

How Freethinkers Made Notable Contributions to Civilization

◀ Joseph McCabe



How Freethinkers Made Notable Contributions to Civilization

A Review of the Socially-Constructive Activities
of the World's Foremost Atheist, Agnostics,
Rationalists, Skeptics, Deists, and
Freethinkers

JOSEPH McCABE

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INTRODUCTION

In my *Rise and Fall of the Gods* I traced the appearance of Atheism in all periods of history about which we have ample contemporary evidence. I showed that the common opinion of Atheism, that it is the eccentric profession of a few individuals or of small groups of men and women in sophisticated periods of civilization, is absurdly false. In every age in which men were free to speculate and to discuss their traditions Atheism appeared; and it spread in proportion to the knowledge which men had in each such age. It is now acknowledged that these conditions were found and Atheism spread widely in India and China in the 6th Century B.C., in the Greek-Roman world, and in the best periods of the Arab-Persian civilization. The validity of this historical law, that Atheism always grows with freedom and knowledge, is decisively shown by the world-spread of it, where it is not violently checked, in our own age.

I here propose to complete this study by exposing the folly of the second common estimate of Atheism, or the pretense that it makes men selfish or callously indifferent to the social welfare and to the sufferings of others. It is amazing to what extent our literature is still saturated with the clerical claim that Christianity has a noble record of social service and that with its passing social inspiration will decay. It is surely time that we put together, as I do here, the undisputed historical facts which show that this claim is exactly the reverse of the truth.

The Christian apologetic which is responsible for these perversions of history has passed through three phases. Down to the outbreak of the French Revolution and during the half-century of reaction which followed it the Churches were generally content to claim that they served men's interests in a life beyond the grave. Their entire scheme of doctrine and ritual was based essentially upon men's hope of heaven and fear of hell. With the advance of knowledge and the spread of education however, men began to rub their eyes and to appreciate the fact that hell had been just a nightmare of the race during 15 centuries. Heaven had never been to them more than a pale day-dream, for neither scholar nor artist had ever succeeded in giving it a definite and alluring shape. It was hell that really mattered; and, as this hideous phantom was dismissed by growing millions of folk and they turned eagerly to discover the resources of earth, the clergy had to discover some utility of the Churches in the visible life of man.

First they concentrated upon sexual morality, which they persuaded large numbers of people to call "the social problem." A remarkable literature was produced during this phase. Clerical writers were permitted by historians to make the ridiculous claim that Christianity had made and kept the world virtuous and thus saved Western civilization from the decay which the older empires had brought upon themselves by vice. Anti-clerical writers like Emerson, Lowell, Huxley and Spencer, instead of showing that the Christian period had been, on the contrary, one of the utmost sexual freedom,

argued zealously that the code of virtuous behavior was independent of religion and would be as authoritative as ever. But the general public, which had not needed either science or philosophy to teach it that hell is a disreputable myth, again consulted its common sense and drew its own conclusion. If, men said to the clergy, you insist that there is no basis for your law of sexual virtue except in the Christian religion, it is obviously a part of your peculiar domestic discipline, not a requirement of social stability, and does not concern non-Christians.

So in the closing years of the last century the clergy began to enter upon the third phase of their apologetic. They were, they said, the guardians, not merely of purity, but of justice. They were the inspirers of the generosity, benevolence, and unselfish idealism which soften the harshness of life for the unfortunate. The civilization of the white race was, they urged, superior to any other, more progressive and longer-lived, because it was based upon Christian conceptions of justice, service, and brotherliness. Remove those foundations and the entire social fabric would totter.

It is astonishing that in an age when every period of history is as thoroughly explored as the course of the Amazon, millions of men and women, often with pretensions to culture, can still seriously entertain the thin fallacies and rank untruths by means of which this claim is sustained. To the historian such statements as that Christianity broke the fetters of the slave, secured justice for the free worker, gave the world schools and hospitals, emancipated women, and raised the general level of character are just amusingly impudent. In each of these respects the new Christian world completely ruined the fine constructive work which the Romans had done. The social and intellectual degradation that followed was, in its duration and squalor, worse than any of the other reactions which have, in various ages and countries, suspended the progress of the race. The recovery, from the 11th to the 18th Century, was slower than that of Egypt, China, India, Persia, or any other civilization after one of their corresponding Dark Ages; and this slowness was largely due to the opposition, of the Church. In a little book entitled **The Social Record of Christianity** I have given a summary of the facts in so far as they show the real historical action of Christianity: Here I make a complementary summary of the facts which compose what we may call the Social Record of Skepticism. We shall find that, as is almost invariably the case when the religious apologist turns to history, his claim is just the reverse of the truth. On the most sober and critical presentment of the undisputed facts of history the great periods of benevolence and social service have been also the most notable periods of skepticism, and skeptics led in every branch of social reform and redress of ancient evils.

