's training. All would be selfish and self-indulgent. The spirit of charity would die, the spirit of jealousy would prevail.[18]

Similarly, the editor of the Christian World, in an article on the Problem of the Poor, wrote:

> Its complete solution is impossible and in truth undesirable, for if there were no 'impotent folk' to heal, if there were no innocent poor to be kind to, Christians might lack exercise for that benevolence, that love of mercy, which is inseparably connected both with Christian duty and Christian joy.[19]

Finally, the following passage from an article in the Christian World by Henry Drummond - the author of The Greatest Thing in the World - was written, apparently, in complete sincerety:

> Recently he [Drummond] had read a novel in which all the people were made to dwell in marble mansions, were surrounded with every luxury, and lived the most aesthetic of lives. On putting the book down, he felt that it had one great want - the poor. There was no light and shade. That novel had made him feel what the poor are to the rich "It would be difficult to imagine what a great city like Glasgow would be like without the poor to call out their sympathy." "The older a man grew the more he understood that the great happiness in life consisted in making other people happy."[20]

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[18] Lord Norton, "Socialism", in the Redpath Tracts, CCXIII, (1895), 35.

[19] Quoted in: "The Highwayman's License", the Christian Socialist (September, 1888).

[20] Quoted in the Christian Socialist (May, 1888).

The existance of a very wealthy class in Britain was also justified not only on economic and cultural but also on moral and religious grounds. In 1867, the Rev. R. W. Dale, who was later to become an outspoken critic of irresponsible wealth, delivered a series of 'Week-Day Sermons', in which he included a section devoted to "The Perils and Uses of Rich Men". But for the existance of a large class of people "freed from the harassing cares of an incessant struggle for bread", he asserted, "the higher forms of civilization would perish." Further, "the rich man may use his intellect, his education, and the influence of his position to improve the laws of his country and to do whatever can be done by political means to advance the high interests of the nation." And finally,

> Multitudes will be honoured at the last day, because they endured the hardships of this life without impatience; but God wants some to receive His praise, because their love for Himself and their faith in things unseen were too strong to be mastered by all the pleasures and delights which this world can give.[21]

Such were the justifications found for the economic system practised at that time in Britain. Opposition to the ideas of Socialism came from all quarters; but once more emphasis was laid on two forms of attack: the Socialist doctrine was believed to be impractical, and it was believed to be immoral. To a writer like Lord Norton, for instance, the Socialist ideal was nothing more than a dream of an organization of society which could have no basis in reality:

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[21]R. W. Dale, Week-Day Sermons, (London: 1867) pp. 1-5.

> Christian Socialists do their cause much harm by tilting at the science of political economy as Don Quixote at a windmill.
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> They fancy economic law opposed to moral law, which they justly deem supreme. The ethical is truly a stranger motive than the materialist, both practically and rightfully, in Social improvement. But they mistake the facts of political economy for doctrines.
>
> As well might they quarrel with the physical laws of gravitation, and accuse it of suggesting suicide by self-precipitation.[22]

But Socialism was considered impractical not only because it went contrary to "natural law", but because it seemed altogether contrary to human nature:

> . . . the selfishness of human nature has yet proved too strong for Christian principles, but have we the very smallest reason to believe that, where Christianity has failed, Socialism would succeed? Can we imagine any ideal of human brotherhood nobler than is set before us by the Gospel, or stronger motives for embracing it than are there impressed upon mankind, or more earnest attempts to realize it than have actually been made, both in Europe and America, in commonwealths organised on a Christian model?[23]

Human selfishness, then, would destroy a Socialist state. The same view was expressed by Prof. Sidgwick in a speech delivered at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in which he stated that State Socialism could not survive since it could not appeal to the motive of self-interest:

> . . . the difficulty of finding any substitute for this motive, either as an impulsive or as a regulating force is a valid ground for rejecting all large schemes of reconstructing the social order on some other entirely different basis.[24]

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[22] Lord Norton, "Socialism", Redpath Tracts, CCXIII, (1895), 18.

[23] George C. Brodrich, "Democracy and Socialism", Nineteenth Century, XV (April, 1884).

[24] Reported in "The Scientists and Socialism", Christian Socialist, (Oct. 1888).

But this was not all. To many writers Socialism was immoral, running contrary to the Christian ideal of marriage and of the family. A good deal of publicity had been given to the practise of 'free love' in model Socialist communities, and the following quotation was chosen from many with a similar point of view:

> It is hardly to be gainsaid that certain Socialist communities, as certain Socialist bodies, have displayed a good deal of practical approval of laxity in this direction. Experimental marriages and free love have been tried as matters of necessary social experiment. But though the action of the extremists by itself perhaps need not be seriously feared, it assumes a certain importance when viewed in connection with certain opportunities or encouragements which the exigencies of the new State may provide. If the State undertake the upbringing of children, it may possibly wish to be consulted as to the marriages which lead to their production.[25]

The inditement of Socialism on moral rather than on economic or political grounds brought to men engaged in the controversy the habit of finding proof for their points of view through the interpretation of the Scriptures. During the 1880's a good number of writers and speakers chose 'chapter and verse' to suit their needs. In his address to the Christian Socialist Society in June, 1888, for instance, the Rev. Stewart Headlam had this to say:

> Jesus Christ was very much like a Trafalgar Square Socialist, and at last, like some of them, He came under the power of the law and suffered. Christ was tender to the poor, the victims of a bad social system . . . He came to found the kingdom of Heaven UPON EARTH. Nearly all His great works were "secular", - works for the good of men's bodies, works against hunger, disease and premature death.[26]

Many other examples might be given. But a good number of them are tedious and quite often unintelligent. William Rossiter, a member of

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[25]E. C. K. Gonner, "The Socialist State, its Nature, Aims, and Conditions", in Redpath Tracts, CCXIII (1), (1895), 122-128.

[26]The Christian Socialist (June, 1888).

the "Working Men's College", accurately criticized the position adopted by many men of both sides in the dispute when he wrote:

> The dignitary who occupied the pulpit at St. Paul's told his congregation, on the authority of Jesus Christ, that there would always be rich and poor . . . But he forgot to tell them that Jesus Christ also advised the rich to sell all they possess and give the proceeds to the poor. Christianity is a pick-and-choose sort of thing after all . . . a Christian can always find texts to suit his interests.[27]

Since Socialism had become a moral and religious question, it was inevitable that a Socialist movement should develop within the ranks of the churches themselves. The first formal organization appeared in mid-century in the Church of England. A later organization, the Christian Socialist Society, was non-denominational, drawing its membership from all Protestant churches. Although the movement passed through a number of stages - ranging from extreme radicalism to old-fashioned Evangelicalism - and seemed at times on the verge of extinction, this was prevented by the work of a hard core of extremely devoted men. It was this group which kept the question of the Church's relationship to the social problem before the church councils and, through newspapers, tracts and periodicals, before the general church membership and the public at large.

The originators of the modern Christian Socialist movement in England were Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley. Both were the sons of clergymen, and both were teachers: Maurice was Knightsbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, and Kingsley

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[27] William Rossiter, "Artisan Atheism", the Nineteenth Century, XXII, (July 1887).

was a Professor of History and author of The Water Babies and Alton Locke. Although Maurice chose the title 'Christian Socialism' as "the only title which will define our object, and will commit us at once to the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial Christians and the unchristian Socialists",[28] the movement seems to have more closely resembled the humanitarianism of the Evangelicals than true Socialism or radicalism. In their Tracts for Priests and People, for instance, they emphasized the loss to society through the dwarfing of human nature by poverty and ignorance, and stressed the necessity for the regeneration of society through education. With this aim in mind they founded the Working Men's College in 1854, and persuaded young Cambridge graduates to teach there during their spare time. Twelve years later, when he became Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, Maurice set to work to test the principles of co-operation. In defence of his social philosophy he had said to the council of King's College in Dec. 1851:

> We did not adopt the word "Christian" merely as a qualifying adjective. We believe that Christianity has the power of regenerating whatever it comes in contact with, of making that morally healthful and vigorous, which apart from it must be either mischievous or inefficient.[29]

Maurice died in 1872. Five years later a new Socialist society came into being - again within the Church of England. The new Guild of St. Matthew was, however, much more radical than the earlier organization had been, and its founder, Stewart Headlam, was also a member of the Fabian Society. In 1877 Headlam and George Sarson wrote a pamphlet entitled "The Church's Mission to the Upper Classes" for

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[28] Quoted in "Phases of Christian Socialism", the Christian Socialist (March, 1889).

the Church Congress, and in 1888 presented a memorial to the Pan Anglican Conference of Bishops. This memorial contained a statement that could not leave their position in doubt: "With the main contentions of the Socialist," they asserted, "the Christian is not only able but bound to agree."[30]

The Guild of St. Matthew never, however, reached the mass of the clergy. The report of the "Committee Appointed to Consider the Subject of the Church's Practical Work in Relation to Socialism" for the Lambeth Conference of 1888 emphasized that the methods of Socialism were not those of the Church, and that "spoliation or injustice in any form is abhorrent to her sentiment and belief."[31] In 1893 the number of church clergy in the Guild was only twenty-seven, and by 1895, out of a total membership of 364, ninety-seven were clergymen. Although the Guild lasted until 1910, its most profitable years were over by 1893.

A second organization, the Christian Social Union, was less strongly Socialist than the Guild, and proved, in the long run, much more influencial. Founded in June, 1889, by Canon Gore and Canon Scott Holland, its purpose was to "awaken the church to the social implications of the Creed and the Bible". By 1895 the Union numbered twenty-eight branches and had 2,600 members. In 1889 it published the Lux Mundi, a remarkable collection of essays which reached its tenth

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Quoted in Godfrey Elton, England Arise!, p. 190

[31] For a complete discussion of the official attitude of the Church of England to Socialism during the 1880's see Chap. IV.

edition within twelve months. While repudiating confiscation and violence and the materialism of continental Socialism, the Lux Mundi emphasized the Christian principles of brotherly love and personal duty:

> Christianity certainly is not pledged to uphold any particular form of property as such . . . But where Christian ethics steps in is, firstly, to show that property is secondary, not primary, a means and not an end. Thus, in so far as Socialism looks to the moral regeneration of society by a merely mechanical alteration of the distribution of the products of industry or of the mode of holding property, it has to be reminded that a change of heart and will is the only true starting point of moral improvement.
>
> And so, secondly, Christianity urges that IF there is private property, its true character as a trust shall be recognized, its rights respected and its attendant duties performed.[32]

Both the Guild and the Union were open only to members and clergy of the Church of England. Within the Nonconformist churches, meanwhile, a number of leading ministers had become involved in questions concerning social reform, and were beginning to search for new solutions to the old problems of poverty and ignorance.[33] The radical Society of Christian Socialists, which was undenominational, published the newspaper the Christian Socialist from 1883 to 1891. This monthly paper, priced at one penny, contained, in addition, to propagandist material, reviews of church conferences, and of sermons preached by well-known clergymen and leaders of all denominations. As a society it did not last, but its work was later taken over by the Christian Socialist League, with the Baptist preacher Dr. John Clifford as president. The Manifesto of the

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[32]Quoted in Rev. C. C. Binyon The Christian Socialist Movement In England, (Lond.: 1931) p. 156.

[33]For the official voice of the Nonconformist Churches toward Socialism during the 'eighties, see chap. IV.

Christian Socialist Society, published in the November, 1889 issue of its newspaper, reveals both the undenominational nature of the organization, and the thorough-going Socialism of its suggested programme. The full Manifesto is reproduced below:

Christian Socialist Society

Manifesto

> Christian Socialism aims at embodying the principles contained in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ in the industrial organization of Society.
>
> . . .
>
> The Society is independent of special theological views, and welcomes as members those who desire to subordinate their private advantage to the good of the commonwealth and of mankind, and to strive for the knowledge and the power of doing it in the best and highest manner possible.

Aims of the Society

> The union of men in a real universal brotherhood.
>
> Public control of Land and Capital to be gradually assumed, and the organization of Society on a basis of rightly directed industry and moral worth (rather than of wealth, privilege, and monopoly as at present); industry being understood to comprise both mental and manual work.
>
> The fullest possible development of the powers and faculties of each member of the community by the provision of a liberal education, physical, mental and industrial.
>
> The consequent ennobling of domestic and national life, and the promotion of enlarged peaceful relations with all men.

The Society of Christian Socialists preached, then, an undiluted Socialism which went far beyond the teachings of Kingsley and Maurice. In January, 1888, Alfred Howard wrote in an editorial ". . . we do not feel bound to limit our views of the subject [Socialism] to the horizon of Kingsley and Maurice nearly 40 years ago, when the latter could see no further than the co-operation of the working classes." The co-editor

of the paper wrote a second article in May, 1888, in which he once more defined the aims of the Society and strongly criticized the tendency which was developing among certain members of the clergy to call themselves Christian Socialists:

> His [Rev. M. Kaufmann's] views, as set forth in the book in question [Christian Socialism] are not ours, though they are held by many who persist in calling themselves Christian Socialists, without a shadow of title to the name; so we are bound in the most emphatic way to repudiate them, and to stigmatize the Christian Socialism he advocates, or rather endorses with his approval, as a hollow and pretentious sham . . .
>
> You may label them [the co-operative organizations advocated by Mr. Kaufmann] what you like, but all the same they will be nothing else but joint-stock companies of profit-seeking and dividend-grabbing capitalists.

The exasperation of the editor is understandable. The term Socialism had, in fact, ceased to have any specific meaning; when used with the adjective, 'Christian', it had also lost much of its original stigma. Those churchmen, therefore, who were beginning to question both the effectiveness and the morality of the laissez-faire system and who were re-studying the multitude of problems associated with industrialization, were in many cases advocating reforms which they considered Socialistic in character.

Within the new "Christian Socialist League", there was room for a number of men whose attention had been drawn to "the Social Problem", and whose attitude toward Christianity compelled them to apply religious values to political problems. But the ultimate aims of the League remained vague, its members uncommitted to any specific programme of reform. The very definition of the term 'Socialism' made by Dr. Clifford, the President of the League, as "an attempt, in part, to actualise the highest

social ideal, to hasten the dawn of the day, when there shall not be a poor man, an ignorant man, or a vicious man, or an oppressed man in the land"[34] seems little more than pious optimism. Similarly, Dr. Clifford's speech to the Baptist Union in 1888 - when he was Chairman of that body - in which he emphasized the duty of individual Christians to support these organizations which helped the oppressed, and the duty of the church , as a corporate body, to teach the moral and spiritual laws which should underlie industrial methods,[35] seems little different in viewpoint from that of any other liberal churchman of his time. The sincerity of Dr. Clifford's purpose, however, was revealed in the fall of the following year. In September, 1889 he was one of a group of ministers who convened the Nonconformist meeting which acted in support of the strikers at the London Docks.[36] As chairman of the Baptist Union, he continued to exert a strong liberal influence over that body. It is surprising how many of the leaders of the various Nonconformist churches were, toward the end of the decade, extremely sympathetic to the labouring classes, and how many insisted that social and economic questions he discussed at the May Meetings of their respective denominations. The official decisions of the churches, in consequence, reflected during the last years of the decade a preoccupation with social problems unknown in their history.

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[34] The Christian Socialist (April, 1889)

[35] For the reaction of the Christian Socialist to Dr. Clifford's address see p.

[36] A detailed study of the London Dock Strike is presented in Chapter V.

During the 'seventies and 'eighties the church was also faced with the growth of two forms of irreligion in Britain: that of agnosticism and militant athiesm on the one hand, and that of Positivism - the Religion of Humanity - on the other. Both of these movements stimulated a response within the churches: first, in a restatement and reaffirmation of Christian dogma; and second, in a re-emphasis upon the role of the church in society. For that reason the two movements - and the reaction of the Nonconformist churches to them - are briefly considered in this chapter.

Although most churchmen looked upon the doctrines of Positivism as anti-Christian, and although Dr. Congreve, the leader of the English Positivists, attacked the Worship of God as the "Religion of the Past", the Rev. of Llewelyn Davis' statement that Positivism was itself an outgrowth from Christianity was a rather generally accepted point of view:

> If development could consist in appropriating part of a doctrine and rejecting the rest, the system of Auguste Comte might well be called a development of Christianity. . . . Comtism, as a moral and religious system, apart from its philosophy of the sciences and of history, is a worship of humanity.[37]

Certainly most men found the Positivist emphasis upon a religion of humanity repulsive - Huxley stated that he would as soon worship the generalized conception of "a wilderness of apes". Nevertheless, the stress which the movement placed upon the social betterment of man had considerable influence upon the thinking of many church leaders. With reference to the general question of 'Christianity and Humanity', for instance, the Rev.

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[37]The Rev. J. L. Davies, "Comtist Positivism," the Contemporary Review, XXV (January, 1875).

Hugh Black studied, in retrospect, the manner in which Christianity had taken possession of other philosophies, including the Humanism of the Renaissance and the political and intellectual freedom of the Reformation. He then continued:

> It [Christianity] is taking the science and politics and social movements of today and will direct them to large and noble ends . . . . It is a principle of life and has its undying power in the present realization of God in the world. Its task is to make the secular life of man sacred, and to transform the natural into the spiritual.[38]

Similarly, although the Editor of the Nonconformist and Independent criticized the religion of humanity as a "religion of negation and denial", he found it difficult to condemn its principles entirely, particularly insofar as Positivism emphasized the possibilities for human betterment which would follow upon the advance of science. The Rev. S. Chadwick, Wesleyan Church, Clydebank, made the much more sweeping statement:

> The teaching of Jesus is so far from alien to this new demand Positivism that I claim for Him the best of everything in Positivism, Secularism, and Socialism. It was from Jesus they learned whatever righteousness they may have.[39]

A rather more detached position was taken by the Rev. James Martineau in an essay on "Modern Materialism" in the Contemporary Review (February, 1876) in which he emphasized that Positivism could never successfully challenge the truths of Christianity, since religion could not be explained away by atomic materialism. Methodist ministers, in particular, were quick to see in Positivism an outgrowth of some of the basic teachings of Christianity. Nor is this surprising: the core of Methodism

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[38]The Church Quarterly Review, LIII (January, 1902).

[39]Quoted in: the Christian Socialist (April, 1890).

had traditionally been its emphasis upon mutual sympathy and support; of all the branches of Nonconformity it had been the warmest and most human in its approach.