CHAPTER I

WHO FIRST TAUGHT THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN?

In its later centuries what we call the Ancient World gave birth to the ideals, intellectual, social, and political, which would later inspire modern civilization. The cradles of these ideals were a number of beautiful and very cosmopolitan cities which arose, facing the blue and sunny Mediterranean, on the Western coast of Asia Minor. There the advancing wave of the migrating Greeks met merchants and travelers from all the older civilizations. They perceived the rustic character of the stories about gods and goddesses which their fathers had brought from Europe, and, while the uneducated workers merely adapted the legends to their new environment and raised superb temples like that of Diana at Ephesus, the more able and more thoughtful, freed from the religious tyranny that was still powerful in Greece, indulged in novel and independent speculation and worked out the rudiments of science, philosophy, social ethics, and political democracy.

Amongst the ideals they cultivated was that of the brotherhood of men. From the very foundation of civilization men had vaguely seen that their own experience of social life strongly recommended the ideal of mutual helpfulness and friendliness. It is true that the gradation of social ranks, the relations of kings or nobles to subjects and of masters to workers, led to oppressions and cupidities which thwarted the ideal, but it was theoretically honored as a law of social life. Dead kings and nobles boast in the earliest tombs of Egypt how just and generous to the needy and helpless they had been. The earliest code of law in Babylonia sternly insists on justice to the workers and to women. As soon as China comes into the full light of history we find its great teacher Kung-pu-tse summing up the entire code of duty or social wisdom in the word "Reciprocity;" and the ideal is plainly implied in the universal benevolence upon which Buddha and his followers laid supreme stress in India.

But it was an interesting and almost forgotten people, whose country lay back of the coast-cities of Asia Minor—indeed, they ruled the cities at the time to which I refer—that most clearly formulated the law of the brotherhood of men. Few folk have not at one time or other heard or read of Croesus, but if you add that he was the king of the Lydians not one in a hundred thousand will understand. Our history is still so largely written by men who bow to religious prejudices that the Lydians and their great contribution to ancient civilization are never mentioned. For their religion was mainly a light cult of the goddess of love, and their sex-practices were as free as, if not more free than, those of any other nation. Yet it was these extremely sensual and amorous folk who passed on to the Greeks and Romans one of the finest elements of their civilization, the law

of universal friendliness or, in a rather exaggerated phrase, of the brotherhood of men.

Inland from what is now the city of Smyrna lies a broad and rich valley which offers a most pleasant contrast to the hilly districts North and South and to the half-barren mountains of Greece and the Balkans. A wave of the Aryan migration from Greece and the Balkans broke into this region, mingling with the earlier inhabitants and in time gaining lordship over the whole Western half of Asia Minor. These were the Lydians. To the natural wealth of the country they added a skill in trade which made their capital, Sardis, one of the great cities of the old world and its last king, Croesus, the immortal symbol of wealth.

They had brought with them the stogy figures of the Olympian family of gods and goddesses, but they found that in Asia Minor the chief deity was not the sky-fathers. It was the great earth-mother, the goddess of love and fertility, Ma. So they identified their "mother of the gods" with Ma, and, while they declined to adopt some of the harsher features of her cult, such as the castration of priests, they embraced very cordially the glorification of sex which was associated with it throughout western Asia. An ancient traveler quaintly says of them that the classes they held in highest esteem were "bankers, merchants, artisans, inn-keepers, and courtesans." All girls earned their dowry by religious prostitution in the temples, and it is recorded with honor that the richest contribution to the building of one of their chief monuments was made by the prostitutes.

While their religious beliefs thus sanctioned and encouraged sexual freedom, it was also part of their exceptionally genial ideal of life. They were regarded by travelers as the most pleasure-loving people on earth. They were famed for their cooking, their wine, their gambling, their music, and their pleasure-gardens. And it was part of the same ideal that they should cultivate friendliness more than other nations did. "Friend of all men" was the highest compliment they paid to their dead; and amongst them originated the practice of organizing the workers of the various crafts in brotherhoods or unions, which spread in time over the whole Greek-Roman world. That they dreamed of a brotherhood of men in an international sense no one would claim. Their ideal had its nationalist limitations, and, while they extended their friendliness to all peaceful visitors, they conquered and ruled a good deal of territory. It was, nevertheless, this ideal of the Lydians which became, in the minds of certain Greek thinkers, the doctrine of the brotherhood of all men and had most notable consequences in the life of the Roman Empire.

Social history is, as I said, still so lamentably written that most folk are under the impression that the doctrine of the brotherhood of men, in so far as it has proved the inspiration of reforms and philanthropies, was contributed to civilization by Judaism and Christianity. The Lydians cultivated it long before we have any reason to suppose that "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" was lodged in Hebrew literature. That commandment, which almost defeats itself by prescribing a psychological impossibility, if you take it literally, meant to the Hebrew no more than that he should live in peace and mutual helpfulness with his Hebrew neighbors. From the early prophets to the latest rabbis of the Talmud the attitude

prescribed toward the Gentile is very far from friendliness. Whether the command has or has not prevented Jewish families and neighbors from quarreling as others do we will not inquire, but when the commandment was taken over by the early Christian writers it became ironic. Not only do the earliest documents of the New Testament show that there were violent quarrels in the communities even in the first flush of the apostolic fervor, but within a century the entire Church was lit, in the conflict with the Agnostics, by a veritable conflagration of passion.

The history of the Church from that time onward is a grim comment on its claim that it taught Europe the brotherhood of man or put a living inspiration into that doctrine by basing it upon the fatherhood of God. How barren of social results it was, I have shown in my *Social Record of Christianity*, but there must be few who are ignorant of the broad features of the Christian Era which make a mockery of the humanitarian ideal.

Slavery, the greatest sin against man, was extended to more than four-fifths of the people of Europe and not condemned by any Church until the age of skepticism opened in the 18th Century; and until the same period the majority of what were called free workers were kept in dire poverty and ignorance, and inferiority. In no previous civilization had there been so stark a contrast of the callous wealth and arrogant power of the minority and the squalor and helplessness of the vast majority. War, the second greatest sin against man, remains to our own time and is more devastating than ever; and some of the worst wars (Thirty Years War, etc.) were waged in the name of the religion which was supposed to have taught Europe the brotherhood of men. Worst of all, the authorities of the religion invented the dogma that rebellion against themselves was a lethal crime, and, if we make a full tally of men who were slain, generally with great barbarity, for revolt against the Church (including heretics of the Greek Church, Albigensians, Witches, etc.), we find that literally millions of men, women, and children, or far more than in all the other religions of the world put together, were immolated on this spurious altar of the brotherhood of men under the fatherhood of God.

Very different is the story of the genuine ideal of the friendliness or brotherhood of men which we trace back to its cradle in sensual and erotic Lydia. The Lydians dominated the famous strip of the western coast of Asia Minor, Ionia, and the nearer islands when the Greeks in that region made their first contribution to European civilization by a wonderful development of poetry and love of beauty. Their influence was still paramount when, in the cities of the coast, cosmopolitan Greeks made the second great contribution by inaugurating the practice of speculating on the nature of things and the code of human behavior independently of all religious traditions and thus laying the foundation of philosophy, science, and ethics. It was in a general atmosphere of skepticism, of lost allegiance to the old gods of Greece without any deep acceptance of the gods of Asia, that these things were accomplished.

The third and greatest achievement of the Greeks was the splendor of Athens. The port of Athens was the nearest Greek port to the islands and the Ionian cities, and it was this geographical fact, not a genius of the Athenian people which led to the opening of its

glorious career. Here again the work was accomplished in a general atmosphere of skepticism. The contemporary Greek historian Thucydides repeatedly assures us (*History of the Peloponesian War*, II, 53, III, 82, etc.) that the flowering of Athens in all its glory was preceded and accompanied by a great spread of Atheism, and the two outstanding men and, the intellectual and the artistic life, Pericles and Pheidias, were skeptics. It was the quite general attitude of the brilliant gathering at Athens of philosophers and artists who gave the city its undying fame.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that skepticism created the glory of Athens and piety ruined it. The ignorant people, a truculently pious self-governing democracy, seeing the natural alliance of culture and aristocracy, turned upon the skeptics. Socrates was sentenced to death and several philosophers were banished. Creativeness almost ceased, and it was in this period of decay that the semi-skeptics, and historians call Plato and Aristotle, gathered small groups about them. Able as they were, the modern practice of glorifying them is misleading, since all authorities now acknowledge that they had very little influence in the Greek world and still less in the Roman. For real contributions to civilization we look to two philosophers, Zeno and Epicurus, who came later; and they came to Athens from the direction of Asia Minor and gave the world an explicit and effective doctrine of the brotherhood of men. Both were dogmatic materialists, ridiculing the very idea of spirit (as most of the Greek thinkers did) and speaking of the Gods, when they were forced to do so, in a way which deceived nobody.