If Nonconformist ministers tended to look upon Positivism as a challenge which their churches could successfully meet, their reaction to the increase in atheism and agnosticism was very different. Their spread throughout all classes of society was described by one minister as a "propagative action like that of fever-germs on the spores of a fungus."[40] The strength of atheism among the working classes of the great cities had been known since the great census of 1851, and had been re-emphasized by such studies as the Bitter Cry. But the churches were now deeply concerned by the growth of atheism among the upper classes, and especially among prominent scientists and philosophers. For it appeared that John Morley expressed the views of a number of educated men when he wrote that those who agreed with him were not sceptics - "they positively, absolutely, and without reserve reject as false the whole system of objective propositions which make up the popular belief of the day, in one and all of its theological expression."[41] Other influential writers advocated Agnosticism (a term first coined by Huxley) as the only intelligent position to take in the face of the discoveries of modern science. Witness this Statement made by Huxley in the Fortnightly Review

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[40]Rev. J. L. Davies, "Church Prospects", The Contemporary Review, XXV (Jan. 1875).

[41]Ibid.

(November, 1874):

> Of all the senseless babble I have ever had occasion to read, the demonstration of those philosophers who undertake to tell us all about the nature of God would be the worst, if they were not surpassed by the still greater absurdities of the philosophers who try to prove that there is no God.

Indeed, so assertive were the criticisms of the avowed atheists among the philosophers, that churchmen welcomed any moderating in the viewpoint of the more celebrated among them. Thus, the editor of the Nonconformist and Independent (April 19, 1894) welcomed the fact that, although Herbert Spencer was "not a believer in Divine revelation . . . he is not a combative Agnostic, nor prone to assert that Christianity in its purity has been other than a blessing to mankind." And the Rev. J. Llewelyn Davies, in his review of Mill's essay on "Religion", stated that it represented progress in Mill's thinking from pure and simple atheism to that of a "rational sceptic," who described Christ as a man "charged with a special, express, and unique commission from God, to lead mankind to truth and virtue."[42]

It was, however, the highly-publicized "Bradlaugh Case" which brought the question of atheism into general public attention. Charles Bradlaugh was a member of parliament from Northampton, and, as an avowed atheist and propagandist lecturer for the Secularist Society, he had refused to take the Parliamentary oath. At least three times during his parliamentary career he had clashed with British church leaders. During March, 1883, when a bill for admitting atheists to parliament was introduced, more than 13,000 of the Church of England clergy appealed to the

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[42] Ibid.

Archbishop of Canterbury to prevent the bill from becoming law, and the Council of the Evangelical Churches called a special prayer-meeting to "prevent the Divine Name from being blotted out of the Statute Book." Not all Nonconformists, however, were agreed about the nature of the Parliamentary Oath. The editor of the Nonconformist, for instance, had condemned the meeting at Exeter Hall, and, in July of 1885, wrote that "to think of defending theism by the hollow form of a Parliamentary oath is a miserable and almost blasphemous superstition." He also added that Nonconformists were themselves hopelessly divided on the proposed legislation.

There were a few church leaders, certainly, who took the position that the decision reached in the 'Bradlaugh case' would decide the future of Christianity in the British Isles. In The Catholic Presbyterian (Vol. IV, July, 1880), we find the following statement by the editor:

> If we read our Bibles, we find that the very office of the civil magistrate is appointed by God. The State is God's creature, and the magistrate is God's servant. To allow men to occupy the office of the servant who deny the very existance of the Master, and to wield a power derived from God, and for which they are responsible to God, while they scorn the idea of there being such an existance, seems utterly incompatible. Admitting avowed atheists to Parliament would be the reductio ad absurdum of the principle of toleration.

Similarly, in a sermon entitled "God or Atheism for England?", preached at All Saints' Church, Weston-super-Mare, on Sunday, March 4th, 1883, Henry George Tomkins reported the appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and added his own relief that other Christian men "of various

communities are joining in defence of our common national allegiance to God."[43]

The interesting thing about the Bradlaugh case, however, is the use made of his career by some Nonconformist leaders to prove their case that irreligion and extreme emphasis on individualism go hand in hand. Following Bradlaugh's death in February, 1891, the Independent (February 6, 1891) endorsed the following statement from a memorial oration by the Rev. Charles A. Berry:

> Few things were more remarkable than Mr. Bradlaugh's vigorous opposition to everything of socialistic aim. He was one of the most marked individualists of this generation. It was a striking and suggestive circumstance that man like Leslie Stephen and Herbert Spencer occupied the same philosophic standpoint. . . it seemed to the preacher that this view of humanity was the logical outcome of the denial of God. Socialism was only another way of expressing brotherhood, and brotherhood was only reliable where fatherhood is recognized.

This is a far cry from the period - a scarce decade earlier - when the same editor was bedevelled by the question of the association between Socialism and the denial of God!

In this chapter we have been concerned with the interflow of ideas, and particularly with the penetration into the middle and upper labouring classes of the new ideas being put forward by the intellectual leaders of the 1880's. In the spread of ideas the Nonconformist press and pulpit played an extremely important part. Communication among the

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[43]Henry George Tompkins, "God or Atheism for England", Redpath Tracts, CLXXV(2), (1883).

major Nonconformist churches was remarkably close, and they constituted, on occasion, a united community within British society. It should be re-emphasized that Nonconformists, as a group, had no compunctions about introducing secular matters into their sermons and newspaper discussions. Indeed, the largest and most influencial of their newspapers, the Nonconformist and Independent had been founded in 1880 "as an unsectarian organ of Free Church principles" with the express purpose of informing the Nonconformist community of current national affairs as well as of their religious and ecclesiastical movements.

Why then, were many Nonconformists - together with many of the clergy and members of the Established Church - so slow in recognizing the inadvertent viciousness of many of their arguements regarding social questions? In an article entitled "The Slow Growth of Moral Influence in Politics" the Bishop of Hereford laid the cause in the lack of teaching of corporate values in the New Testament. As a result, he stated, there was now a lack of systematic teaching in Christian countries of the morality of public life:

> . . . the Divine Founder of our religion and His apostles deliberately confined their teaching to personal morals. Living as they did under a heathen Imperial government . . . they left the political world severely alone, content to sow the seeds of new principles, and a new spirit in individual hearts.
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> . . . National and international morality thus seem to lie on the outermost fringe of moral influence, and they rise in consequence very slowly.[44]

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[44] The Nineteenth Century, XLVIII (August, 1900).

During the 1880's political and economic ideas were, as we have mentioned, in a state of flux. Men were convinced that something was wrong with society, but could not agree about the methods to be used in bringing about a cure. As a consequence, economists, political scientists and moralists debated among one another in a grand "merry-go-'round" search for solutions. Although undiluted Socialism attracted very few, there is every evidence that during the decade the British reading public developed a maturity of outlook on social questions which was altogether lacking earlier: many of the old clichés were no longer accepted, and many of the sacred concepts associated with mid-century Liberalism were now brushed aside. This change in attitude is reflected in the sermons of preachers such as R. W. Dale and, to a remarkable degree, in the editorials of C. S. Miall of the Nonconformist and Independent. If we return to the statement made at the beginning of the chapter - that the controversy over social and political problems took place in an atmosphere deeply religious in character - the tremendous importance of the inter-penetration of economic and political philosophy and religion becomes evident. It must be considered as one of the cohesive forces within British society which prevented the Labour movement from becoming, during its formative period, a purely class struggle and which resulted in the growth of the "Liberal Socialism'[45] which would give a unique character to the emerging Labour Party.

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[45]Refer David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, Penguin Books, p. 151.

IV

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE CHURCHES IN THE EIGHTEEN-EIGHTIES

The widespread discussion of social problems during the 1880's was reflected in the official stand taken by the various churches in Britain toward the question of the relationship between Christianity and the political and economic organization of society, and toward those political issues which might affect that relationship. The position of the Roman Catholic Church, as revealed through the Encyclical Letters and the official publications of the church, was unequivocal; that of the Church of England, however, was much less clear, and much more complicated. The 'May Meetings' of the larger denominations within the Nonconformist churches revealed a similarity of approach to the social problem which reflected a higher degree of community among them than one would ordinarily expect. And while there is real evidence from their conference discussions that as challanging questions were brought up for discussion a rift was developing between the liberal and conservative groups within each denomination, many of the more radical members of all of the principal sects developed a unity of purpose and outlook which gave their movement much more influence than it might otherwise have had.[1]

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[1]The Christian Socialist League, for instance, was non-denominational: its president was Dr. Clifford, chairman of the Baptist Union in 1888; its vice-president, J. B. Wallace, was a Congregationalist minister who founded the Brotherhood Church.

In her study of England in the Eighteen-Eighties, Helen Lynd quoted from the work of the Catholic scholar William J. Kerby, who, she felt, had clearly stated the system of values underlying the policy of the Roman Catholic Church in England during this period. The extract (p. 301) seems worthy of reproduction here:

> Social questions present themselves to the Church's mind primarily in the form of error or sin, to be met and conquered by truth and virtue. Hence her first impulse to social reform directs her, not so much to social institutions as to correction of minds by true teaching and reforming hearts by instilling virtue. When, however, erroneous teaching distorts human relations and is incorporated into the customs, constitutions and laws of a time; when injustice and oppression are due to these erroneous views the Church will enter directly the field of reform to protect morality, justice, human dignity, and the family . . . The Church is conservative in such effort . . . she is inclined to recognize an established order as sanctioned, since all ethical relations are exprest in its true terms . . . she is slow to advance against institutions as such.

In his Encyclical Letter of 1891 Pope Leo XIII considered at length the position of the Roman Catholic Church in relation to Socialism, and this will be considered in detail in Chapter VII. During the eighties the Papacy was relatively silent on economic and social questions; in his Encyclical of 1882, however, the Pope expressed his fear that a deep hostility was growing to the constitution of socity in both Europe and America. This was caused, he stated, by the selfishness of the age: the root of Socialism lay in the pursuit of comfort, pleasure and luxury by the majority of men. In the Tablet, a weekly newspaper of the Catholic Church, there is clear evidence of the emphasis placed by the Church upon the achievement of social reform through the improvement of individual character rather than through the changing of institutions. In April of 1881, for instance, the Tablet had this to

say about the relationship between the Catholic church and the civil power:

> The Church is tied to no one form of civil polity . . . All she teaches is that the civil government is a divine ordinance and obedience to lawful rulers a Christian duty, and this teaching applies equally whether the form of government is monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy.[2]

Despite the church's intimate contact with the extremely poor in Ireland and the great cities of England - by 1903 there were 200,000 Catholics in London alone - the leaders of the Catholic Church in Britain remained silent on the political implications of the social problem. Father Barry and Cardinal Manning were notable exceptions: and there is evidence that toward the end of his life Manning was dismayed by the contrast between the work of the Evangelicals within the Established Church and the general indifference of English Catholics.[3]

By the 1880's the Church of England embraced a remarkable variety of attitudes and beliefs. During the century, however, two quite separate - and often conflicting - streams of thought had developed: a High Church movement stressing ecclesiasticism - exemplified by the Oxford movement of the thirties - and at times stressing the privileged position of the Church; and the Evangelical movement, stressing humanitarianism, and the need on the part of the church to give its active help toward relieving the suffering of mankind. Both of these

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[2]Quoted in Helen Lynd, England in the Eighteen-'Eighties (London: Oxford University Press, 1945) p. 303.

[3]Ibid. p. 307.

movements are reflected in the points of view expressed through the discussions at the various conferences of the Church during the eighties, and account for an apparent inconsistency between the lectures and discussions at the various local councils and the final decisions reached at the Lambeth Conferences.

The Christian Socialist movement within the Church had begun during the 1850's, with the work of Kingsley and Maurice.[4] In 1877 the radical Guild of St. Matthew had been formed, and in the same year its founder, Stewart Headlam, had prepared the pamphlet, "The Church's Mission to the Upper Classes" for the Church Congress. The subject of Socialism was not, then, an unfamiliar one to the Established Church. Nevertheless, the chief topics introduced at official church conferences throughout the early years of the 1880's were those connected with doctrine; and in those years of predominately Liberal rule the Church was also preoccupied with the preservation of the Establishment. During the last two years of the decade, however, the question of the Church's relationship to the social problem became a subject for study and debate at many of the Church Conferences at both the local and national levels. In July, 1888, for instance, the Southport Evangelical Conference heard a paper on 'Christianity and Socialism' by the Rev. J. F. Kitto, vicar of St. Martin's-in-the-fields, London. In his address Mr. Kitto traced socialist demands to "the meanness, selfishness, and cold inconsiderateness of many among the wealthy" and stated

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[4]The growth of the Christian Socialist movement is discussed more fully in Chapter III.

that, insofar as Socialism sought the amelioration of the race it was at one with Christianity. He looked to the Church to teach "a clearer recognition of personal and individual responsibility" and "a truer conception of the duties of stewardship and of spirit." Only these, he stressed, could repair "some of the mischief and remove some of the discontent at work among us."[5]

In the same year, Socialism was also one of the subjects under discussion at the Southwell, Chester, and Lichfield Diocesan Conferences, and at the York Diocesan Conference the Labour question was fully considered through discussion of Co-operation, Socialism, the Sweating System, and Wages. Similarly, at the Annual Church Congress, the "persistent increase of crippling poverty in civilized Europe side by side with the growth of wealth and luxury"[6] was referred to by the Bishop of Manchester in his opening address as a question to which the attention of the Congress might well be directed.

The Church's interest in social questions reached its culmination in a report by the 'Committee Appointed to Consider the Subject of the Church's Practical Work in Relation to Socialism' at the Lambeth Conference of 1888. The report emphasized that the Church could help to bring about practical reform through improved education, through the establishment of penny banks and workmen's guilds, through"inducing capitalists to admit their workmen to profit-sharing" and by "teaching artisans how to make co-operative production successful." However, it

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[5]Reported verbation from the Liverpool Courier in the Christian Socialist (July, 1888).

[6]Ibid. (November, 1888).

also stressed that the methods of Socialism were not those of the Church, that "spoliation or injustice in any form is abhorrent to her sentiment and belief." The report continued:

> But, after all, the best help is self-help. More even than increase of income, and security of deposit, thrift and self-restraint are the necessary elements of material prosperity.[7]

The great weakness of the report was, of course, its unrealistic attitude toward the condition of the great mass of unskilled labour. For this the recommendations of the committee were strongly criticized by the editor of the Christian Socialist (September, 1888), who described them as 'piecemeal and patchwork', entirely unsuited to meet the needs of the majority of labourers who were working at subsistence wages.

By the end of 1888, then, although individual lecturers had been given the opportunity to introduce the question of Socialism, and although committees of the Church had inquired into the various aspects of the problems associated with industrialization, there is no evidence that the chief leaders of the Church looked upon Socialism as other than 'a system of spoliation,' a dangerous movement which the Church could help to overcome by encouraging those self-help organizations which would deminish discontent, and by increasing "the feeling of brotherly interest between class and class."[8]

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[7]"Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider the Subject of the Church's Practical Work in Relation to Socialism - The Lambeth Conference of 1888", in The Five Lambeth Conferences, compiled by R. T. Davidson (London, 1920), pp. 137, 140.

[8]Davidson, The Five Lambeth Conferences, p. 140.

In July of 1889, however, the Central Diocesan Council heard a paper in which Canon Furse flatly denied that poverty was of divine ordination: "To survey human history with the presumption that poverty was a premanent institution in the Kingdom of Christ was, in his judgement, unwarrantable."[9] Canon Furse also stressed that while the Socialist aimed to get justice for the poor, the church had doled out charity, "which is inferior in worth to justice." In conclusion, he asked for a more just and uncompromising attitude on the part of the church in dealing with the producers of wealth - irrespective of persons.

Before the meeting of the Diocesan Conferences of 1889, the London Dock Strike had occurred, winning many persons of the middle and upper classes to a position of sympathy with the plight of unskilled labour. A new sense of urgency is therefore reflected at the Conferences: at the Durham Conference, for instance, the Rev. M. Moore Ede,[10] Rector of Gateshead, defined the aims and objects of Socialism, and stated that these were in accordance with the principles of justice and righteousness.. At the Carlisie Conference, the Rev. Llewellyn Davis appealed to the clergy not to remain aloof from the growing moral consciousness of the times. At Leicester, the Bishop of Peterborough delivered a speech on "Christianity and Socialism" in which he emphasized that a Christian state, carrying out literally

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[9] The Christian Socialist (July, 1889).

[10] Canon Ede's convictions about the position the Church should adopt on the social problem were admirably expressed in the 'Hulsean Lecture' for 1895.

the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, "could not exist a week together". He did, however, support the following resolution moved by Canon Vaughn:

> That the attitude of the Church towards Socialism ought to be one of sympathy, in so far as it is a protest against existing social evils and an effort towards the establishment of a less unequal economic order: of criticism, especially in so far as its estimate of human nature is a false one, and its social ideal false in consequence; of practical counter-action, by bearing more faithful witness by teaching and example to the Christian doctrine of property, as being essentially a trust to be wisely administered and not a possession to be selfishly enjoyed.[11]

Similarly, the Committee of Bishops of the Lambeth Conference approved the aim of Socialism "to unite labour and the instruments of labour;" while deprecating any idea of the immediate nationalization of land and capital.

The official attitude of the Established Church continued, therefore, to be one of sympathy toward those suffering from poverty, and toward worthwhile legislation to improve their condition. But the duty of the Church, as an institution, was to counter-act the growth of the Socialist movement by teaching Christian attitudes of social responsibility to those who were holders of property. Evangelicalism, as expressed through the various Christian Socialist organizations, remained confined largely to those ranks of the clergy who were in close touch with poverty: Canon Barnett, for instance, kept the social problem before the churches and universities through his articles and work at Toynbee

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[11] "Resolution moved by Canon Vaughn and Seconded by Bishop Magee at the Diocesan Conference at Leicester, on Oct. 25th., 1889", the Christian Socialist (December, 1889).

Hall; and Canon Scott Holland, the founder of the Christian Social Union, brought the question of Socialism before the Lambeth Conference of 1889. But while they and their followers were given a hearing at the Diocesan conferences, their work did not receive the official endorsement of the Church: in the case of Canon Barnett, indeed, The Official Year Book of the Church of England refused to sanction his activity.[12] Of Barnett's relationship to the Church Harold Spender later wrote:

> His Church failed to follow or understand. They were shocked by the breadth of his appeal . . . Some of them did their best to drive him, as they drove Wesley, outside their fold. It was only his own great patience . . . that kept him within.[13]

The conservative influence of the Church was exerted through its wealth, its tie with the ruling classes, its domination over the two great universities. There were very few men of radical views among its higher clergy. Bishop Westcott - whose paper delivered to the Church Council at Hull in 1890 is reviewed in Chapter VII - was one of a small group to whom the social question was the most important religious question of the time. To many outside the Church, unfortunately, the open hostility of Dr. Temple, the Bishop of London, toward the workers during the London Dock strike,[14] was much more indicative of the attitude of the upper clergy of the Church.