Zeno, son of a Phoenician merchant, came to Athens from the island of Cyprus, earlier from Asia Minor, and founded the Stoic philosophy. It was a combination of a theory of some philosophers, that a great impersonal mind, composed of some sort of finer matter than ordinary stuff, pervaded and guided nature, with the Lydian belief in the brotherhood of men. Since all historians admit that the followers of Zeno had a very considerable social influence in the next five centuries, his teaching is called a religion, and so the fiction that religion alone can inspire social service is maintained. He quite certainly did not believe in a personal God or anything spiritual and had not the least idea of founding a religion. The truth is that most writers who mention Stoicism give their readers a quite false idea of his character and aims. They make him the arch-apostle of virtue. I do not know a single writer on him who reproduces this statement about him in the *Lives of the Philosophers of Diogenes Laertius*:

He rarely used boys, and he had recourse to prostitutes only a few times, and then only to show that he had no prejudice against women.

A strange founder of a new religion!

The truth is that while the mystic element of his philosophy, the belief in a material mind pervading nature and consequently a deep respect for the law of nature, was developed by a few of his followers on definitely religious lines, it was the humanitarianism that appealed to most of them; and they were innumerable and often men of the greatest influence. In this humanitarian ideal his philos-

ophy coincided with that of Epicurus, and the idealism of the Roman world was due to a blend of the two.

Epicurus also came to Athens from the East, the island of Samos. Descriptions of him as the apostle of pleasure, especially sensual pleasure, are as silly as the description of Voltaire and Paine as Atheists. He was a very learned and refined man of the most temperate habits, and he expressly held that passion interfered with the happiness of life. His cardinal social doctrine was friendship or friendliness to all men. Men, women, and slaves were equally welcome to his table, on which one rarely saw anything but bread, barley-water, cheese, and fruit. To ward off fanaticism he said that there might be gods of the Olympian type in some remote corner of the universe, without the least interest in human affairs and therefore of no interest to men. He was a dogmatic materialist and an Atheist.

Hence when historians tell us that for the next five or six centuries the greatest social inspiration of the Greeks and Romans was a blend of Stoicism and Epicureanism, they mean a blend of the sentimental brotherhood of Epicurus with the Stoic idea that this was enjoined by the law of nature. The blend is usually called Stoicism, and there is then so little reluctance to admit its fine results that you will find these acknowledged in any good encyclopedia. "No system of philosophy," says the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "has borne fruit in practice to an extent comparable with that of Stoicism." "It was the creed, if not the philosophy, of all the best Romans," says the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. "All the principal kings in existence in the generations following Zeno professed themselves Stoics," says Professor Gilbert Murray.

Over this wide field we cannot wander, and we must be content to notice the two greatest contributions to civilization which we trace to this inspiration. One was the magnificent development of science at Alexandria. Here a genuine scientific method was followed, and century by century the scholars laid the foundations of our leading sciences. This was not the only contribution to civilization of the great and magnificent city which the later Greeks—even Cleopatra was of pure Greek or Macedonian blood—built at the gates of Egypt. A very generous medical service of the poor was provided, and fine parks, zoological gardens, theaters, hippodromes, and superb marble buildings made the city pleasant for all citizens. The idea of universal education had not yet won recognition, but we are not well informed about the life of Alexandria in this respect, and the zeal of its rulers to collect a library of more than half a million volumes suggests that a large proportion of the population was literate. They provided also the finest supply of pure water to all citizens that the world had yet seen. I have shown in my *Rise and Fall of the Gods* that there was no Stoic religion, or any other genuine religion, in the Ptolemies, the Greek kings of Egypt who financed and sedulously encouraged this work, or in the great majority of the scholars who created Alexandrian science.

This superb city, which seemed to be inaugurating a new age and leading the race in the direction of modern civilization, was one of many which the Greeks created when Athens fell into decay. On the hills of Asia Minor, where ragged peasants have struggled

for a living during the last thousand years, they built the smaller but hardly less sumptuous city of Pergamos, with a library of 300,000 volumes and the usual marble theaters, temples, gymnasias, etc. Four centuries later it was still so flourishing that its school produced the greatest medical writer of the old world, Galen. Many such cities were built, and they generally had a high standard of social service and civic spirit. It was a common practice to provide free medical service, and sometimes a number of cities competed to secure an eminent medical man, who then received what was for that age a princely salary; and we must not forget that Greek physicians were bound by a solemn oath, not merely by the honor of their profession, to avoid discreditable practices.

This fine constructive work of the later Greeks, in an age when skepticism was more widely spread than at any other time until the 19th Century, was taken over and carried to a higher level of public benevolence by the Romans. In general literature, and even in many historical works—particularly in popular manuals of general history or of the history of philosophy—the valuable service of the Greeks on this side is concealed by concentrating the reader's attention upon the beautiful buildings of Athens or upon the philosophic systems of Plato and Aristotle, which had very little influence in the old world. An even worse practice of such writers is to describe the Romans as selfish and callous. For no expert historian questions that it was precisely in the Roman world that the Stoic-Epicurean doctrine of the brotherhood of man had its finest triumph.