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[12] Lynd, op. cit. p. 323

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid. p. 327

The Church of Scotland began its investigation into social conditions as a result of an inquiry into the serious problem of the "lapsed masses." In the Assembly of 1885 a committee was appointed to consider "what means might be devised for improving the physical and social conditions of the lapsed, and for promoting their spiritual interests." In 1887, in its report to the General Assembly, the committee made three main suggestions: first, that the Church might cooperate with sanitary and other authorities to have the laws on the subject of sanitation fully carried out, and if possible improved by new acts; that in "all attempts to improve the physical condition of this class, they should be encouraged to co-operate in their own material improvement, and that any benevolent scheme for the improvement of their dwellings should be made, eventually at least, self-supporting"; secondly, that encouragement should be given to establishment of temperance cafes, reading-rooms, and lecturships and that "the whole influence of the Church be brought to bear upon the diminution of intemperance as among the most deadly enemies of the working man"; and finally, that an organization of members of the Church be formed as parish workers among the lapsed. The committee also suggested that a query be sent down to discover the opinion of kirk-sessions.[15]

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[15]"Special Report by the Committee on Christian Life and Work to the Venerable the General Assembly, 1887" in Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland for the Year 1887 (Edinburgh) pp. 442-4.

In 1888 the assembly asked the presbyteries to report to the Home Mission Committee the conclusions to which they had come, and the practical measures they had adopted. At the Assembly of 1889 these reports were read by the Committee; two of these, from the larger cities of Scotland, are noteworthy: The Edinburgh Presbytery pointed out the need for consolidating sanitary legislation:

> The chief defect of sanitary legislation at present is its fragmentary and premissive nature. Scattered through many Acts and amended Acts in which sections are repealed or amended, it is difficult to interpret its meaning. This arose from necessity at the time, but what is needed now is a Consolidation Act, applicable to the whole country, and giving greater compulsory and penal powers to the authorities in carrying out the legislative requirements.[16]

The report went on to suggest that the Church should help to educate public opinion, and support legislation which would improve the physical condition of the people.

The Glasgow Presbytery felt that the Church should help in bringing to light the facts connected with the physical surroundings of the poor, in arousing public interest with reference to these facts, and of suggesting remedial measures. For this reason a commission had been appointed to enquire into the housing of the poor in Glasgow, to gather and classify facts, and to suggest remedies.

After hearing the evidence reported from the presbyteries, the Assembly of 1889 issued a pastoral letter and appointed a Special Committee on Non-Church-Going, with instructions to advise the Assembly as to future action. This committee became very active in the collection of information on social conditions in the various presbyteries

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[16] "Reports on Non-Church-Going: Reports by Presbyteries", in Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland for the Year 1889, p. 403.

of the Church. Its final report, issued in 1896, will be considered in detail in Chapter VII.

The sincerity of the General Assembly is apparent from its general discussions and from the reports of the various committees, while some of the suggestions offered for the improvement of social conditions were both worthwhile and practical. There is, however, very clear evidence of two weaknesses: a tendency toward paternalism - despite the insistence by a number of speakers that all schemes should eventually pay their own way or even show profit; and a seemingly exaggerated emphasis upon the need for moral and spiritual regeneration which would, of itself, result in the improvement of the physical environment of the masses. The real work of the Church, re-emphasized by its General Assembly, was to win back the lapsed masses through "a more faithful use of its existing agencies", and "faithful visitation" by ministers and elders, aided by the active promotion of temperance, and the initiation of worthwhile social legislation.[17]

Within the chief denominations of the Nonconformist churches, meanwhile, the social question had become, by the end of the decade, one of the major problems discussed at the annual meetings. This is especially true of the Congregational Church, which, as the church of the middle class, had previously taken the lead in opposition to the position of privilege held by the Establishment. As a church supported

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[17]"Reports on Non-Church-Going," in Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland for the Year 1889. p. 443.

largely by merchants and traders it had, however, become almost completely identified with the laissez-faire principles of mid-century Liberalism. To many of its members and clergy, Socialism seemed to offer a double threat: first, to the individual freedom which they valued so highly; and secondly, to the workings of an economy whose laws they identified as fundamental to "the laws of nature."

It is not surprising, however, that the members of a denomination which had published the "Bitter Cry", whose chief newspaper, the Nonconformist and Independent, had constantly kept the problems connected with poverty before its readers, and which now had a growing group of ministers who were becoming more and more critical of the measures taken by the public in the relief of social distress, should want the whole question examined at its annual meetings. Nevertheless, discussions were more or less spasmodic until 1888: At the annual meeting of 1882, for instance, the chairman made no mention of social action: his full preoccupation, in that address, was with the question of religious freedom and the need for disestablishment.[18]

The address of Dr. Fairbairn, the chairman of the Union for the following year, however, was almost wholly concerned with the loss of the masses from the influence of the church, which he explained as a result of the indifference of churchmen to their problems:

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[18]The Rev. J. A. MacJadgen, "The Ideal of the Christian Church", in the Redpath Tracts. CLXXIII(2) (1882).

> His [the worker's] battle for his rights and liberties has been mainly his own; while many of the men who have helped him have been loudly anti-Christian, too few Christian men have dared to apply religion to his problems and his conflicts.[19]

The Church, he felt, ought to feel that social questions were "peculiarly its own, not to be wisely or justly determined without its help."[20] While leading the Congregational Church into the social field, however, Dr. Fairbairn did not question whether his church would be forced to participate in the struggle between the classes. Although he strongly criticized the Established Church for the way in which it had "pauperized the labourer" and "divided the aristocracy . . . from the people of England",[21] and although he pictured Christ's dismay at the evils of the industrial world, he did not suggest any specific action which the Church might take. He emphasized, rather, the enormous problems involved in healing a society where factories and workshops had created uniformity, had repressed individuality, and had blighted the culture of the home.

This same vagueness was apparent in the resolution adopted by the Union the following spring. It was justified, however, by the editor of the Nonconformist and Independent (May 21, 1885) in the following statement:

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[19]A. M. Fairbairn, "Christianity in the Nineteenth Century", in the Redpath Tracts, CLXXV (1883), 33.

[20]Ibid. p. 51.

[21]Ibid. p. 49.

> Looking at the evils that afflict large classes of the community on the one hand, and at the undeveloped condition of public opinion as to social questions on the other, the sympathetic but very vague and general, resolution adopted on Friday, is probably as good a one as had any chance of acceptance.

Confusion in thought, rather than lack of sympathy or initiative, seems to explain the absence of a specific programme: the old methods of helping the poor now seemed virtually useless; but there were no ready-made schemes - other than co-operatives and emigration societies - to which the church could give its support. Dr. Fairbairn had emphasized that with the growth in influence of the speculative sciences philosophers had grown more pessimistic about the condition of man. In a similar frame of mind the editor of the Nonconformist and Independent (May 21, 1885) wrote:

> To do this work, [of social reform] however, it will want more light than is at present available. Forty years ago it was pretty generally believed that all the truth about the prosperity of the industrial classes might be summed up in one or two propositions or maxims. Self-interest, acting under due enlightenment was sufficient to save us all. Then came the Socialists, Christian or otherwise, anathematising the gospel of gain, and preaching disinterested and paternal co-operation. At the end of a long and diversified experience, we find ourselves pretty much where we were before . . . yet we are still without any short simple formulae, the acceptance of which would be a ground of united action.

This, perhaps, explains the absence of a discussion of social questions at the Unions of 1886 and 1887. Of the May meetings of all the Dissenting Bodies in 1888 the editor of the Christian Socialist (June, 1888) wrote:

> At every one of these meetings, where men spoke who were moved apparently by deep religious feeling, the social question was studiously, and with the greatest care avoided . . . At none,. . . was there the slightest suggestion of any proposal whereby the social condition of the poor would be bettered.

In the fall of 1888, however, the tone of the discussions at a sectional meeting of the Congregational Union at Nottingham was completely changed. As the result of a paper read by the Rev. F. H. Stead entitled, "The Need of a System of Christian Economics", a resolution was passed inviting the Committee of the Union to hold a meeting the following year when "land, manufacturers, and all other matters connected with the subject would be discussed."[22] In the fall of 1889, the Congregational Union of England and Wales met at Hull. In accordance with the resolution and Mr. Stead's appeal that the church should think out a system of economics "that would give the guidance which the commercial and the working men so much needed,"[23] Mr. A. Spicer was invited to introduce the subject of Christian Economics with Reference to the Land Question and to lead the discussion. The following letter, written to the editor of the Nonconformist and Independent (September 12, 1889) illustrates the reaction of some members of the Union to the speaker and his subject:

> It is difficult to imagine how anyone can contend that the questions connected with the ownership and occupation of land are suitable for discussion at the meetings of the Congregational Union . . . By inviting a gentleman [Mr. A. Spicer] to lead this discussion who, however high his character, is known to be identified with Henry George and his doctrines, the Union has, at least, admitted that these doctrines are proper for consideration in a great Christian assembly . . . It would be easy to show that confiscation and dishonesty are impolitic as well as wrong; but I trust and believe that the members of the Congregational Union, when they see where they are going will be quite satisfied with the ethical side of the question.

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[22]"Labour and its Remuneration", the Nonconformist and Independent, IX (October 25, 1888).

[23]Ibid.

We can imagine the discomfiture of this writer when, in 1890, the Report of the Special Committee on Social Questions, known as the Swansea Manifesto, was accepted, and when, in 1893, Mr. Spicer was made Chairman of the Union. But these events were in the future, sparked by the great Dock Strike in London, which occurred shortly after the Union meeting of 1889.

Meanwhile, the other Nonconformist bodies had also begun discussions of the social problem at their church conferences. The chairman of the Baptist Union in 1888 was Dr. Clifford, an active member of the "Christian Socialist League". In his opening address, Dr. Clifford emphasized that social questions were the most important problems faced by the churches, and stressed the importance of the rule of the Church in "building a new city of God."[24] In so doing, Christians individually should work to protect the oppressed and the weak, while the churches, as organized bodies, would devote themselves to teaching the moral and spiritual laws which should underlie industrial methods. It was this address, along with that of Mr. Stead to the Congregational Union, which prompted the editor of the Christian Socialist (November, 1888) to suggest that the churches were about to take a new departure:

> The two addresses we have referred to . . . were more Christian (and more Christian because more Socialistic) than anything we have seen for a long time that has emanated from either of these bodies.

In June of 1889, the Christian Socialist again reported satisfaction at the agenda of the Baptist Union:

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[24] "A Social Gospel", the Nonconformist and Independent, IX (October 4, 1888).

> The discussion on profit-sharing at the Baptist Union last month, which was opened by a paper by Mr. T. W. Bushill, is satisfactory as showing still further how seriously the Churches are taking up the labour question.

Within the Methodist Church, similarly, the 'Forward Movement' led by Hugh Price Hughes continued to press for the more active participation of the church in the social field. As editor of the Methodist Times Hughes had, throughout the decade, called the attention of his church to social evils, and through his work with the London Methodist Mission had helped to found an institution which quickly became one of the strongest elements of Methodism. The 'Forward Movement' stressed political action, and urged Methodists to remember the tradition of service in the church founded by Wesley:

> . . . the State may legitimately be required to afford some protection . . . to the victims of its own neglect and mistakes. We are keenly alive to the perils of State action. But we are ready to run some risk in a determined effort to secure at least that the poor shall have a chance of possessing healthy bodies and . . . to place within the reach of every one of them the highest educational development of which they are capable . . .[25]

In November of 1889 the editor of the Christian Socialist once more reported the preoccupation of the churches with the social problem:

> Socialism is in the air! Church congresses have cautiously fingered it; the "Forward Movement" of Wesleyanism is moving fast towards it; and even the capitalistic bourgeoisie of the Congregational Union has recently discussed the pros and cons of Land Nationalisation.

But how much did these discussions by the official bodies of the churches really mean? Perhaps the following statement made by the editor of the Christian Socialist in November, 1888 in his review of

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[25]the Methodist Times (November 4, 1886), quoted in Lynd, op. cit. p. 338.

the speeches of Mr. Stead and Dr. Clifford before the Congregational and Baptist Unions reveals the real significance of the official attention of the churches to social questions:

> Our only fear is whether . . . these bodies as a whole will follow on the lines so honestly and boldly laid down for them . . . for, as even Dr. Parker said quite lately . . . "always allowing for exceptions, the pulpit is the paid slave of respectable society." However, the fact remains that these things have some how or other got said, printed and circulated and cannot now be recalled.

The discussions added considerably, then, to the creation of a new climate of opinion within the ranks of the Nonconformist churches. It should be remembered that the leaders of the group who called themselves Christian Socialists were among the most respected and influential members of the Nonconformist community. The more practical results of their work would be reflected in the Swansea Manifesto of 1890 and in the Bradford Conference of 1891.

V

THE LONDON DOCK STRIKE

With the wide publicity given to the condition of the urban masses during the 1880's, a number of writers warned of the possibility of a prolonged period of social unrest in Britain, and of the introduction, within the labour movement, of Syndicalism on the Continental pattern. At its outset, the great London Dock Strike seemed to many to signal such a beginning. But the happenings of the next month were altogether different from those expected; the strike became, in fact, an instrument which not only strengthened the position of unskilled workers throughout Britain, but which greatly heightened sympathy between the middle, upper-labouring and labouring classes, and increased the force of the modified Socialism which was taking root in Britain, and which would become the basis for the later Labour Party. For these reasons, it is worthwhile to review the events of the strike in detail, noting particularly the part played by public opinion in determing its success.

When poverty has reached a certain depth, its graduations cease to matter. For this reason there is something ridiculous in any statistical comparison of the standard of living of the very poor in any two periods of history.[1] From reports such as Charles Booth's study of London poverty in 1886, however, it is safe to assume that as far as the masses of unskilled workers in the great cities of Britain were concern-

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[1]See p.26 for a review of Robert Griffin's speech as President of the Statistical Society in 1883 on the progress of the working classes.

ed, their condition was, if anything, worse toward the end of the century than in the 1850's. Since this statement runs contrary to the statistical evidence of wages and prices accepted by most historians of the period, it needs explanation: with the possible exception of the Factory and Mines Acts, the bulk of the social legislation passed was not being enforced - there were still sweated industries; further, the draining of population from rural to industrial areas had resulted in a higher concentration of population within the slums of the great cities, and these areas had enlarged with the decay of older city districts: the resulting deplorable condition of housing alone, wiped out the advantages which workers had gained through lowered prices in many basic commodities; and finally, the great mass of British labour was now cut off from the class of skilled artisans, whose condition had greatly improved between 1850 and 1870.

It was the artisan class which had benefited by the growth of trade unionism after 1850. Unions took the form of Amalgamated Societies, which were uninterested in political action of benefit to labour as a whole, and which depended upon their strength in collective bargaining to make strike action unnecessary. Their dues were heavy, and a large proportion of their income was set aside for the provision of sickness and unemployment. The great mass of unskilled labour - representing some ninety percent of the workers - remained outside the unions. During the sixties and seventies there had been several attempts at their unionization, the most successful being the National Agricultural Labourers' Union, organized by Joseph Arch, a labourer and Methodist preacher,

which numbered 100,000 members by 1872. These attempts, however, were destroyed by the great trade depression of the later seventies. By 1881 the National Union had a membership of only 15,000, and the other unions which survived became little more than Friendly Societies.[2]

With the 1880's, however, a small group of men - most of them ardent Socialists - began the organization of unskilled workers, and before the end of the decade most of the basic industries were unionized: The Miners Federation, the General Union of Textile Workers, the Steel Smelters Union, the National Sailors and Firemen's Union - all these were formed before 1888. In London, Ben Tillett, a docker in the Port of London, formed the Tea Operatives and General Labourers' Union, and began the unionization of the transport workers. Finally, in early 1889 the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union was formed by Will Thorne, aided by other leaders including John Burns and Tom Mann. This "New Unionism" was completely different from the older Friendly Societies or unions for skilled workers - it was open to all labourers within the industries listed; usually there was no provision for a sickness or superannuation fund; and its leaders had one aim only - to use the unions as a striking force to secure higher wages and improved conditions of work for their members:

> They set out to build up Unions which would be able to appeal to the entire working class, and to follow a fighting policy based on class solidarity and directed, by implication at least, against the capitalist system itself. In short, the "New" Unions were in intention Socialist, in the sense that the leaders, while they concentrated

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[2] In Norfolk the National Union remained strong enough to help Joseph Arch in his election to Parliament in 1885 - one year after the agricultural workers had been granted the franchise.

> on immediate "bread and butter" issues had as their further objective a definitely Socialist policy of class organisation and action.[3]

The first group of unskilled workers to go on strike were the London Match Girls. In 1888 they appealed to the general public through Mrs. Annie Besant's journal the Link, and although without money or union backing, won their demands for increased wages. Then, in the summer of 1889, Will Thorne's Gasworkers' Union demanded a reduction in working hours from a twelve to an eight-hour day, and the gas companies conceded. This success encouraged the workers at the London Docks, where, on August 14, a small strike had broken out at the West India Dock. It was this strike, almost totally ignored by the British press during its first week, which paralyzed the port of London for a full month, which at one time even threatened a general strike of all London labour, and which, after gaining favourable support from the general public, was brought to an end only after almost complete concessions were made to the demands of the men. This victory had far-reaching effects both inside the labour movement and without, and was all the more remarkable because the London Dockers, of all unskilled labourers, were the most despised.

The condition of workers at the Docks had been brought to the attention of the public in the previous year, when a Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System had interviewed a number

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[3]G. D. H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement, Lond., II, 162.

of reliable workers, and had also received evidence from Ben Tillett, the Secretary of the Dock Labourers' Union. Much of the evidence received from the owners and managers contradicted that of the workers, and because such a high percentage of casual labour was employed, it was impossible for the committee to arrive at an accurate estimation of either the total number of men employed at the docks, or their average weekly earnings. Tillett estimated the number of labourers seeking employment at approximately 100,000, but others felt that 50,000 would be a more accurate figure. The average pay earned depended largely on luck, and might have been anywhere from 3 s to 7 s per week.