It is now 150 years since Gibbon described the age of the Stoic-Epicurean emperors at Rome as "the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous." One historian after another has endorsed that verdict or at least given the highest praise to the benignant rule of those emperors. Even Protestant historians like Sir Samuel Dill and Dr. Emil Reich, experts on the history of Rome, have amply reckoned the Romans from the ancient calumnies, and Reich has made a contemptuous attack upon their slanders. Mr. T. R. Glover, another Protestant historian and high authority, says that this second century "was, perhaps, the period when a greater proportion of the civilized world had a better government than at any other time" (*The Influence of Christ in the Ancient World*, p. 13). Yet apologetic writers and preachers repeat the old untruths, and popular writers on history follow them.

Greek philosophy reached Italy when the Romans looked to the East for other worlds to conquer. By this time the schools which were predominant in Greece were the Skeptical School and the Stoic-Epicurean. The system of the Skeptics corresponded closely to Agnosticism as it was defined by Huxley and must have had for the realistic Romans an air of intellectual paradox; though it did at once lead to a good deal of skepticism in the ordinary sense. It was the Stoic-Epicurean ideas which appealed to the Romans, and, apart from a few students like Seneca and Marcus Aurelius and some of the great lawyers, it was rather the Epicurean sentiment of brotherhood than the Stoic dogma which was accepted. Already in the 1st Century B.C. the famous orator and writer Cicero, a skeptic as regards even belief in God, composed a treatise, *On Duties*, which

accepted as a fundamental principle "the friendliness of the whole human race." A century later the philosopher Seneca used the very language of Epicurus, saying that the slave is "just a friend in an inferior condition." Between the two is Julius Caesar. Most people think of him only as a conqueror, but he was a universal genius and a statesman with high ideals of civilization. Mommsen fills a whole chapter with an admiring account of the plans for the Romans which the daggers of the assassins prevented him from realizing.

It was, however, in the period after the removal of the insane Nero and the half-insane Domitian that social idealism lent a glow to the Empire. Most of us recognize today that science and social idealism are the chief factors of civilization. Some day they will be fully embodied in the organization of the state, as they are in Russia, but meantime we gratefully count the nations or ages whose contributions led the race in that direction. The Greeks of Alexandria, and in a lesser degree of other cities, had begun the work of creating science. Whether it was from circumstances or from temperament, if we may draw that distinction, the Romans neglected science, but they gave the world a brilliant example of social idealism. I have shown this in detail in several Little Blue Books (1218, etc.) and larger works and must be content here with a short summary.

First as regards slavery, which is counted their greatest crime. Before the Christian Era opened the Romans had begun to alleviate the lot of the slave and check the irresponsibility of cruel masters; though these were far less numerous than many writers assert, just as recent experts find that slaves were very much less numerous than had been supposed. In short, before the close of what is called the Stoic period the slave was legally protected from cruelty, the killing of slaves was counted murder, the conditions of their life were compulsorily improved, and the manumission (freeing) of slaves was warmly encouraged. Whereas Christian apologists now resort to the miserable subterfuge that Christ and Paul did not condemn slavery because they hesitated to wreck the Roman economic system—as if either of them cared a button to preserve that system—the most eloquent of the Roman orators, Dio Chrysostom, a friend of the emperor and idol of the patricians, delivered two powerful orations, which we have, in which he declared, in the heart of Rome, that slavery was immoral. It was against the law of nature. No Church condemned it until skeptics roused the conscience of the world against it, as we shall see, in the 18th Century.

Thus a crime against one half the hundred million inhabitants of the Roman Empire was very greatly mitigated. What the emperors did for the entire body of workers it would take a chapter to describe in full. I will not stress the fact that corn (and at some periods other food) was distributed free to the citizens of Rome and elsewhere, for the motive here was largely political. But the abundant free provision of pure water, the street-sanitation, the numerous holidays (more than half the days of the year), the superb baths, libraries, and gymnasia to which they were admitted for a cent, the free theaters, circus, and amphitheaters, the gorgeous shows (sometimes costing half a million dollars in a day) provided free for the crowd, and the beautifully decorated marble lounging-places

and colonnades gave the workers a positively pampered position.

Controversial writers ignore or are ignorant of these things, and they tell their readers that the Romans had no schools or hospitals or philanthropic institutions until the Church started them. This is as bad as when they say that Christianity "broke the fetters of the slave." The Roman system of education has been described for a hundred years in histories of education and classical dictionaries. A network of free primary schools, often in the open air, covered the empire and in the towns and cities taught all children. A system of free secondary schools, with teachers paid by the municipality, was so widespread that even small towns near the edge of the Sahara in Africa had them. And in the larger cities were higher institutions, corresponding to our universities, to which poor youths were admitted free and in many cases given maintenance. No modern manual of the history of education describes the Roman system otherwise.