Twenty years before dock labouring had been a regular trade; dockers worked about ten months of the year, and average earnings were from 20 s to 25 s per week. However, the replacement of sailing vessels by steamers had made necessary the immediate unloading of ships, and the introduction of the use of hydraulic machinery had cut down further the number of men needed. At the same time, general increased unemployment swelled the number of casual labourers; sailors, painters and agricultural labourers as well as those temporarily unemployed from the various skilled trades joined the ranks of those waiting at the dock gates:

> As there may be a call for hands at any moment, the men who are always on the spot get the best chance. . . The news that ships are due in any particular dock soon spreads, and the gates of the dock are beseiged in the morning. . . "The first thing," says a witness [before the Select Committee] just fresh from the struggle, "is this, that there is a chain put up right across the entrance to the dock, and the contractors are on one side of the chain and the men the other. You can imagine for a moment from 1,500 to 2,000 men crowded together, the front men forced up against the chain; the back men are climbing over the heads of those in front, and the contractor behind the chain is picking out the men, generally his own favourites. I myself have had eight or ten men upon my shoulders and my head, and I have been hurt several times in a struggle for

employment like that." [4]

The condition of the men was further described to the Commission by Colonel Birt, general manager of the Millwall Dock:

> . . . it is these poor unfortunate fellows, most of whom are without physical strength - the very costume in which they present themselves prevents them doing any work . . . There are men who are reduced to the direst poverty, men with every disposition to work well, but without the strength to do it.[5]

Ben Tillett reported that some seventy percent of the dockers were married, and that their wives and children contributed to their support. The condition of the unmarried was, therefore, worse:

> The reason for these [the unmarried] being able to live at all is that there is some kind of communism among them; for they help each other. It is the practise among them to pay for each other's beds, or 'dosses', when the man has not had a turn of work.[6]

The strike began on August 14, 1889. The principal demand of the dockers was for a raise in pay from fivepence to sixpence an hour, and from sixpence to eightpence for overtime. Other demands included the provisions that no men should be taken on for less than four hours' work, that men should be engaged only twice a day at fixed hours, and that the practise of letting out work to middlemen or "contractors" should be abolished or pay increased.

The strike spread quickly: on August 17 two unions of stevedors - the aristocracy of dock labour - left their work in sympathy with the

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[4] The Times (August 29, 1889).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

dockers; within two weeks Tillett reported that more than 100,000 men were on strike and there were rumours that the movement might spread to the men in the gas works and to railway servants and tram-men. By August 22 the dock directors had placarded the whole district with posters offering permanent employment to 1,000 men at 20 s per week. On the following day it was reported that forty "black legs" sent from Liverpool were induced to join the strike. From that time on large numbers of pickets were on duty in the strike area, and there were frequent letters to the press from supposed victims of intimidation. However, in the Commons, the Secretary of State for the Home Department stated that there was nothing which could be described as "an organized system of intimidation". He did feel that there was a considerable amount of pressure exercised, which in some cases "passed into acts of intimidation but of a nature very difficult for the police to interfere with."[7]

The impact of the strike upon the people of London, and - through the newspapers - upon the whole country can hardly be exaggerated. John Burns - the leader and chief organizer of the strike - later said that the strike passed through three stages: "the first was of contempt; the second was one of pity; and the third was one of respect and admiration." Each day monster processions through the heart of the city brought many Londoners for the first time into contact with members of "the submerged fifth" - men whose condition had been made known through the work of

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[7] The Times (August 27, 1889).

the commissions, surveys, and missions of the previous decade and whom many regarded with dread. Ben Tillett reported that 50,000 men were taken to the city on August 22, and 80,000 on the following day. The Times of August 24 gave this description of the procession:

> There were eight brass bands and many drum and fife bands, and a large number of flags and banners. There was also a large addition of allegorical groups in wagons, representing the coal heavers, the ship scrapers, the hydraulic men and the lightermen, who brought some boats all fully manned. Represented in the procession, too, were the dockers' children, thin and ill-clad, contrasted with sweaters' children, well fed, plump, and well dressed. Then there were illustrations of the sweater's well supplied dinners, contrasted with the bones, offal, and garbage which were represented as forming the dockers' dinners. The procession, which marched eight abreast and numbered over 70,000, after a long walk through the city, returned to the West India Docks. A great mass meeting was then held.

Very soon, however, the public began to realize that the processions were not dangerous, and that although Burns was an avowed Socialist, he was not using the strike to arouse the country to violence. On August 27 The Times reported:

> So far . . . there appears to have been nothing in the behavior of the men to justify the alarm felt in many quarters, the men's conduct having been of the most ordinary description, though they have not refrained from holding out threats to non-strikers.

The following day The Times reported that public sympathy was as yet "a young and delicate plant". By August 30, however, it printed a notice issued by twelve clergymen in the East End, expressing their conviction that the labourers were actuated by a sense of "undue oppression and injustice," that their strike was not the result of revolutionary agitation, and that help from the general public should not be withheld.

Toward the end of August, there began an almost general criticism in the press of the refusal of the directors to come to terms with the strikers; there was also criticism in some papers of their pervious mismanagement - which had resulted in low-dividend returns to their stock-holders. The situation was further complicated by the open rift which broke out between Mr. Norwood, the Chairman of the Dock Committee, and Mr. Sutherland, representing the ship owners, who now began to press for the right to unload their own vessels and hire their own labour. Their demand was backed by the editor of The Times, who stated on August 31 that the directors were themselves to blaim for being exposed to the hostility of both their workmen and their customers:

> They have encouraged the growth of this wretched and shiftless class by their daily distribution haphazard of an uncertain quantity of employment, . . . the relations established between them and these casual labourers are of a thoroughly demoralizing and unhuman kind.
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> Their insistance upon their right to unload vessels, instead of leaving shipowners to do their own work in their own way, is at the bottom of the whole mischief.

A third group, the wharfingers, were apparently divided in their attitude: by September 3, thirty of the leading owners felt that the directors had given all reasonable concessions to the men; another group, headed by Mr. Lafone, were highly critical of the directors, supported the dockers in their demands, and wanted the lightermen to return to work to unload the vessels in midstream or at the wharves.

By the end of August the Dock directors found themselves waging a three-way battle against their workers, consumers, and wharf owners, and discovered that general public opinion - even to the conservative press - had gone against them. On the final Saturday of the month

further pressure was put upon them by the issuing of a manifesto by the strike committee addressed to all London workers. In the manifesto it was reported that the directors had once more refused the demands of the men for a raise in pay and for abolition of the contract system, and an appeal was made to all city workers not to return to their jobs on the following Monday unless the demands of the dockers were conceded. The manifesto was a mistake, and was withdrawn early Sunday morning. The directors then took the position that the strike movement was weakening, and, in retaliation, announced on the following Wednesday that they could not recognize the representative capacity of Burns and Tillett at any further negotiations.

During the last week in August deputations were sent from the London Chamber of Commerce and from the London Liberal Association asking the directorate to submit the issues to arbitration. In reply, its chairman, Mr. C. M. Norwood, stated that he felt the strike was no longer one between the committee and its casual labourers, but a prearranged conflict between organized labour and capital. Finally, on August 31, Cardinal Manning and the Acting Lord Mayor of London visited the Dock Committee in the hope of persuading the directors to concede to "the reasonable demands" of the men. This meeting was unsuccessful, but the Cardinal, whose brother and father had each been chairman of one of the dock companies, continued to work for a peaceful settlement of the strike. On Sunday, September 1, he invited Burns to a conference, and completely won the leader's confidence:

> The Cardinal's quiet, calm demeanour much impressed him [Burns], and his heart and soul appeared to be interested in the strike, and in the suffering of the dock labourers. . . After he left the Cardinal he was animated with far greater hope that the strike would soon be brought to a speedy and successful conclusion.[8]

On September 4 it was announced that the Lord Mayor, then travelling in Scotland, was expected to return to London on the following Friday. On his return the mayor, accompanied by the Bishop of London and Cardinal Manning, met with Sydney Buxton, Burns and Tillett, and, in the evening of the same day, with the directors. These conferences were, apparently, completely unsuccessful. On the following Tuesday, September 10, it was reported that the Lord Mayor had left the city, and that the Bishop of London had returned to Wales. On the same day, the Cardinal, "undeterred by previous rebuff and failure, undismayed by the retreat of the Lord Mayor and the Bishop of London",[9] met with Burns and Champion. On the following Friday there were final conferences, and the directors at last conceded the men's principal demands, including the raise in pay to sixpence an hour. During the previous week they had, in fact, agreed to the raise, but only on condition that it would become effective in the following January. To this concession the men were adamant in their refusal; it was the Cardinal's alternate suggestion that the increase should begin on November 4 that finally received the support of both sides. The men agreed to return to work on the following Monday - a full month after the strike had first broken out.

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[8]Burns' speech was reported in The Times, (September 3, 1889.)

[9]The Times (September 11, 1889).

For the trade unions, the success of the strike marked the beginning of a new era. The first and expected result was the inrush of new members to both the unions for the skilled and those for the unskilled. The 'New' Unionism, based on the conception of working-class solidarity, was also greatly strengthened: the General Railway Workers' Union was created to challange the older and conservative Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, for the first time general labourers were included within the membership of the Gasworkers' Union, and the first organization of 'white-collar' workers occurred, with the beginning of unions for shop assistants. No accurate figures exist for estimating Trade Union strength before 1892; however, it is probable that during this period the number of members enrolled nearly doubled.[10] The success of the 'New' Unionism was reflected in a rise in wages - probably as much as 10 percent for most trades, with a corresponding rise in prices of only 4 percent.[11]

The labour movement was also strengthened by the creation of Trade Councils in a number of smaller centres; these were vital in establishing communication between unions, and were also used by labour leaders as distribution points for Socialist propaganda. Since most of the aims of the leaders of the 'New' unions could be carried through

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[10] G. D. H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement, London, 11, 163.

[11] Ibid.

only by political action, they had for some time supported the formation of a working-men's party. The success of the strikes of 1889 and the capture of the Trades Union Congress by the 'new' unionism, now made the creation of a Labour Party a clear possibility.

The success of the Dock Strike was due to a number of factors. Outside financial support - as we shall see - assured that the men would not be broken through hunger. The fact that the directors of the dock companies had lost the confidence of the shippers and a number of the wharf owners meant that they could not stand up indefinitely to the demands of the men. The rift between the directors and the shipowners was fully revealed in the correspondence between Mr. Norwood and Mr. Sutherland published in The Times, and resulted in the washing of a lot of dirty linen in public: the proof of poor management which the letters contained lost the directors the support of the conservative press, and gave weight to the argument that all labour demands could not be met with refusal simply by management's appeal to economic laws.

It was not, then, a healthy organization which the men had set themselves to break. Nevertheless, the strikers had achieved almost the impossible, and the cocky English labourer, acting under leadership in which he apparently had full confidence, has never been seen to better advantage. Despite outside support, the records of witnesses to the strike clearly reveal that the docker and his family did suffer greatly from hunger during the last weeks of the strike, and at many

times it was reported that the men could not possibly hold out. There is no doubt that Burns' leadership explains much of the men's courage and restraint, but from the first the tone of the strike was less that of an industrial war than of a religious crusade. Since the police could not have hoped to hold so large a mob in check, the following extract from a speech made by Burns to the strikers on August 27 and quoted verbatim in The Times, must have done much to win over public opinion to the side of the dockers:

> Now, lads, off with you to the West India Docks to join the great procession. But before we go let us tell the police that we are coming up the Commercial-road, Leadenhall-street, Eastcheap, and then back to the West India Docks, where the great mass meeting will be held. Now, lads, are you going to be as patient as you have been? ("Yes.") As orderly as you have been? (Shouts of "Yes.") Are you going to be your own police? ("Yes".) Then now march off five deep past the dock companies' offices, and keep on the left hand side of the street.

The small role played by politics during the strike is surprising when it is remembered that the most influential of the leaders - Mann, Burns and Champion - were ardent Socialists. Their attitude was expressed by Burns in a speech to the strikers on September 2:

> The present strike was not one in which religion, politics, or class differences would enter . . . It was not a war. It was a revolt on the part of the labourers against the misery of the past with a desire to have something like enjoyment in the future.[12]

It was this deliberate confinement of the aims of the strike to the issues involved at the beginning which goes far toward explaining the support which the men gained both from the general public and from such an influential leader as Cardinal Manning. Their leaders often explained to the strikers what the gain in wages would mean:

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[12] The Times (September 2, 1889).

> This strike would give a penny an hour more to the working man, and nobody but a working man knew what that meant. It meant at least 2 s a week more, and that would give two rooms where they only had one, or a whole room where now they only had half a room.[13]

At the same time, there is every evidence that both leaders and men realized that the dock strike was a test case. Burns again and again mentioned the help which the strikers were receiving from other unions, and particularly from the workers of Australia. At a mass meeting on August 23 he emphasized that "they (the dockers) had begun a revolution now in the cause of labour - a peaceful one, which would not cease." At the end of the strike, he delivered a victory speech, in which he stated, in not too exaggerated a way, what the results of the strike would mean both for the labourers themselves, and to men's attitude toward political economy generally:

> They [the dockers] now knew the advantages of combination, and must not be slow to receive them . . . The strike also proved unmistakably that the lowest of workmen, degraded though they might be, had still a great deal of manhood left in them . . . At one time he despaired of the middle classes of England helping or even thinking of their condition. Educated men had played on their poverty and lack of combination in the past. There was now a feeling of remorse on their part at the poverty their selfishness had involved. Unrestricted competition had now received a death-blow at the hand of the dock labourer.[14]

At the beginning of the strike very little financial help came from outside, either from the general public or from the unions for skilled workers. Later, as opinion moved in support of the strikers a

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[13] Speech of Burns quoted in The Times (August 29, 1889).

[14] The Times (September 14, 1889).

wave of public giving resulted, including a number of surprising individual donations. On August 30, for instance, a correspondent for The Times reported: "Mr. Burns read out to his wife and Mrs. Aveling the list of cheques and post-office orders received, and I was careful to notice that some of them, amounting to considerable sums, came from very well-known people." The Times writer did not quote names. On September 5, however, the Nonconformist and Independent reported that Mrs. Gladstone had visited the docks on the previous Monday afternoon. After being taken to the soup kitchen operated by the Christ Church Oxford Mission, she left a cheque for the relief of the strikers, from herself and the Rev. Harry Drew. The newspapers also reported that Mr. Lafone, the managing director of Butler's Wharf, who had opposed the dock directors' stand in refusing a raise, continued to pay his labourers who were out on strike in sympathy with the dockers. It was from the labour unions of Australia, however, that the greatest help came: during the last two weeks of the strike they sent a total of £30,000, virtually ensuring its success. Other approximate figures are as follows £4,000 from British unions, £13,000 by the general public, and £100 from foreign sympathizers.

The amounts listed above do not include the behind-the-scenes help given to the families of the strikers by relief organizations set up by a number of the churches in the dock areas.[15] On August 29 the

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[15]On August 26 The Times reported that General Booth had opened his cheap food and shelter depot on the previous day to supply food at half-price. Two days later the paper stated that the Army had given breakfast to 5,000, and by September 3 reported that the numbers receiving soup and bread had increased to 7,000 or 8,000.

editor of the Nonconformist and Independent reported:

> Rev. James Chadburn and his workers are feeding five hundred children daily; a thousand are daily fed at the Great Assembly Hall; the Salvation Army depots are supplying food at half-price, and other agencies are at work.

In the same issue the following letter was printed by the editor:

> Sir,- Will you permit me to appeal, through your columns, on behalf of the starving dock labourers and their wives and children? In our immediate district (Canning Town and Victoria Docks) the distress is already great . . . to those who for years have constantly visited the homes of the dock labourer the more secret misery of wives and children is laid bare . . .
>
> Any sums entrusted to our care will be carefully and promptly utilised in this district, chiefly in supplying food to the families of the men.
>
> Yours very truly,
>
> F. W. Newland
>
> Congregational Church, Canning Town E.,
> Aug. 26.

The only help given to the dockers during the early days of the strike by the Nonconformist denominations was through separate church bodies in the area of the Docks and through individual subscriptions. After making what the Christian Socialist called "an eleventh-hour" decision to take more effective steps toward helping the strikers, a group of high-ranking Nonconformist ministers convened a meeting in the Memorial Hall for Monday evening, September 9.[16] Early in this meeting a resolution was made to continue the contributions of the Nonconformist churches during the period following the strike, and to enter into

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[16]The circular convening the meeting was signed by Rev. D. Clifford, Rev. D. Hannay, Rev. S. H. Booth, Rev. J. T. Wigner, Rev. Andrew Mearns, Rev. F. B. Meyer, and Rev. J. Chadburn.

correspondence with individual churches for increased help. Although Dr. Hannay, the chairman, said it was not his purpose to pass judgement on either of the parties involved in the strike, the speeches which followed the resolution for help soon made it clear that the audience was, on the whole, highly critical of the stand taken by the directors. It was also decided that a deputation should be sent both to the Dock Directors and to the Lord Mayor telling them of the conviction of the meeting "that the claims of the men, as expressed in their latest proposal of 6 d an hour at once, or on the 1st of October, should be instantly conceded."[17]

A second meeting was held on the following Friday evening, at which a further resolution was made. Moved by Dr. Clifford, the resolution was worded as follows:

> This meeting expresses its hearty sympathy with the cause of the dock labourers, rejoices in the moderation, self-control, and patience which had characterized their efforts to obtain a just wage, and records its satisfaction that the long continued strike appears to be reaching its termination on a fair and just basis.[18]

An amendment, proposed by Mr. Drury, that the workers had forfeited public support by their Manifesto of August 30, was supported by two members only, and the original resolution was passed. It was then agreed, on the motion of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, and seconded by Dr. Parker, that special appeals should be made to all Nonconformist churches in London for distribution to the strike funds.

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[17] The Times (September 10, 1889).

[18] The Times (September 14, 1889).

The two meetings revealed the sympathy and sense of identification of a number of those present with the docker's cause; and the conviction, expressed by several speakers, that the strike was only a part of a general upheaval among labour which the churches should help to guide and Christianize, was one which was beginning to be expressed more widely in Nonconformist newspapers and sermons. As a result, during the nineties the churches' responsibility in the social field would be restudied in the light of the new insight obtained during the strike into the condition of the mass of British workers.

A great deal of publicity was given to the Dock Strike throughout its duration by all sections of the British press. Although newspapers differed widely in their presentation of the issues at stake, they were general in their admiration for the discipline of the men and the restraint of their leaders. As conservative a paper as the Spectator was in the beginning critical of the stand taken by the directors of the dock companies. In its issue of August 31, for instance, the following statement appeared:

> There seems every reason to believe that if they did not struggle to make ill-invested capital pay a dividend to which it is no longer entitled, they might very easily concede the most important of the labourers' demands, and give greater satisfaction to their customers too. If they do not reconsider their position . . . the policy of superceding them by a Trust managed in the public interest, will soon become the only remedy.