The claim that the Romans had no care of the sick poor is just as wildly inaccurate. From the Greeks they adopted the cult of the healing god Aesculapius, and, as in Greece, the priests of every temple of this god devoted themselves to the free treatment of the sick. But from the time of Nero onward Roman cities had, like most of the Greek, municipal doctors to give free treatment to the poor. Rome had one in each of its 14 poor wards, and other cities had from five to 10. They received good salaries, though they were also allowed to charge rich patients, and were exempt from taxation. Some were women-doctors, and there were also dentists.

As to philanthropic institutions, the historical truth, about which no expert differs, here makes a mockery of the conventional jibe that the Romans were callous and selfish. The Stoic-Epicurean emperors (from about 90 to 180 A.D.) set a fine example in founding and endowing orphanages, homes for the aged, free-food institutions for poor children, libraries, baths, etc., and rich men and women followed it in every city. The Protestant historian Reich doubts "whether private benefactions under the Antonines were less frequent and generous than in our own day" (*History of Civilization*, p. 19). When the historian Lecky, an arch-trimmer in contrasting pagan and Christian service, wrote that charitable institutions were "absolutely unknown to the whole pagan world," archeologists had not yet examined many of the inscriptions which have since been discovered on the ruins of these institutions. Any writer who repeats Lecky's words today is dishonest. Both in Greece and Rome, Sir Samuel Dill says, "the rich had to pay heavily for their honors and social consideration in the days of Cicero and in the days of Symmachus" (*Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 191): that is to say, from the 1st Century B.C. to the 4th Century A.D. In no other age of the world except that of the Arab-Persian civilization at its best and our modern skeptical age was there even a remote approach to this practical application of the brotherhood of men. It was by no means confined to Rome. It spread to the 1,197 cities—we should say towns and cities—of Italy; and cities with public marble buildings; the same institutions were built by the Romans from Gaul to the edge of the Sahara, from Spain to the Syrian and Persian deserts.

That all the benevolent emperors, governors, and wealthy folk who contributed their donations of from \$5,000 to \$50,000 (worth far more than such sums now are) were skeptics no one dreams of claiming. The greatest emperor of them all, Hadrian, notoriously was, and he was (like his wife, a professed Epicurean) rather an Epicurean than a Stoic. It is enough that the inspiration of the whole work was the Stoic-Epicurean doctrine of the brotherhood of men, **not** under the fatherhood of God, and that the whole of this splendid constructive work falls in the greatest age of skepticism that the world had yet known. As the gods receded into the clouds, earth became brighter for the mass of the people.

CHAPTER II

SKEPTICAL ARABS SHAME CHRISTENDOM

Since I propose in this book chiefly to examine social experience and its inspiration in modern times, I have in the last chapter surveyed about a thousand years of ancient history. For the same reason I do not extend the survey to Asia and describe the magnificent social service of the Buddhist (and Agnostic) King Asoka in India or of several Confucian (Agnostic) monarchs in China. Of Asia it is enough to say that all constructive civilization there before the modern age is traced by all historians to the teaching of two men, Buddha and Kung-fu-tse; and both were Atheists in the sense that they advised men not to waste time and energy upon questions of Gods, spirits, or religions and clearly did not believe in these. If it seems to any reader that I have covered a vast expanse of territory too hastily, he will find on inquiry that I have explored it fully and given the highest authorities in my **History of Morals, Rise and Fall of the Gods, Hundred Men Who Moved the World**, and a number of the Little Blue Books. But there is no statement of fact in the preceding chapter that cannot be verified in any good Classical Dictionary or Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities or in the accepted specialist manuals.

With the same design of coming speedily to the new constructive age which began in the 18th Century I here survey 14 centuries in a single chapter. If I have any reader who has not learned the reason from my previous detailed works on the period, and if he thinks that at least I ought to meet the current claim that civilization rose higher than ever when the Christian religion was imposed upon the Greek-Roman world, I would remind him that the Dark Age which enwrapped Europe from about 450 to about 1050 A.D. makes a mockery of such claims. I have elsewhere pointed out a singular fact to which no other historian has drawn attention: that by the year 600 A.D. civilization seemed to have collapsed in every part of the globe. There was still wealth and art of a kind in the Byzantine or Greek half of the old Roman Empire, but character was in all classes debased and cruel and the mass of the people were densely ignorant, degraded, and exploited. It was worse in Europe; and, by a strange coincidence, Persia, China, and India also were just then in a state of confusion and reaction. If there are folk of a more advanced race on Mars who can follow the fortunes of Earth, they must have concluded that the 3000-year effort of these humans to construct a civilization had finally perished. The first great age of skepticism was over and civilization had passed away with it.