A week later, the Spectator again defended the claims of the "half-skilled" for improved wages, although its editor felt that the suffering of the whole body of English workers was often exaggerated. By September 14, however, the Spectator had become very concerned by the

public reaction to the strike, and, in particular, by the introduction through sections of the Liberal press of moral issues which it felt were irrelevant:

> The Dock Directors are bound, as trustees, in the interest of their constituents to haggle in the market-place, and to get for their shareholders the best terms they can. Their first duty is not benevolence.

In a continuation of this article, the editor pointed out that there was no offence in being rich while other men were poor:

> Christianity has no such teaching in it, though it condemns an absorbing love of riches; and as for the Utopians, if they cannot think of a better ideal for the world than to become a grand Pauper Asylum, with the rich unwillingly distributing alms in it, they had better retire and meditate till they can.

In strong contrast to the editorials of the Spectator are those of the Nonconformist and Independent, which, more than any other newspaper, reported the activities and expressed the opinion of British Nonconformity. Its editorials (written by C. S. Miall, who was editor when the first number of the revised paper was issued in 1880, and continued in that office until the paper became a purely Congregationalist journal, the Independent, in September, 1890)will be quoted rather fully, since they illustrate to a marked degree the emergence of a new point of view among many of the leaders of the Nonconformist community. The strike forced Miall to the conclusion that such measures as church missions or planned emigration fell far short of providing any effective remedy for the relief of poverty. There is much in these editorials which explains why many leaders of the Nonconformist churches were led into complete support of labour demands: the Nonconformist belief that

no sphere of action lay outside the scope of the laws of right and wrong led its adherents to reexamine the existing economic system and to emphasize the duty of both statesmen and churchmen toward finding a solution. It was the insistence on the introduction of moral issues into the strike movement which revealed the wide gap in attitude between the Nonconformist and Tory press. Early in September the Saturday Review wrote:

> The strike at the East End is not a dispute in which the onlooker is bound to take sides, or feel any especial sympathy for either party. The dock labourers have their labour to sell, and the companies are bound to buy it on the best terms.[19]

In contrast, the Nonconformist and Independent explained public support of the strike in the following way:

> The most universal feeling . . . is undoubtedly a deep conviction of the substantial justice of the men's cause. But it has been greatly aided by a revolt of the healthy conscience against that brutal perversion of the truth concerning supply and demand which makes it an argument in defence of the common practise of pitting destitute men one against another in competition for the lowest possible wages.[20]

On the same day, the editor firmly stated his position regarding the moral justification for the strike:

> Many of us can remember when Christian people were taught that a strike was per se an evil thing - a flying in the face of the Divine ordinance. Since then, although the combination of workmen for the protection of their interests has been recognized by law, something of the old feeling now and then shows itself. We however, live and learn, and truly no more instructive spectacle has been presented to this generation [than the behavior of the of the dockers.]

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[19]Quoted in the Christian Socialist (September, 1889).

[20]The Nonconformist and Independent, X (September 12, 1889).

The editor's belief, shared by many ministers of the Nonconformist churches, was that the dock strike marked a critical stage in the transformation of the conditions of labour. It was the special duty of the church to lessen the bitterness of the social war, and to do all in its power to bring it to its conclusion. Writing two months after the strike was over, the editor pointed out the differences between the aims of the 'Old Unionism' and the 'New', and foresaw a long period of strife ahead:

> Those bodies [The Old Unions] had limited ends and demands, on which account they are derided by the newly-risen champions of labour, who are Socialists, and proclaim doctrines that reach far beyond any question of wages. . . It is, therefore, a long conflict that is before us . . . The art of organising labour, is but in its infancy, and its development and application may change the face of society.

In the same article the editor emphasized the necessity for more than a 'benevolent disposition' on the part of the church toward the relationships of capital and labour, while at the same time he made it clear that the church itself had no 'special enlightenment' on industrial relations - such understanding would have to be the work of its best men:

> Here, [in the field of industrial relations] as elsewhere, the "truth" . . . has to be "bought" by the pains and efforts of observation, comparison, and inference; . . . The Churches, as such, have no special enlightenment on the processes of industrial society, and, with the best intentions, may easily make serious mistakes. They are the guardians of those Christian principles which should govern industrial relations, and it should be the chosen business of their best men to understand the state of things in which those principles should be applied and made good.

The determination on the part of a number of leading Nonconformists to become better acquainted with the needs of the labouring classes took more concrete form after the Dock Strike. Noon-day lectures soon became a thing of the past, as churchmen met on a more equal basis with labour leaders. The result was a rather startling series of meetings which disclosed the part which had been played by some Nonconformist ministers in the East End of London during the organization of the 'New' unionism, and a new feeling of identification with the chief aims of labour on the part of a number of middle-class congregations.

In January, 1891, a group of twelve workingmen met with Nonconformist ministers at a conference in Bradford to discuss the ways by which the churches might give more effective help to the labouring class, and later in the same month the Rev. Walter Walsh held a similar conference with workingmen in the Rye Hill Baptist Church at Newcastle-on-Tyne. Early in February a meeting was held between Congregationalist ministers and labour leaders at the Memorial Hall in London at which Ben Tillett was invited to be the guest speaker.[21] At this conference the work of the Rev. Josiah Foster and the Rev. F. Barday in helping to found the Dock Labourers' and Tramcar Workers' Unions was revealed. The Rev. F. W. Newland, whose letter requesting aid for the Dockers and their families during the strike was reproduced above, stated that his church

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[21]The Independent (February 6, 1891) carried a full report of the Memorial Hall meeting.

had provided dinners for 20,000 children during the winter of 1889.

The following September, the Trades Union Congress was held at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and was welcomed, in Sunday evening service, by the Rev. Walter Walsh, whose conferences with working men had already, according to the Independent, "brought on his track the heresy-hunters of the Baptist fraternity". On the following Sunday, Tom Mann and Ben Tillett delivered addresses in two of the Congregational churches of Leeds. In reporting Tom Mann's speech, entitled "Religion and the Labour Movement", the Independent of September 18 remarked:

> This scene at Marshall-Street presents a strange combination of ideas, once hardly conceived compatible. The speaker is an artisan, and also a Royal Commissioner. He is a Trade Unionist representing the lowest grade of unskilled labour, and he is speaking in a chapel of Congregationalists once thought to be bourgeois of bourgeois . . . what changes - scientific, social, political, and religious - are here attested!

In his speech at Belgrave Chapel Ben Tillett pointed out that the twenty millions comprising the poorer classes had only nine direct representatives in the House of Commons, and that only through church membership had the workers obtained representation in the country's institutions. This same emphasis upon the role of the churches in making known the needs of the workers was expressed by Tillett in a People's Meeting held in Cambridge Hall in mid-October:

> I believe that no Parliament will alter the condition of the people because the monied class fill every social function in this country. I do not believe that political economy will reach them, I do not believe that mere knowledge will reach them. I do not believe that mere intellect will shape and alter existing conditions, but I do believe you preachers, you Christians, who can touch the conscience of men and touch their hearts, on you rests the responsibility.[22]

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[22]The Independent (October 23, 1891).

We shall see in a later chapter, what official action was taken by the Nonconformist Churches during the 1890's in response to this appeal. Tillett's point of view, however, began to be accepted by a greater number of labour leaders after the strike. Writing in the Nineteenth Century in November, 1889, Frederic Harrison, the leading English Positivist, dwelt at length upon the help given to the Dockers by the middle-classes during the strike. Socialists, he said, had often refused to consider that "industry must be moralised by opinion, not recast by the State - moralised by education, by morality, by religion." The strike, he felt, had proven the tremendous importance of appealing to the public conscience to bring about a gradual socialization of industry:

> The persistent appeal to the public conscience on moral and social grounds has done, what Trade-Unionism per se has failed to do in forty years, and what all the schemes for confiscating private Capital and nationalising private property have only succeeded in hindering and delaying being done.

That the appeal to the public conscience had been enhanced by the strength of Nonconformity among the middle classes has been emphasized throughout this chapter. We shall next turn to a study of the penetration of Nonconformity within the labour movement itself.

VI

THE PENETRATION OF NONCONFORMITY INTO THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

To those leaders of the Labour movement who were devoutly religious, the refusal on the part of the churches to adopt the cause of the working-classes as their own, and to ally themselves against the forces of reaction and privilege seemed both heartless and incomprehensible: Burns had left the Church; in extraordinarily bitter editorials W. C. Campbell and Alfred Howard attacked the churches for not fulfilling their proper function; after the London Dock Strike Ben Tillett spoke to a number of Nonconformist audiences, and, in moving language, pleaded with the churches to identify themselves with the cause of labour;[1] and in an article on the relationship between Christianity and the working-classes Arthur Henderson accused the churches of being "little better than religious hothouses for the preservation of the interests of middle-class society".[2]

During the early nineties, however, a new Nonconformist church appeared under the leadership of the Rev. John Trevor, who had been minister of the Upper Brook Street Unitarian Free Church in Manchester. Troubled by the fact that few labourers attended his church, and by the criticism of labour leaders that existing churches were not fulfilling the needs of working-men, he founded the Labour Church in

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[1] "What the Churches Ought to Do", the Independent (April 10, 1891).

[2] George Haw, ed, Christianity and the Working Classes, (London, 1906) p. 119.

Manchester in 1891. The name of the new church was apparently suggested by William Baillie, whom Trevor described as "an atheist, communist, anarchist, and revolutionist".[3] The first service was held in the Chorlton Townhall on Sunday, October 4. On the following Sunday the speaker was Robert Blatchford. Later speakers included union leaders Ben Tillett and Tom Mann, and Dr. Stanley Coit of the South Place Ethical Society in London. The principles of the new church were set down in the following statement:

> (1) The Labour movement is a religious movement.
> (2) The religion of the Labour movement is not a class religion, but unites members of all classes in working for the abolition of wage-slavery.
> (3) The religion of the Labour movement is not sectarian or dogmatic, but free religion, leaving each man free to develop his own relations with the Power that brought him into being.
> (4) The emancipation of Labour can only be realized so far as men learn both the economic and moral laws of God, and heartily endeavour to obey them.
> (5) The development of personal character and the improvement of social conditions are both essential to man's emancipation from moral and social bondage.[4]

Each new member of the Labour Church paid a small registration fee which was renewed annually. On joining, he was required to give his occupation, municipal ward, and Parliamentary constituency.[5]

The new church grew rapidly. In 1892 the Labour Prophet became its official newspaper. In 1893 the Labour Church Union was formed as the nucleus of a national organization, and before the end of the year there were branches of the church in Bolton, Halifax, Bradford and London. The total number of affiliated churches, however,

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[3]"The Labour Church", the Wesleyan-Methodist (October, 1893).

[4]"The Labour Church", the Independent (November 27, 1891).

[5]Ibid.

never rose above thirty, and a large proportion of these were in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Individual churches remained largely independent, although annual conferences were held.

From the beginning the Labour Church worked in close association with other bodies organized for the improvement of labour. Trevor himself helped to form the Independent Labour Party, and persuaded Blatchford to form an organization in Manchester.[6] In some cities the two bodies had a common membership: the president of the Bradford Labour Church was Fred Jowett, and several trade union officials were on its committee.[7] The inaugural conference of the I. L. P. was, in fact, held in a Bradford Chapel which had been rented by the local Labour Church, the Fabian Society and a labour union.[8] Members of the Fabian Society might not ordinarily be suspected of being sympathetic to the teachings of the Labour Churches. In Birmingham, however, the Labour Church absorbed the local Fabian Society, after the Church had promised to provide a number of sermons on social subjects.[9] Similarly, there were attempts on the part of the Labour Churches to affiliate with the Ethical Societies of the London area. A minimum of six churches affiliated with the Ethical Union at one time or another.[10]

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[6]Henry Pelling, The Origins of the Labour Party, (London: MacMillan, 1954), p. 145.

[7]Ibid. p. 142

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid. p. 145.

[10]Ibid. p. 144.

The origin of the Labour Church movement as a protest against the alienation of organized church bodies from the working classes was reflected in a number of bitter attacks against the churches in its newspaper and on its platforms. The following letter from a correspondent to the Labour Prophet reveals the attitude of some of the members of the movement to organized religion:

> Is it to the capitalistic governments of the day they [the workers] must look? Surely not. Where then shall they look? To the Churches, with their bishops and clergy, their sects and systems? No, no! They must get outside the existing institutions that are so much under the power of the capitalistic Pharaohs of this day . . . We have found that political promises are like pie crusts, made to be broken, and spiritual consolation a poor food for hungry stomachs.[11]

In forming the movement, Trevor had expressed his purpose of uniting the two enthusiasms of the day: the enthusiasm for personal salvation and that for the salvation of society. The "enthusiasm for personal salvation", however, apparently received scant attention in the services of the church. Among the subjects for sermons announced by the Labour Church, the following were noted by the Wesleyan-Methodist (October, 1893): 'Municipal Workshops'; 'The Future of Trade Unionism'; 'A Case for Socialism'; 'The Outcome of a Few Monopolies'; 'Literary Methods'; 'Getting On'; 'Working for a Dead Horse'; 'The Spur to Industry under Socialism'; 'The Religion of the Land Question'; 'The Lesson of the General Election'; 'Commercialism Incompatible with Christianity'; 'The Evolution of Society'; 'The Blind Struggle of a Disinherited People'; 'Democracy in the Kitchen'; 'Woman's Place in

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[11] The Wesleyan-Methodist (October, 1893).

the Labour Movement'. In criticism of this emphasis upon secular subjects, the editor of the Wesleyan-Methodist stated:

> Personal character is hardly considered at all. Read its hymns, note the themes of its ministry, study its tracts, its newspaper, and it will be seen how seriously it ignores the question of personal character and conduct. . . If the existing Churches fall into the error of magnifying the importance of character to the neglect of social and political claims, the new Church falls into a far more serious error in occupying itself so enthusiastically with Secular economics as substantially to forget the supreme importance of personal purity and goodness.

Many of the older Nonconformist churches soon began to look upon the Labour Church as a purely class movement. After attending the inaugural service of the Bradford Labour Church a correspondent of the Christian World remarked that in no part of the service was there reference to man's spiritual nature. Similarly, Canon Brody, in an address to working-men in Bradford, said that he found the Labour Churches too sectarian and narrow to represent the religion of the incarnation. In further repudiation of Trevor's statement that the religion of the new church was not merely a class religion, the editor of the Wesleyan-Methodist (October, 1893) wrote:

> All are invited to join it [the Labour Church] , but it is hardly likely that those who are guilty of 'the damnation of respectability' will do so; all who are chargeable with the heresy of property and the crime of respectability are practically excommunicated.

The vagueness of the religious teaching of the Labour Church is illustrated by the following statement made by Trevor and quoted in the Wesleyan-Methodist:

> Our religion is our attitude toward God, or the Supreme, or the Eternal, or whatever name we choose to give to that Power that brought us into being . . . But this religion must be absolutely free, leaving each man to form his own conception of God, and of what his relationship with God is or ought to be.

Its break even from the Christianity of the early church is clearly shown by the following statement from an editorial written by Trevor:

> Jesus comes to us second hand. The Churches have done their best to make it impossible to understand him, and the very words of his which are recorded are but the remembered or imagined words of men who could not comprehend what he meant. So I seldom trouble with what Jesus said, but go in my weary moods to men whose words come to me as straight from their hearts to mine as ink and paper permit.[12]

It is understandable, then, why a number of Nonconformist ministers refused to recognize the Labour Church as another Protestant denomination. The following statement from the Wesleyan-Methodist does not seem unduly harsh:

> . . . having little or no spiritual persuasion, they [The Labour Churches] treat religious doctrine as quite an open question . .. Whenever men are in earnest they have a creed, and a very definite and obligatory one, as we see in the Labour Church concerning secular things; whenever men are comparatively indifferent they are loose and obscure, as we see in the same Church touching diviner doctrines.

Similarly, in commenting upon the statement of the principles of the Labour Church, the editor of the Independent (November 27, 1891) wrote:

> Since so many Churches have been actually, though not avowedly, "capitalistic" coteries, we cannot grumble at the idea of a 'Labour Church'. It is difficult, however, to hold back a smile at the dogmatic repudiation of dogma. For what on earth are these "formulated principles" but dogmas?

And in criticism of the economic teachings of the Labour Church, the editor of the Wesleyan-Methodist wrote:

> So far as the creed of the Church touches earth it is narrowly sectarian and intensely dogmatic. There is nothing indefinite in its political creed, its industrial creed, its social creed; all here is clear, sharp, confident, imperative.

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[12]Quoted in the Wesleyan-Methodist (October, 1893).

Trevor's own opinion of the place of religion in the Labour movement clearly reveals the Labour Church's complete disassociation from the teachings of all other Christian denominations:

> The distinctive idea of the Labour Church is not to bring Christianity into the labour movement, but to insist on the fact that the labour movement is itself a religious movement, and does not need to have any particular type of religion imported into it, but rather to have its own religion developed as a true religion, capable of personal and social inspiration, and bringing man into closer relationship with God and each other as God's fellow workers.[13]

Almost complete secularization of the Labour Church developed from its close association with those leaders of the working-class movement who regarded it primarily as a vehical for political propaganda. In some centres the Churches were also used by the I.L.P. to rent halls which could not otherwise be used for Sunday meetings.[14] The following speech, recorded in the Labour Prophet, is clearly Marxist, and illustrates open bitterness toward established governments and the ruling classes:

> John Bingham, of Sheffield, gave an eloquent speech, in which he said the popular idea of anarchy was chaos and violence, but in reality anarchy meant perfect order combined with complete liberty. Governments existed only to maintain property and privilege. Police and military were mere animated machines, used to do the dirty work of the ruling class. . . Heaven would exist when all lived in brotherhood, when government and private property had vanished, and anarchy was realized.[15]

Although the Labour Church movement has been described as "a symptom of religious decline, of the transference of religious enthusiasm to the political sphere"[16] and cannot properly be considered as

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Pelling, op. cit. p. 143.

[15] The Wesleyan-Methodist, XVII (October, 1893).

[16] Pelling, op. cit. p. 150.

part of the Protestant tradition, it nevertheless contributed to (and was itself a reflection of) the religious atmosphere of the early Labour movement. It did not, however, survive: after 1898, the Labour Prophet was replaced by a quarterly paper; with Trevor's death the movement decayed, and very few of the churches remained after the First World War. A much deeper association of Nonconformity with the Labour movement occurred through the penetration of its older denominations into the individual components of the Labour Party. Of these, one organization only, the Socialist Democratic Federation, claimed complete freedom from religious influence.