In explaining this collapse we make full allowance for the destruction of the Roman Empire in Europe by the Huns and the Goths and Vandals. When the apologist is compelled to face the facts and to admit that the Roman Empire fell speedily into degradation

after it became Christian, he is eager to throw the whole blame upon the barbarians. He never tells his readers that these barbarians hardly entered the Eastern or Greek half of the Empire, yet it also sank into debasement. It is one of the most amusing features of Lecky's **History of European Morals** that he makes a desperate effort to find some improvement upon pagan days in Christian Europe, yet he passes one of the severest and most contemptuous verdicts in all history upon Greek Christendom, which was **not** affected by barbaric invasions. He finds this Empire, in which Christians were free to work out their social ideals and there was ample wealth for the purpose, "one of the least noble forms that civilization has yet assumed" (II. 6). It was "very cruel and very sensual;" it was "pre-eminently the age of treachery" and "more destitute of all the elements of greatness than any other civilization." In fact, he says of Christian Europe itself after discovering many virtues in it—discovering them, that is to say, in its religious fiction—that "few men who are not either priests or monks" would not have preferred to live in the best Greek or Roman days rather than anywhere in Christian Europe during the thousand years that followed "the triumph of Christianity."

Let us avoid the contortions of both the apologist and the historian who keeps one eye on religious prejudice and consider the facts. The great Roman institutions which I described in the last chapter obviously depended upon wealth, public and private, and upon state and municipal organization. The barbaric invasions destroyed these over practically the whole of Europe. But why was the recovery so slow? Some recent historians of the school which professes that we have been unjust to the Church point out that barbarians from the North continued to descend upon Christian Europe. These, however, were local disturbances, and in two cases out of three the "barbarians" (the Lombards and Normans in Italy, for instance) became in two generations more civilized than the Pope's subjects.

But let us quit these historical wrangles and consult the facts which matter. We are asked to believe that Christianity abolished slavery and gave the world schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions. The reader will now be prepared to see the small grain of truth in this preposterous statement. The Greek-Roman world had these institutions in enormous numbers, but they were, naturally, pagan, and, since the early Church tried desperately to keep its people out of that atmosphere, it had to do something in the way of providing similar institutions of its own brand.

As a matter of fact, it did very little even before the fall of the Empire robbed it of most of the vast wealth which the new Christian emperors had heaped upon it. All the wealth was wanted for the Churches and the clergy. The Roman Church, for instance, was one of the richest and strongest, but it had not even one small hospital until the year 380 A.D. The apologetic writer Loring Brace, one of the most zealous to show what Christianity did in this way, can fill only eight lines of his large work with actual evidence of Christian hospitals. Schools were more numerous, since they were essential for the instruction of converts, but to compare the thin scattering of poor catechetical schools with the state-system of the Empire would be like comparing the surviving old-time "herbalists"

here and there with the medical system of a country. It was, of course, the same with the charitable institutions. Unless the Churches had provided free food for the poor and cared for widows and orphans, they could not have held what ground they did in competition with the pagans.

From about 380 onward, when all rival religions were forbidden by law, under penalty of death, and decrees were passed for the destruction or closing of their temples, we ought, especially as the Church was now wealthy, to expect quite a spring-time growth of Christian schools and orphanages, and hospitals. Nothing of the kind happened. The pagans, especially at Rome, defied the decrees, and the Church was absorbed in a mighty struggle with them and with large bodies of heretics and schismatics in its own sphere. When, in the early years of the 5th Century, the bishops got sufficient power in most places, there was an orgy of destruction of colleges, libraries, temples, literature, and works of art. The vandalism was stupendous. The burning of the great library and college at Alexandria and the murder of Hypatia were part of the pious orgy. Constructive work in the same period was negligible.

A clerical writer might suggest that when this destruction of a culture that was steeped in paganism was completed, the Church would really have begun the constructive work with which it is fraudulently credited, but just at that period the Northern and Asiatic barbarians poured over the Empire from Cologne to Carthage. Again the plea is worthless. One to two million barbarians, mostly (except the Huns) traveling afoot—and I include the women and children in this figure—could not literally cover the whole Western Empire, yet historians find very little trace of schools or charitable institutions even in the parts, such as the South of Gaul, where the Romans had built a dozen fine cities, which were least disturbed. When, moreover, the Goths who settled in Italy found a great leader, Theodoric, who made a fine effort to save the old culture, the Roman Church opposed him and ruined his work.