The Socialist Democratic Federation occupies a strange place in the history of the British labour movement. Formed in 1883, its membership during the eighties probably never rose above 1,000 paying members. Because of its identification with the mass demonstrations of the unemployed in the mid-eighties, however, and its connection with the Great Dock Strike in 1889, both its size and influence over the masses were at the time greatly exaggerated by the British press.

The S. D. F. was from the beginning a middle and upper-middle class organization; wage-earners composed only one-third of its executive in 1884, and none of these acted at the policy-making level. The Federation was also a curiously autocratic organization; Henry Hyndman, its founder, was an out-and-out Marxist, and from the beginning its committee became involved in disputes over doctrine. At the end of its first year there was a major split: on December 27, ten of

its committee members, including William Morris, Dr. Aveling, Eleanor Marx, and Belford Bax, resigned from the organization because of an "attempt to substitute arbitrary rule therein for fraternal co-operation."[17]

Although the Federation never won widespread support, it had strong associations with the Land Reform Union and the National Secular Society, and two other bodies - the Scottish Land and Labour League, and the East London Labour Emancipation League -were later affiliated with it. Because of the financial backing it received from Hyndman's wealthy friends, it could afford the publication of the newspaper Justice, which gave widespread publicity to its activities and propaganda. Largely because of its association with the "New" Unionism, the S. D. F. attracted a large number of new recruits in the 1890's. Competition from the Independent Labour Party, which was formed in 1893, did not cause a decline in the Federation's membership, largely because it remained the only purely Socialist organization in Britain, and was therefore the only alternative to the I. L. P. In its Conference Report of 1898 the S. D. F. claimed a total of 137 branches - about double its number in 1893, and about two-thirds of the I. L. P. total.

The later history of the Federation was, however, stormy, and it never regained the strength which it had achieved in the nineties. Although it was one of the organizations which helped to form the Labour Representation Committee (the nucleus of the Labour Party) in 1899, it withdrew from the Parliamentary Committee in 1901, because

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[17]Quoted in Pelling, op. cit. p. 30.

of the rejection by other organizations within the Committee of its class-war theories. In 1911 it became the British Socialist Party, and in 1916 its membership was once more split over its attitude to the Great War. The main body of the party, being internationalist, opposed the war, while Hyndman and Blatchford preached against the German menace in the Clarion, Daily Mail, and Morning Post. Finally, in 1918 Hyndman's section joined the Labour Party, and the S.D.F. ceased to exist as an independent organization.

Meanwhile, the Socialist League, which had been formed by Morris and his followers after their secession from the Federation in 1884, had gained few converts. Morris himself was opposed to any kind of Parliamentary action, and many of its members were out-and-out Anarchists. Therefore, after the views of the group interested in political reform were repudiated at the annual conference of 1888, a second split occurred, and the league's disintegration soon followed. Morris himself withdrew in November, 1890, and before his death in 1896 rejoined the Federation. The one real contribution of this strange society to the labour movement was its publication, beginning in 1885, of the Commonweal, which in 1887 sold over 150,000 copies. To it Morris contributed 'News from Nowhere' and, in collaboration with Belford Bax, 'Socialism, Its Growth and Outcome' together with many of his other Socialist writings.

The weaknesses of both the Federation and the League lay in their emphasis upon complete acceptance of Marxist theory, and in their refusal to accept any sort of compromise. The failure of the S. D. F. to win support from the working-classes has been explained

by Godfred Elton:

> To the organised working-classes in Britain, patient, self-respecting, religiously-minded, good-humoured, proud of their country and intellectually indolent, eager for the quickest road to practical improvements but profoundly sceptical of Utopias and impervious to abstract theory . . . to such as these the Marxism of the Federation, obstrusely theoretical, bitterly class-conscious, international, intolerant of compromise or partial reform and apparently anti-Christian, could make little appeal.[18]

It was the apparently anti-Christian character of the Federation which also contributed toward the stiffening of the attitude of the churches that Socialism was itself un-Christian. The church parades organized by the S. D. F. also brought down on its head the anger of church bodies, who felt that they were being deliberately put at a disadvantage by Hyndman and his followers. The following extracts are taken from a long article on the "Socialist Parade to St. Paul's" as it was described in the Nonconformist and Independent of March 3, 1887:

> Mr. Hyndman's followers, after disturbing with their obtrusive "Church parades" several congregations during the last few weeks in various parts of London, determined to have a big muster last Sunday afternoon under the dome at St. Paul's. Elaborate preparations were made to bring together an enormous crowd. . . The Socialists marched in bodies from various parts of the metropolis, some with bands and all with banners. . . Every precaution was taken by the police to avoid disturbance. . . Inside the sacred edifice the police were so judiciously posted as to prevent any serious interruption of the service.
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> The Socialists had asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to preach from the text: "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour", but his Grace did not feel inclined to comply with the request, and the pulpit was occupied by Dr. Gifford, the Archdeacon of London . . . Dr. Gifford preached from Proverbs XXII.2: "The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all."

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[18] Godfrey Elton, England Arise! (London: J. Cape, 1931), p. 93.

The disapproval of the churches toward the church parades is better understood when it is remembered that a number of the leaders of the S. D. F. were either avowed atheists, or looked upon Christianity as the enemy of Socialism.[19] In March of 1888 the editor of the Christian Socialist condemned articles appearing in the Commonweal for accentuating the differences of opinion between Christian and non-Christian Socialists. In an article entitled "The Religion of Socialism" Arnold Bax had written that atheistic humanism, "the recognition of social progress as our being's highest end and aim" would be the Religion of the Future.[20] Hyndman himself professed complete indifference to the theological teachings of Christianity. "We are not one of those", he wrote in Justice, "who foam at the mouth because people who are helping on the Cause believe in an ancient Asiatic religion".[21] He was, however, adament in his assertion that the churches, as institutions, were opposed to the well-being of the poor. In a letter published in The Times in answer to a suggestion made by the Rev. W. Probyn - Nevins that the Federation should appeal to the London clergy for help in the collection of funds for the relief of poverty, Hyndman wrote:

> Dear Sir, - We Social Democrats have found that the ministers of religion in the metropolis, as elsewhere, with a few honourable exceptions, side with the rich and against the poor. This being so, I for one should consider any such memorial from us quite out of place and useless. Social Democrats are no more anti-Christian

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[19] An exception was Edward Carpenter, who had held a Cambridge curacy under J. D. Maurice. His book Towards Democracy is much closer in emphasis to the writings of later leaders of the Labour Party.

[20] Quoted in the Christian Socialist (April, 1888)

[21] Quoted in Godfred Elton, p. 90.

> than anti-Mahomedan, anti-Buddhist, or anti-Confucian. Christianity, as seen in this country, is merely the chloroform agency of the confiscating classes. Consequently the workmen are daily turning more and more against its professors.[22]

The exaggerated anti-religious attitude of many of its members, together with their violent criticism of many of Britain's established institutions and their flambouyant disregard for convention, also lost the Federation the support of many labour leaders who came from outside London, a number of whom, as members of the artisan class, had been brought up on the strictest moral teachings of one or another of the Nonconformist sects. In 1887 Kier Hardie attended a number of the meetings of the Federation in London. He afterward wrote:

> Born and reared as I had been in the country, the whole environment of the clubs, in which beer seemed to be the most dominant influence, and the tone of the speeches, which were full of denunciation of everything, including trade unionism, and containing little constructive thought, repelled me.[23]

The Fabian Society, formed in 1884 (the year after the reorganization of the Social Democratic Federation) was also, during its early years, largely confined to London. Small in number - in 1903 it claimed only 835 members[24] - it exerted tremendous influence through the publication by its seven essayists of a large number of tracts and pamphlets on social and economic topics. The famous Fabian Essays on Socialism,

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[22] Quoted in Rev. M. Kaufmann, Christian Socialism, (London: 1888), p. 222-3.

[23] Quoted in Pelling, op. cit. p. 67.

[24] Quoted in J. K. Hardie, "The Independent Labour Party", the Nineteenth Century, (April, 1903).

published in 1889 under the editorship of George Bernard Shaw, was based on a series of lectures on "The Basis and Prospects of Socialism" in which the Fabian policy of evolutionary Socialism had been explained. Under the leadership of Shaw and the Webbs, the self-appointed work of the society was the education of the British public in economic theory, and the permeation of the older political parties with socialist ideas. Discarding Marx' theory of the class-war, they substituted their 'utility theory' for Marx' 'labour theory of value' and adopted the slogan, 'production for use, not for profit'.

Although, as Godfrey Elton has pointed out, "the abiding service of the Fabians to the Socialist movement was a lesson in tactics",[25] they were opposed to a distinctly Labour party, and placed their hope in the conversion to Socialism of the leaders of the older parties. In this they completely overlooked the political power of the trade-union vote and the importance of the financial help which the unions might give to a new party. Also, although the very real influence of the Fabian publications should not be discounted, it is too easy, perhaps, to attribute to the work of this remarkable society other socialist forces which may, in reality, have originated from other sources. Certainly, a powerful political movement could not have been based exclusively on Fabianism:

> Fabian socialism represents radicalism without bitterness. It does not represent an appeal to emotion and, therefore, BY ITSELF it is politically impotent. And yet it can be and has been of help to a

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[25]"England Arise!", p. 116.

larger and more elemental political movement.[26]

The emphasis which the Fabians placed upon logic and expediency rather than upon principle attracted a large following among intellectuals; at the same time, it rather shocked middle-class Nonconformists:

> . . . what are commonly understood as moral considerations get little respect from our essayists. The word "wicked" is particularly obnoxious to them, and its employment moves them by turns to sarcasm and pity. The ordinary reader is soon made aware that he is in a new ethical world, with a dialect of its own.[27]

The society also remained an almost exclusively middle-class organization. "The workers," wrote Shaw, "could not go our pace or stand our social habits.[28] Although the ideas and the findings of the investigations of the Fabians were of invaluable service to the labour movement, it was the evangelicalism of the Independent Labour Party which popularized Socialism among the workers, just as it was the emotionalism of Stead's Pall Mall articles which appealed to so many of the middle class. By refusing to aspire to power rather than influence, however, the Fabians continued to play a most useful role to the later Labour Party.[29] Their energy and dedication, similarly, established among British intellectuals a tradition of involvement with the needs of society which has continued to the present time.

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[26] Adam B. Ulam, Philosophical Foundations of English Socialism, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1951), p. 79.

[27] "A Socialist Manifesto", the Nonconformist and Independent, XI (January 16, 1890).

[28] Quoted in Pelling, op. cit. p. 36.

[29] See Ulam, op. cit. p. 76.

The final components of the British Labour movement - the trade unions, cooperative organizations, and the Independent Labour Party - drew upon similar memberships from the working classes. The trade unions and the cooperatives had had, during the previous century, a close association with Methodism, which had deeply influenced both their philosophy and their plan of organization. Wesley's work, almost exclusively among the working classes, had been hampered by lack of assistance from an educated group of supporters. Through his genius for organization - possibly greater than that of any other religious leader in history - he gave each Methodist community the strength to survive with only intermittent help and guidance from outside. He did this by dividing the largest local units, or bands, into a number of smaller groups which met together regularly for prayer and meditation. In addition, classes of approximately twelve members were organized and led by an official appointed by Wesley. All local societies were regularly visited either by him or his lay preachers, and each society sent a delegate to the annual conferences. In this way, members of individual chapels became part of a highly-organized religious and social community, which, during Wesley's lifetime, was largely under his personal control. In the beginning an autocratic organization, it nevertheless had within it the elements of a democratic church, capable of giving to its members training in group organization and public speaking.

At first Wesley was unable to reconcile himself to Whitefield's practice of preaching in the open: once convinced of its necessity, however, he devoted half a century to "field preaching". Similarly, when

he realized that his movement was being weakened by a lack of trained ministers, he admitted a large number of lay preachers, most of whom came from among his converts within the working classes. This practise remained a vital part of Methodism, and survived throughout the century. The following report from the Nonconformist and Independent of February 19, 1880 clearly reveals this:

> The Methodist chapels and preaching rooms are about 16,000 in number, or as many as the Establishment. The ministers number about 3,600, and the lay preachers nearly thirty-five thousand: There are also connected with the several Methodist bodies 40,000 class-leaders; 658,000 members (as distinguished from attendants) and 214,000 Sunday-School teachers, in 12,000 schools, containing 1,400,000 scholars. . . It may be added that the proportion of laymen to ministers varies in the several Methodist bodies - being seven to one in the oldest, and fourteen to one among the Primitives.

These two practises - class organization, and lay preaching - became part and parcel of the trade union organization, originating from the association of the unions with the more radical sects of Methodism which had been evicted from the main body during the period of economic depression and political oppression which followed the Napoleonic wars. As early as 1797 Alexander Kilham and his followers formed the Methodist New Connection, and during the first decade of the next century the Primitive Methodists were expelled from the main church body. Under the names of "Camp Meeting Methodists" or "Ranters" this group appears again and again in the later history of the working-class movement: the Chartist movement in Yorkshire took on a definite religious flavour; miners in Northumberland and Durham were inspired by Ranter preachers; the farm labourers in Dorsetshire were led by Wesleyan Methodists. Among the outstanding leaders who appeared during the century were Joseph Arch, George Loveless, John Raymer Stevens, Richard Oastler, and Thomas Cooper: all had been Methodist preachers.

During the final quarter of the century Methodist lay preachers came largely from the artisan class of British labour. Often of limited education, they nevertheless possessed complete understanding of the emotional needs of their audiences, and were markedly successful speakers. For those who became attached to the Labour movement, it was completely natural that they should transfer their religious emotionalism to the political platform, and emphasize the religious aspects of the doctrines connected with Socialism.[30] This, perhaps, explains the nostalgia with which Philip Snowden wrote about the early Labour movement:

> I do not think the Socialist movement has ever recovered the enthusiasm and moral fervour which inspired it in those early days. When a party becomes concerned only with material reforms, and ceases to emphasize the moral purpose behind such reforms - important as material reforms are - it fails in its real purpose of the spiritual uplifiting of the masses.[31]

The following account by A. G. Tardner of one of Snowden's speeches made during the election campaign of 1900 is also very revealing:

> They crowd to Snowden's meetings, not as to a political gathering, but as to a revivalist meeting. They tread lightly, sit mute, almost transfixed, rarely applaud until the close, when the enthusiasm breaks forth. They seem entranced like men silenced by the impact of great truths . . . He has touched politics with morality, and morality with religion, and has raised the whole subject to a plane above the normal littleness and screeching of Party warfare.[32]

Snowden was not an exception: of the 192 Labour members in the British Parliament in 1925, some forty-five had been lay preachers.[33] Thomas Burt, one of the two earliest Labour M.P.'s, opened the Trades Union

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[30] A fully-documented account of the close connection between Methodism and the working-class movement has been made by Robert Wearmouth. See his "Some Working Class Movements of the Nineteenth Century", London, 1948.

[31] Philip Viscount Snowden, An Autobiography, (London: Ivor Nicholson, 1934), p. 151.

[32] Ibid.

Congress in 1891 with the following words:

> We are determined, while we endeavour to do the right - to ask God to direct our power and our energies to the improvement of men, to raise not only an individual here and another there, but to raise humanity as a whole to a greater position of material well-being, and not only material well-being, but also to loftier heights of intelligence and of nobility of character than it has hitherto attained.[34]

It is significant that Burt's speech was reported in the Congregationalist newspaper, the Independent. It is also significant that the Congress was welcomed to Newcastle by the Rev. Walter Walsh, minister of the Baptist Church at Rye-hill, and that during the same week Tom Mann and Ben Tillett were addressing Congregationalist Churches in Leeds.

The Marxist group within the trade union movement remained relatively small - even among those who were avowed socialists. When William Morris asked a group of men he was addressing in Glasgow why they had become socialists, he received the following answer:

> All, it seems, can remember from boyhood a vague sense of injustice. They had read Robert Burns or Carlyle or Ruskin and the rankling suspicions had begun to crystallise. Then had come the Highland Crofters' revolt and Henry George's teaching. "Sybil" and "Alton Locke" and Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables" are also recalled. But no one mentions Marx. And no one, it seems, has read any of the earlier Socialists, Sir Thomas More or St. Simon or Fourier or Robert Owen or Louis Blanc.[35]

The interjection of the religious element into the Labour movement, and the presence of evangelical Nonconformity among the middle classes, however, made the establishment of a separate Labour party

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[33]William Maddox, Foreign Relations in British Labour Politics, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1934).

[34]Quoted in "The Labour Parliament", the Independent (September 11, 1891).

[35]Godfrey Elton, op. cit. p. 221.

extremely difficult. The Fabian policy of permeation seemed, during the eighties, the surest way of bringing about a socialist state, particularly since both of the established political parties had passed a certain amount of social legislation and now depended equally upon working-class support. The presence of Chamberlain's Radical group within the Liberal Party also seemed to create the possibility of the conversion of that party to a socialist platform. The traditional Lib-Lab alliance had, however, several distinct disadvantages; by far the most important of these was the functioning of the local Liberal caucuses which controlled the election of party candidates. Theoretically democratic, they were, in most areas, dominated by the middle class, and were general in their refusal to support Labour candidates. The Fabian tactic of permeation was, in this situation, completely unsuccessful: if a caucus were taken over by those supporting a labour representative, the people with money withdrew, and the candidate, if elected, was left without financial support during his period of office. As a result, the Trades Union Congress formed the Labour Electoral Association in 1886 to press for payment of M.P.'s and to negotiate with the Liberals for greater parliamentary representation. Although the principal leaders of the Liberal Party apparently approved their demands, local caucuses continued, for social and financial reasons, to refuse support to Labour candidates.[36]

A quarrel with the Liberal caucus of Mid-Lanark started Keir Hardie on the course which was to lead to the formation of the Independent Labour

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[36]Pelling, op. cit. p. 237.

Party. After a preliminary meeting of sympathisers in Glasgow, the first conference of the new party was held in August of 1888. Its chief objects were to be the political education of the workers and the return to Parliament of men who supported its programme. It was not, however, committed to Socialism; it emphasized political reform and legislation of benefit to the working-classes, and sought support from sympathisers of all classes. It would also not oppose a candidate from either of the established parties who acknowledged the importance of parliamentary action in the social field.

Meanwhile, Hardie was working with Champion and Aveling toward the creation of an independent party in England and Wales, and was attempting to convert the Trades Union Congress to financial support of Labour candidates. In September, 1888 he addressed the Congress on the need for Labour representation in Parliament, but, largely because of his earlier criticism of Henry Broadhurst, the Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress, his motion was defeated. Similarly, his proposal to the Congress in 1891 that a penny levy should be imposed on all trade union members to establish a fund in support of Labour candidates met with defeat by 200 votes to 93.[37]

In the election of 1891 Hardie ran as an independent candidate in West Ham, and won his first seat in the House of Commons. Of the two other independent candidates in the House, Burns had needed no outside help in winning the Battersea seat,[38] and Havelock Wilson worked in

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[37] Ibid. p. 105.

[38] The success of the London Dock Strike and of the 'New' Unionism had assured Burns' popularity. He was critical of the creation of an independent Labour party on the grounds that it would divide the Trades Union Congress.

close cooperation with the Liberals. Ben Tillett had lost to the Liberal candidate at West Bradford by only 600 votes: a fact which revealed that the new party might grow at the expense of both the older parties.

The organization of an independent party in England was started through the use of the Workmen's Times, whose editor, Joseph Burgess, invited all persons interested in helping the formation of the new party to send their names and addresses to him. The response was immediate: By the middle of September, 1892 - just four months after the original announcement - over two thousand names had been sent in, and local branches of the new party were being formed.[39] In January, 1893 the inaugural meeting of the party was held at Bradford - the home of Trevor's Labour Church, a branch of the Fabian Society, and many other labour organizations - in a former Wesleyan Reform Chapel. Of the 120 delegates, the majority came from northern England or Scotland. London sent a very small delegation (the S.D.F. leaders refused to attend and the Fabians sent two members only, one of which was Bernard Shaw). One-third of the total number of delegates came from Yorkshire itself. The chief work of the conference was the drawing up of a constitution and programme and the choice of an executive. Its programme resembled that of the Scottish Labour Party, the introduction of the eight-hour working day and other immediate reforms taking precedent over more radical clauses. The provision for the taxation, to extinction, of unearned income, however, and the statement of the final objective of collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, clearly revealed that the party would be socialist in doctrine.

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[39]Pelling, op. cit. p. 115.

The decision to have a large executive, elected on a geographical basis, prevented it from meeting regularly. In the year following the conference, the party was kept alive by Hardie's work in Parliament, by his regular lectures throughout the country, and by the work of the local organizations. At the second annual conference, held in Manchester in 1894, a smaller executive was elected, dominated by members from the North. During the following months so much enthusiasm was created that it was decided to run thirty-two candidates in the general elections of 1895. The result was total defeat: Hardie lost the West Ham riding, and none of the other candidates was returned, despite the fact that the party had received the support of some 44,000 voters.

Much of the work of the I. L. P. lay in the future: sectional differences would have to be resolved; the financial help of the unions would have to be secured; and other socialist organizations would have to be won over - the Fabians to support a policy of labour independence, the followers of the S. D. F. to acceptance of Parliamentary tactics. But the foundations of a national party had been laid; writing in the Labour Leader shortly after the elections Hardie reviewed what had been accomplished:

> Despondency? No, no, rather proud, savage elation. Half the battle won the first time, and that, too, the most difficult half. But we must learn to fight elections.[40]

A final word must be said about the part played by the local organizations in the creation of the Independent Labour Party. These

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[40] Ibid. p. 178

were heavily concentrated in the North of England, in such Nonconformist strong-holds as Manchester or Bradford. Out of the three hundred branches of the party listed in its directory for 1895, one hundred were in Yorkshire, over seventy in Lancashire and Cheshire, and forty in Scotland.[41] They carried on their work by sponsoring speakers, issuing pamphlets, and supporting their members in the elections to local councils. In this work they received the strong support of the London Fabian Society, which supplied them with "book-boxes" containing material on public housing, improved sanitation and the like. They also acted in close cooperation with the local Fabian Societies, and in a number of cases the two organizations merged.

Local branches were visited regularly by itinerant speakers. Often giving several speeches in one centre, they changed their character slightly for use in the Labour Churches. The Socialism they preached was usually evangelical in character, a blending of politics and religion which was Methodist in origin. Completely dedicated, at home with their audiences, they had found the key to a people's movement in an emotional appeal which, while denying Marxism, closely resembled the revivalism which was its source.

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[41] Ibid. p. 172.

VII

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE CHURCHES IN THE EARLY NINETIES

In his Encyclical Letter of 1891, Pope Leo XIII emphasized that a new revolutionary spirit had taken hold of the working classes. The causes of the new conflict between the classes were many: the growth of industry and the changed relationship between masters and workmen; the great fortunes of individuals as against the poverty of the masses; the discoveries of science; the growth of combination among workmen; and finally, "a general moral degeneration".[1] With the decline of workmen's guilds, and the repudiation of Christianity by public institutions and law, workmen had been given over, "isolated and defenceless, to the callousness of employers and the greed of unrestrained competition".[2] In considering the reconstruction of society, however, the Pope completely discarded any socialistic scheme which would involve the destruction of private property:

> . . . the remedy they [the socialists] propose is manifestly against justice. For every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own.[3]

> Is it just that the fruit of a man's sweat and labour should be enjoyed by another? As effects follow their cause, so it is just and right that the results of labour should belong to him who has laboured.[4]

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[1] "Encyclical Letter of Our Holy Father, by Divine Providence Pope Leo XIII On the Condition of Labour". In the Redpath Tracts, CXCIX (1) (1891).

[2] Ibid. p. 4.

[3] Ibid. p. 5.

[4] Ibid. p. 7.

> Our first and most fundimental principle, therefore, when we undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property.[5]

The remedy for social evils would come through the binding together of the classes in brotherly love. Charity was the function of the church rather than of the state: "Charity, as a virtue, belongs to the Church; for it is no virtue unless it is drawn from the Sacred Heart of Christ".[6] In further warning against the evils of Socialism the Pope continued:

> Most of all it is essential in these times of covetous greed to keep the multitute within the line of duty, for if all may justly strive to better their condition, yet neither justice nor the common good allows anyone to seize that which belongs to another, or, under the pretext of futile and rediculous equality, to lay hands on other people's fortunes.[7]

The duties of government in regulating the relations between management and labour were limited by the Pope to the help and authority which the law could offer, if, through combination of workmen, the public peace might be disturbed, or if the workmen themselves might suffer from conditions repugnant to their dignity as human beings, or from labour unsuited to their age or sex. Definite limits, however, had to be set to the interference of the law:

> The limits must be determined by the nature of the occasion which calls for the law's interference - the principle being this, that the law must not undertake more, or go further, than is required for the remedy of the evil or the removal of the danger.[8]

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[5]Ibid. p. 9..

[6]Ibid. p. 16.

[7]Ibid. p. 20.

[8]Ibid.

Workingmen's combinations or unions should be founded on religion, their aim should be mutual concord, and their result should be the well-being of the poor. To the 'broken in spirit' the Pope promised the shelter of the Church:

> To such as these, Catholic Associations are of incalculable service, helping them out of their difficulties, inviting them to companionship, and receiving the repentent to a shelter in which they may securely trust.[9]

The Encyclical Letter is, in many ways, a strange document. The statement that 'the results of labour should belong to him who has laboured' is an odd one to use in defence of the inviolability of property - which would include the returns from investment and also inherited wealth. And although the influence of Cardinal Manning can be seen in those passages dealing with the necessity of the law's assistance to those degraded by their work, there is no mention of the role to be played by progressive social legislation, and no hope that through government action the lot of the whole body of workers could be materially improved. The full emphasis in the Letter is upon the need of limiting government action to meet the specific need of any particular situation. The Letter is also interesting in what it leaves unsaid: there is no questioning of the justice of the capitalist system - beyond the statement that man has the 'natural' right to possess property - and the conception of the equality of man is dismissed as 'both futile and rediculous'.

In his criticism of the Encyclical the editor of the Independent (June 5, 1891) expressed his disagreement with the statement that the new

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[9]Ibid. p. 31.

revolutionary spirit was a sign of a general moral deterioration. He also disagreed that it was a threat to society:

> Today, however, . . . many wise men are seeing with increasing clearness that it is no more fiend than angel, but a natural, human force - a genuine historical birth, which only needs to be enlightened and moralised in order to be productive of great good.

In sharp contrast to the Pope's Encyclical letter was an address delivered to the Church Council by its acting President, the Bishop of Durham, in the fall of 1890. After stating that he doubted if "the social question were not THE religious question", Bishop Westcott continued:

> If there are . . . owing to the industrial revolution through which we have passed, many whose whole energies are exhausted in providing for others the means of rest and culture, if there are many whose long hours of labour forbid them to see their children except when they are asleep, if there are many whose earnings do not provide adequate support for those who are naturally dependent upon them, if in some occupations current wages have to be supplemented by doles, the Christian, as a Christian, must bend his energies to face the evil, and to endeavour to remedy it.[10]

The Council also heard an address by the Rev. M. Kaufmann - author of a book entitled Christian Socialism, published in 1888 - who reviewed the three claims of Socialism: of society against the individual, of the multitude against the few, of the right of revolution if their demands were not acceded to. In these three aspects, he believed, Socialism deserved the sympathy of the Church.[11]

The rift between the conservative and evangelical factions within the Established Church became more open during the nineties. In the review of the Bishop of Durham's address, for instance, the Spectator

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[10] Quoted in the Spectator, LXV (October 4, 1890), 431-2.

[11] The Independent (October 10, 1890).

(October 4, 1890) wrote at length about the danger of concessions by the Church to the thought of the day:

> . . . there is danger of the hard side of Christianity being forgotten; of the Church approving Unionism even when it oppresses free labour; of its sympathising with workmen even when they break contract; of its condemning low prices even when they are just prices; above all, of its anathematising wealth, instead of the wrong employment of wealth.
> . . . The obligation of charity is taught by Christianity, but not more strongly than the obligation to keep a contract even to one's own hurt.

Two years later the Spectator (August 13, 1892)once more warned of the great danger in attempting to reach the masses by showing that religion was "in the sense in which THEY understand the words, the friend of the poor" who would, as a result, be flattered by a subservient church. In criticism of a pamphlet written under the direction of Bishop Westcott in which it was stated that the solution to the disorder of society would have to be found in the assertion of moral over mechanical laws, the editor wrote:

> If Churchmen have ceased to believe that moral truth has an eternity of significance, while material truth concerns our threescore years and ten, at least do not let them carry over what remains of their own truth into a realm where it becomes demonstrable and pernicious error. That moral truth has a supremacy of jurisdiction and a priority of certainty over the sequences of material phenomena, is not believed by any one who understands what he is saying . . .
> . . . But the danger of our time . . . is to distort a belief in the infinite mercy of God into a belief in the probable leniency of Nature. Such a confusion would always work incalculable ill, but preached as a message to the democracy of our day, that ill is at a maximum.

The Bishops of Rochester and Peterborough continued to exert a strongly conservative influence over the official attitude of the Established Church. In 1889 the Bishop of Rochester advised the clergy

of his diocese to avoid entering any debate over social questions:

> With regard to social questions, such as the sweating system and labour struggle, I would recommend that clergymen should not take a prominent part. Their education did not specially fit them to understand these questions and it was better not to thrust themselves forward as umpires.[12]

The Bishop of Peterborough, in an article for Good Works in February of 1890, wrote:

> She [the Church] may tell them [the poor] how this, the only true brotherhood, rightly understood, is a reason not for repining envy but for patient and self-respecting acquiescence in the inequality which is the appointment of the Father in Heaven . . . To teach him [the poor man] that in Christ's church poverty is no disgrace and charity no humiliation, for that place is of the Father's ordering and the charity is a brother's gift.[13]

For the remainder of the decade, social problems were pushed more to the background: in a twenty-five page review of the Lambeth Conference of 1897, for instance, the one reference to the social problem was in the following sentence:

> After some wise words on 'industrial problems' and 'international arbitration' the Letter proceeds to speak of the 'organization of the Anglican communion'.[14]

A strong Christian Socialist tradition nevertheless remained. Individual members of the clergy continued to belong to various socialist organizations, and in 1904 the Church Socialist League was formed. At the Pan-Anglican Congress of 1908 the relationship between Christianity and Socialism was once more the subject of debate. In his key-note address,

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[12]Quoted in the Christian Socialist (November, 1889).

[13]Quoted in the Christian Socialist (March, 1890).

[14]"The Lambeth Conference of 1897. Review of the Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with the Resolution and Reports", the Church Quarterly Review (October, 1897).

the Rev. Charles Gore, Bishop of Birmingham, denounced the apathy of the Church in the face of social problems:

> . . . where has been the fire of prophetic indignation in the Church, which yet exists to represent Christ and the Bible? It has found occasional expression through individual churchmen, or groups of churchmen, a Lord Shaftesbury, a Maurice, a Kingsley, a Westcott, and others still living. But how utterly, on the whole, has the official Church, or the main body of the Church, failed to exhibit the prophetic spirit![15]

After dismissing two extenuating pleas - that the Church had administered charity, and that it had been forced to follow the teachings of political economy - by stating that the Church was meant to be "no mere ambulance corps" and that either churchmen had misunderstood the economists, or their economic doctrines had been mistaken, Bishop Gore concluded:

> We must identify ourselves with the great impeachment of our present industrial system. . . But more than this, we must identify ourselves, because we are Christians, with the positive ethical spirit of socialistic thought.
>
> It is not of course intended that Christians or churchmen should tie themselves to any one political party, or should behave as partisans of any one class.[16]

Much the same point of view had been expressed by the Rev. W. Moore Ede in the Hulsean Lectures for 1895. In a remarkably able way he explained the official attitude of the Church of England toward the social problem. After stating that there was a growing conviction that the principle of individualism, expressed in the economic relationships of men as free competition, had failed to produce a satisfactory social state, he emphasized that the Church could not ignore its economic and social

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[15] the Right Rev. Charles Gore, "Christianity and Socialism". The Pan-Anglican Congress, 1908 (Lond: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1908).

[16] Ibid.

surroundings. But, while individual Christians might identify themselves with particular political parties, the Church, in its corporate form, was forced to stand aloof from all political affiliation:

> For the Church to identify itself with any party is an abdication of its true and higher function, and would in a fatal fashion secularise the Church.[17]

The function of the Church was to remain that of the creation of a righteous public opinion:

> And surely it is the special function of the Church to create a righteous public opinion, to infuse it with a lofty ideal of duty, and direct the popular will toward noble aims. And the Church will best do its work as watchman on the walls if it never holds its peace, and if they who mention the Lord keep not silent.[18]

In 1889 the Special Committee on Non-Church-Going which had been created by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland,[19] suggested the setting-up of a 'Commission on the Religious Condition of the People'. This commission, consisting of seventeen ministers and elders, was instructed to visit and meet with the presbyteries and synods. The commission, reappointed in five successive years, issued its report on the 'Religious Condition of the People' in 1896, after holding conferences with seventy-three of the eighty-four presbyteries of the Church. Those which remained, largely Gaelic-speaking, were to be entrusted to a smaller commission.

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[17]the Rev. M. Moore Ede, "The Attitude of the Church to Some of the Social Problems of Town Life", in the Redpath Tracts, 1896, CCXVIII (1896), 15.

[18]Ibid. p. 99

[19]See Chapter IV.

A record of the work accomplished by the commission and the impressions of its members is to be found in its yearly reports to the General Assembly. In 1893 it was agreed that in order to obtain full results from the commission's work, each presbytery would be required to report to the Home Mission Committee a clear account of any action which had been taken as a result of the recommendations of the commission. In the same year the chairman of the commission, acting on instructions received from the Assembly, communicated with the County Councils, requesting them to consider the expediency of providing general holidays for the benefit of farm servants in their respective districts. These letters, however, were largely futile, and some councils received them "with only scant courtesy".[20] Perhaps for this reason, although the final report of the commission presented to the Assembly in 1896 contained large sections describing the condition of workers in different industries, it rarely suggested any specific legislative action based upon its findings. There were certain exceptions: in Arbroath, where trawling had destroyed inshore fishing, and had cut off their livelihood from older fishermen who could not go far from shore, the report suggested legislation as the only possible cure.

The large class of farm servants received the special attention of the commission: "bothies", "out-kitchens", cottages for married servants, questions of wages and holidays - all these took up a great deal of space in the yearly reports. In the final report the greatest need of farm servants was pointed out:

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[20] "Report of the Commission on the Religious Condition of the People" in Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland for the Year 1896 (Edinburgh) p. 803.

> The Commission was told from time to time that the want is . . . a great increase of smaller holdings, or larger crofts, a farm of a size which shall enable a family to live in respectability, but requiring only such a modest capital for stocking as shall allow a plowman making a good wage to look forward to its tenancy.[21]

In conclusion, the commission remarked on the widening gulf betweeen master and servant which had developed with the growth of the large farm. Thus, any sense of common interest and of family life had largely vanished; the responsibility which, according to the teachings of the Church, rested upon the former for the welfare of those in his service was often ignored; and a humanizing influence, important in isolated rural areas, had accordingly been lost.

In those sections of the report which dealt with the problem of poverty in the cities of Scotland, special mention was made of conditions in Glasgow, where there were still approximately 36,000 one-roomed houses. Generally speaking, however, the commission felt that a great deal was being done to ease poverty in the cities. There remained three great needs: First, because of lack of planning, worthwhile philanthropic work often fell short of the mark. This was especially true of church agencies, where the waste of strength and resources was said to be enormous, through the indiscriminate use of charity, and the overlapping of effort. Second, the Church should seek more effective help "to heighten the normal standards of life, to reduce the causes and occasions of poverty, to realize a more equitable distribution of wealth" and to inspire the poor with self-respect and the possibility of a better life.[22] Third, there was the need of

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[21]Ibid. p. 804.

[22]Ibid. p. 807-808.

lessening the tendency of the comfortable classes from withdrawing from the neighbourhood of the poor.

The work of the commission was far from superficial; its final report gives an excellent picture of conditions of life in the rural and urban areas of Scotland during the early nineties. The great weakness of the work of the Church of Scotland - its failure to come into contact with the mass of urban workers-is fully admitted throughout the report. Its final recommendation was that great advantage might be gained by making the Established Church a more distinctly living and active force among the poor.

At the Congregational Union of 1890, meanwhile, the report of the Special Committee on Social Questions had been accepted. In this report, referred to later as the Swansea Manifesto, the committee announced its programme of help for all Congregationalists who were forced "to contend with hostile social influence". In the following year, in a general outline of its policy, the committee announced two needs: first, the necessity for a more worthwhile educational programme sponsored by the Church, and second, the need to overcome the prejudices of working-men against the Church by communicating with working-class organizations, and, when necessary, by influencing employers and employed in the direction of conciliation. In its decision to meet with representatives of the unions, the committee had been influenced by the success of the Bradford Conference, held in the spring of 1891 between labour leaders and representatives from the Nonconformist bodies.[23]

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[23]For information on the Bradford Conference, see Chapter V.

In the Assembly of 1893 much of the attention of the Congregational Union was once more devoted to social questions. In that year the Chairman of the Union was Mr. Albert Spicer, M.P., a strong advocate of land reform, who had addressed the Assembly on this topic in 1889. He now re-emphasized that the land problem was the crux of the social problem; until righted, it would throttle every other enterprize for helping the poor. Mr. Spicer also stressed the great part which the churches might play in social reform. Their duties were threefold: to arouse a sense of responsibility in all members toward the needs of the masses; to take a sympathetic attitude toward proposals for reform made by labour leaders; to give support to those proposals when they believed them just and right. The Nonconformist churches were, he felt, particularly well-suited to play a leading role in the social field:

> Our Churches are democratic in their form of government. They consist, too, for the most part of sections of the working, the lower middle, and middle classes, and they represent very largely the comparatively well-to-do side of these classes; . . . [they] are therefore composed of those who have benefited decidedly from the effect of much of the legislation that was carried between 1832 and 1870, having indeed been largely the means of carrying it.[24]

At the same meeting of the Union Mr. James Branch read a paper describing the growth and activities of the 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Societies' which had been organized as an undenominational programme for the specific benefit of working-men. The movement had started. The movement had started in the north of England, but by 1893 there were a number of societies established throughout the country, stretching from Erith in the south-east to Tottenham in the north. Although each society was self-governed, there was a marked similarity in the order of the services; Mr. Branch described the procedure followed at the Rev. Mr. Le Pla's

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[24]The Independent (May 11, 1893).

Church in Kingsland:

> The meeting commences at 3 p.m., with a preliminary performance by the band, which is of a very proficient character; then a hymn is sung, led by the band, a prayer is then offered, reading from the Scriptures, a solo instrumental or vocal, then an address upon a social or moral topic; this may be varied; but the whole is brief, bright and brotherly.[25]

Mr. Branch reported that the movement seemed to be extremely successful: in some larger towns, where it was not unusual for two or three thousand men to gather in churches or in town halls, it was referred to as "the movement of the century". Certainly, its aim was unique:

> . . . we want working men to realise the actual practical sympathy of all Christian men and women with every righteous asperation, and to assure them of our active co-operation in the removal of every disability that restricts their material and moral welfare.[26]

Aside from the continued expression of good will between the classes, however, very little of a concrete nature seems to have been accomplished. The P.S.A. movement did not survive the decade, and was replaced, as the law was relaxed, by Sunday sport, and, with the introduction of cheap railway excursions, by Sunday trips away from the city. Those members of the artisan class who were interested in political discussion were attracted to the Labour Churches founded by the Rev. John Trevor, while to the great mass of urban poor, a much more heady blending of entertainment and religion was being offered by the Salvation Army.

If during the nineties there was less actual controversy within the official church conferences than in the eighties, the reason may be that the position of the churches in relation to the social question had

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[25]Reported in the Independent (May 25, 1893).

[26]Ibid.

been clarified. Unlike in the Church of England, there was within the Nonconformist bodies remarkable unanimity of thought among its most prominent ministers. Speaking to the Baptist Union at Manchester in 1891, for instance, Dr. Clifford defined the social aim of Christianity as one which would free men from the exhausting battle with material objects so that they might engage in a higher battle with those obstacles which prevented their subjection to the will of God. "Our work," he said, "is to reconstruct Society so as to nourish character, and not destroy it."[27] In addressing the Ministers' Union in 1893 John Kenworthy emphasized that, as a Radical, he could appeal to the social force within Christianity to end oppression "by the conversion, not the violent removal of the oppressor."[28] Similarly, in a hand-book on social questions for the Wesleyan Methodist Union, C. E. Walters of the West End Mission emphasized that the British Labour movement was being led either by earnest Christians or by men who respected Christian institutions.[29] And in the same pamphlet Frank Ballard attempted to clarify the meaning of the term Christian Socialism:

> This term assuredly should signify neither a mere nebulous, pietistic philanthropy, nor an absolute committal of every Christian sympathizer with social reform at once and for ever to the whole programme of Collectivism. Rather may we plead that all childish fright at the word Socialism ought as surely to cease . . . The Evangelical reformer and the Collectivist may go a long way together, and do a great deal of good through unanimity of aim and motive.[30]

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[27]Quoted in the Independent (October 23, 1891).

[28]"The Christian Revolt. Essays and Addresses by John C. Kenworthy", (Lond: William Reeves, 1893) p. 15. In the Redpath Tracts, CCVIII (2) (1893).

[29]"Labour: Its History, Conditions, and Prospects", in The Citizen of Tomorrow: A Handbook on Social Questions; ed. S. E. Keeble (Lond: Robert Culley, 1906), 122.

[30]"Christianity and Socialism" in The Citizen of Tomorrow.

In 1888 the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland met at Inverness to express sympathy for the Crofter agitation, and to support legislation for fixed tenure and fair rents. In his address to the Assembly Dr. Rainy emphasized that their purpose was to obtain for the poorer farmer a life which should be "consistent with justice, and a measure of comfort and hope".[31] It was this attitude, expressed in different ways by so many of the leaders of both the Established Church of England and of the Nonconformist bodies, which had prevented the development of a strong anti-clerical socialist movement in Britain and which had assisted the growth of the belief in evolutionary Socialism adopted by Keir Hardie and so many of his followers.

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[31] James Barr, "The United Free Church of Scotland", (Lond: Allenson and Sons, 1934) p. 96.

VIII

CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY AND CONTINENTAL SOCIALISM

A glance at the development of socialist parties in France and Germany during the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century reveals the wide differences between the ideology of Continental Socialism and that of the British Labour movement. These differences can be explained, in part, by the variety of circumstances which led to a greater integration of British society, and in part by the apparent inability of the average British mind to grasp and be influenced by abstract theory. As we have seen, however, the Nonconformist religions played an important part in modifying the ideology of British Socialism, and it is significant that there were no strong Protestant churches in either Germany or France which were free from the control of the civic power.

The German Social Democratic Party was formed in 1875. Up to that time workingmen had been divided, some following the teachings of Marx, while others were members of a second socialist party formed in 1863 by Ferdinand Lassalle. As long as Bismark remained in office the new party was suppressed, and after attempts were made upon the life of William I in 1878, socialists were forbidden to hold meetings and to publish propagantist material, and were also liable to arbitrary arrest. At

the same time, the government attempted to alienate the working-classes from Socialism by a series of remarkable social reforms.

The census of 1875 revealed that 62.5 per cent of the population of Germany and Austria were Protestant. In both Catholic and Protestant provinces the ties between church and state were extremely strong: up until 1792 there were twenty-seven German territories governed by Catholic bishops or archbishops, and forty-five by abbots, abesses, and other spiritual leaders.[1] In most Protestant provinces the government of the church had passed into the hands of the princes, and the tie between church and state was still extremely strong. Thus, in addition to the Old Lutheran Church, there were twenty-six different Protestant churches representing the twenty-six Protestant states.[2] The more conservative of the Protestant clergy desired a more rigid ecclesiastical doctrine which would give them the same power over their members as the Catholic clergy enjoyed, and enable them to hold in check the development of radical and socialist parties.

In the election of 1879, 246 Protestant and 137 Catholic members were returned.[3] Of the Catholic members

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1. Prof. von Schulte, "The Religious Condition of Germany", the Contemporary Review, XXXV (August, 1879).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

ninety-three belonged to the extreme Ultramontane Party, and represented wholly or mainly Catholic districts. This party also exerted a strong influence over the people through the press: in 1879 there were some 267 Ultramontane papers in Germany, apparently censored by the church. The Protestant press, on the other hand, lagged far behind: although there were a number of small church periodicals, weekly newspapers etc., there was no great political daily paper devoted to the interests of Protestantism.

It is not surprising, then, that the Social Democratic Party in Germany became an anti-religious body, looking upon both the Protestant and Catholic churches as institutions enjoying the patronage of the state. The Social Democratic Party grew very rapidly in the years following Bismark's dismissal until, by 1898, it represented some twenty-seven per cent of the voters. It remained completely separate from the Christian Socialist Working Men's Party, which never gained a big membership and remained largely uninfluential. The following extract from the Social Democrat for July 17, 1884, is typical of the propaganda used by the party to wean its followers from the support of established religion:

> . . . as the proletariat wants to subvert modern society, without any intention of replacing it by other forms of society, like itself founded on class rule, but rather to remove all class-rule of whatever kind, so, too, it not only is opposed to Christianity, but every religious system that could not exist without class antagonism (priestcraft), and therefore

> would replace it by irreligion - Atheism. Atheism not as a philosophical system, but as the express denial of every form of religion.[4]

In France, religion was also inextricably interwoven with politics. M. Milsand, writing in 1875, blamed the growth of irreligious Socialism upon the influence of the church in secular affairs:

> To keep clear of despotism, it (Socialism) will propagate materialism and unbelief among the unreasoning masses . . . By identifying the cause of reason and liberty with that of irreligion and anarchy, it will only further the cause of despotism and superstition.[5]

This, he felt, was generally the situation throughout Europe, where secular conflicts were being provoked by differences in religion, and where it was almost impossible to defend a form of government without taking part either for, or against, a church.

In 1904, writing after the Catholic party had been discredited in France because of the "Dreyfus Affair", Sir George Arthur wrote that France was passing through a period of fierce anti-clericalism. "Never", he quoted from a French writer, "has the religious question been placed with such crude frankness at the base of political life, and never, as today, has the vote of the electorate been so

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[4] Quoted in the Rev. M. Kaufman, Christian Socialism (London, 1888) p. 195.

[5] M. Milsand, "Religion and Politics in France", the Contemporary Review, XXVI (June, 1875).

explicitely pronounced."[6] Thus, while England seemed to be entering upon a period of religious indifference, in France a battle was being fought between the Roman Catholic Church and a highly aggressive atheism. "Between these opposing forces", wrote Arthur, "there lies no debatable ground . . . To all intents and purposes they divide France between them."

Although the Duke of Saint-Simon is the acknowledged father of Christian Socialism, in his own country the socialist movement became strongly collectivist and anti-clerical. Writing in the same year as Sir George Arthur, Georges Goyau described three other philosophical conceptions which were gaining ground in France at the expense of Catholicism:

> A Religion of Moi,[7] which is raised into a sort of Deity; a religion of good will regarded as superior to all beliefs and outside of all; a religion of suffering humanity substituted and preferred to the God of suffering - here are the three conceptions which appear to me to contend with the Roman Church for a share of contemporary youth.[8]

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[6] Sir George Arthur, Anti-Clericalism in France and England", the Nineteenth Century, LV (May, 1904).

[7] The Religion of 'Moi' approached what might be called a religion of Culture- one which its followers believed would enable them to approach God through the most perfect in art, science, literature and feeling. It opposed Catholicism on the grounds that it narrowed both individual thought and the individual soul.

[8] G. Goyau, "Autour du Catholicisne Social", quoted in the Church Quarterly Review, LVIII (5) (April 1904).

How great the differences in opinion were between British and Continental socialists was revealed at the International Social/ist Congresses held at the end of the century. The history of the International had been, from the beginning, a stormy one. In 1874 the First International - then only ten years old - had been shattered by the struggle for power between the Anarchists under the Russian aristocrat Bakounin and the State Socialists under Marl Marx. When successive international conferences were resumed in 1887, the Anarchist element declined in numbers until, in 1896, a resolution was passed excluding it altogether. The Second International, as the conferences after 1889 were called, remained a very weak link connecting the socialist movements in the member countries. A central bureau was not formed until the beginning of the new century, and had very little executive power. At the Paris Conference in 1900 open dissention once more broke out when the action of M. Millerand, a French socialist deputy who had accepted a portfolio in the ministry of M. Waldeck-Rousseau, was the subject of debate. The Communist Manifesto of 1848 had given rise to the dogma that under no circumstances should socialists lend support to a bourgeois government, since to do so would be to retard the overthrow of capitalist society. With the exception of the German

party, however, which remained strongly revolutionary, a number of socialist parties - the British in particular - had adopted the principles of an evolutionary Socialism. In the course of this debate a resolution was introduced by the German socialist, Karl Kautsky, that no socialist deputy should enter a bourgeois ministry except as a delegate of his own party, and then only for a specific object. This resolution was a departure from the strict class-war theory, and the British members saw in it a victory for the revisionist group. However, at the Dresden Conference of the German party in 1901 the Kautsky resolution was strongly condemned, and a new resolution was passed re-affirming the class-war.[9] The "Dresden Resolution" was presented to the International Congress and finally passed;[10] its clauses left no room for doubt regarding the position of its supporters on the question of collaboration with bourgeois governments:

> . . . the Congress, convinced, in opposition to revisionist tendencies, that class antagonisms, far from diminishing, continually increase in bitterness, declares:
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> 1. That the party rejects all responsibility of any sort under the political and economic conditions based on capitalist production, and

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[9] J. Keir Hardie, "The International Socialist Congress", the Nineteenth Century, LVI (October, 1904).

[10] Quoted in Keir Hardie, "The International Congress."

> therefore can in no wise countenance any measure tending to maintain in power the dominant class.
>
> 11. The Social Democracy can accept no participation in the Government under bourgeois society, this decision being in accordance with the Kautsky resolution passed at the International Congress of Paris in 1900.[11]

Following the Dresden Resolution, the British section sponsored the Vandervelde-Adler Amendement, which omitted condemnation of revisionism. The vote ended in a tie, and the original resolution was adopted unchanged.

In his review of the conference later, Hardie strongly criticized the German position. Socialists, he stated, had of necessity to adapt themselves to parliamentary tactics. He quarrelled also with the theory of the 'increasing misery' of the working classes, and argued that Socialism would finally come, not from the growing poverty and despair of the masses, but from their growing intelligence and comfort:

> Then, just in proportion as Socialism grows, so will the influence of its representatives in the national councils increase, and the world may wake up one morning to find that Socialism has come, that the long-dreaded revolution is over, and that dreamers are already in quest of a new ideal for the regeneration of the race.[12]

These were the basic differences: to the leading British socialists the state was not an instrument of oppression, but, in the words of Hardie, "the State is simply a good

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

old donkey that goes the way its driver wants it to go";[13] the class-war was not a permanent factor in bourgeois society which would ultimately result in the revolt of the proletariat, but was already being lessened in the face of the development of human thought and the application of religious principles. The British movement, almost completely undogmatic, was far less intellectual, far more emotional, and, as a result, far more adaptable to change than was the Continental movement. Philip Snowdon recalled the early Labour movement as closer to a religious brotherhood than to a political party; Hardie's own Socialism was described by one of his followers as an intuition rather than an intellectual position; and to Ramsay MacDonald "to think of Man versus the State" was "as impossible as to think of a square circle."[14]

This softening of the Labour movement, largely as a result of Nonconformist influence, resulted in the divorce of the British parties from Continental Socialism. It was also a source of exasperation to British Marxists, one of whom described the ideals of the movement as "the

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[13] Quoted in W. Stewart, Keir Hardie, (London: I.L.P. Publication, 1921), p.336

[14] J.K. Hardie and J.R. MacDonald, "The Independent Labour Party's Platform", the Nineteenth Century, XLV (January, 1899)

skins of dead dogmas stuffed with an adulterated socialist ethics."[15] Its emphasis upon religious values, however, made the working-class movement much less terrifying to the British middle-classes, many of whom belonged to one or another of the Nonconformist churches. They were, as a result, much more ready to accept the principles of the "Liberal Socialism" advocated by Hardie and his followers.

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15 Ernest Bax, the Religion of Socialism, (London: S. Sonnenschein, 1886), p. 95.

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Editorial on "The Pope and Poverty", n.s., III (November 16, 1882).

Editorial on "The Cooperative Congress", n.s., IV (May 24, 1883).

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Article introducing "The Ploughshare", a "Journal of Radical Religion and Morality" edited by the Rev. Alex Webster. (August, 1888).

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APPENDIX

A

STATE OF PARTIES IN SCOTLAND IN THE END OF 1872 AND THE BEGINNING OF 1873*

Adherents of the Free Church	790,000		
Adherents of the United Presbyterian Church	474,000		
Adherents of the Presbyterian Church		1,264,000	
Adherents of the Reformed Presbyterian Church	25,500		
Adherents of the Original Secession Church	9,500		
		35,000	
			1,299,000
Adherents of the Episcopal Church	60,000		
Adherents of the Congregational Church	33,000		
Adherents of the Baptist Church	24,000		
Adherents of the Methodist Church	20,000		
Adherents of the Evangelical Union	30,000		
Plymouth Brothers, and sundry small bodies	15,000		
City and Coast Missions	20,000		
			202,000
Total belonging to Evangelical Denominations not established			1,501,000
Others:			
Socinians and fifteen small sects	10,000		
Roman Catholic population	290,000		
Neglecting Ordinances	530,000		
			830,000
			2,331,000
From entire population	3,394,000		
Deduct the population accounted for	2,331,000		
There remains for Established Church	1,063,000		

*The Rev. James Johnston, "The Ecclesiastical and Religious Statistics of Scotland", in the Redpath Tracts, 1800-1900 (Montreal; McGill University) CLIII (1) (1874).

B

CHURCH AND DISSENT IN ENGLAND AND WALES*

DENOMINATION	MEMBERS
Independents	600,000 (approximate)
Baptists	221,524
Wesleyans, Old Connection	342,380
Wesleyans, New Connection	23,895
Wesleyans Reform Union	8,659
United Methodist Free Churches	63,018
Primitive Methodists	150,000
Bible Christians	18,852
Welsh Calvinistic Methodists	93,044
	1,521,372

*C.G. Colleton Rennie, "An Essay on the Progress and Present Position of Church and Dissent", the Redpath Tracts, CXLIV (1) (1870).

C

PLACES OF WORSHIP IN LONDON AND THEIR ACCOMMODATION*

	PROPORTION PERCENT OF POPULATION ACCOMMODATED		PROPORTION PERCENT OF POPULATION ACCOMMODATED
City of London	104.4	Shoreditch	17.2
Hampstead	52.7	Bermondsey	19.0
St. Martin's	45.4	Stepney	20.2
Hackney	45.4	St. Luke's	21.8
Wandsworth	41.7	Bithnal Green	23.3

*"Religion in London. Statistics of Church and Chapel Accommodation in 1865", in the Redpath Tracts, CXXX (1865).