But, while the tremendous devastation broadly explains the disappearance of the great work of the Greeks and Romans, and the Church had not now the wealth to construct a new system of schools and hospitals, the economic catastrophe itself gave the Church one splendid opportunity to prove the sincerity of its doctrine of the brotherhood of men. The Roman system of slavery was destroyed in every province. The vast crowds of slaves which the state had employed were automatically released when the state fell, and the larger private slave-owners lost their wealth and let their troops of slaves disperse. If, as apologists now commonly say, we must excuse, if not admire, the Christian leaders for not condemning slavery in the first four centuries because it would have destroyed the fabric of the Roman economic system, now was the great opportunity to speak. It proves the insincerity of these apologies when we find that not a single bishop or Church even now condemned slavery. On the contrary, the greatest Christian teacher of the age, St. Augustine, the man who would be the leading oracle of Europe for the next thousand years, expressly defended it, and in the most popular and most influential of his works, *The City of God* (Book XIX, ch. 65) and

the greatest Popes, Leo I and Gregory I, always treated it as a settled and just institution.

The truth about this greatest sin against the brotherhood of man is that when Europe became Christian, slavery became worse than ever, and no Christian Church ever condemned it until the lay conscience began to protest against it in the 18th Century. It has been the custom to say that slavery generally ended, in the 5th Century, with the destruction of slave-owners, and was succeeded by serfdom. Modern sociologists like Vinogradov have shown that serfdom was slavery. What really happened, therefore, is that, whereas in the later days of pagan Rome the slaves were at the most **one-fourth** of the workers, according to recent authorities, in Christian Europe at least **four-fifths** of the workers were slaves. From the 12th to the 14th Century this new type of slavery was abolished, by economic and political influences, in most countries, but the Pope's own country, Italy, continued to do a big traffic in slaves with the East. It was no word of the Popes but the triumph of the Turks in the East that destroyed this traffic, and it was then continued by the Catholic Spaniards and Portuguese across the Atlantic and developed into the crime of black slavery in America. Who started the movement for the abolition of that we shall see later.

As to hospitals, schools, and charitable institutions, they almost ceased to exist. You can count on your fingers the schools that experts discover in any century, for the whole of Europe, between the years 500 and 1050 A.D. If after the latter date they appear in large numbers, what we shall see about the Arabs in Spain will tell you why. Every single authoritative history of education will show you an appalling blank for that period of more than five centuries and admit that not one man in 10 could read. Often princes and nobles could not read or write, even in Rome. Europe had become more densely and comprehensively ignorant than any previous civilization had ever been.

There is the same awful blank in histories of hospitals and charitable institutions. Instead of reading Catholic writers with their quite arbitrary pictures of the good monks opening schools, copying classical literature, feeding the poor, maintaining orphans, etc.—pictures in which one really religious monastery is quoted and 999 full of idle sensualists are ignored—read expert works, or even articles in the best encyclopedias. All have the same story about educational and philanthropic institutions: a splendid record in Buddhist India and in the Greek-Roman world, a most miserable collection of far-scattered institutions in medieval Christendom, and then another splendid record in the Arab-Persian civilization. If we say that civilization perished in Europe for five or six centuries, the only sound objection—if you can call it such—is that we really do in the course of those centuries pick up a semi-civilized monarch (Charlemagne, Alfred, etc.) and a learned and upright bishop here and there.

Six hundred years of widespread skepticism and high civilization had been followed by six hundred years of rigorous Christian orthodoxy and semi-barbarism. To try to explain that by the movements of the barbarians is like trying to explain the demoralization of the modern world by the popularity of the cinema. The plain truth is that the Church opposed enlightenment—Gregory I expressly for-

bade the opening of schools—and its monks and prelates were too selfish and sensual to imitate the philanthropy of the pagans.

An improvement on certain lines began in the second half of the 11th Century. There was an intellectual stirring, a rebirth of art, a moderate increase of philanthropic institutions. The Catholic writer is jubilant. His readers, confined by the Church to the reading of uncritical literature, do not ask him for an adequate explanation of the previous six centuries of squalor and ignorance. They do not even put to him the common-sense question why, if the world was so highly civilized six centuries ago—Belloc in his latest book says that it was the greatest civilization of all time—it was still so vicious and unjust at the beginning of the 19th Century. And unfortunately our professional historians are, under Catholic pressure, increasingly reluctant to give a scientific answer to these questions and say, candidly, that the reason why Europe began to advance in the 11th Century is because it was shamed by the brilliance, prosperity, and philanthropy of the Arab civilization. They refuse to study the Arab civilization of Spain and Sicily lest they be compelled to tell the truth. Only two American writers in 50 years have seriously studied it—Draper and, especially, S. P. Scott—and only one, Stanley Lane Poole, in England; and they agree with me.

This development must be considered here because it is a vital part of my theme. In the 9th and 10th Centuries, when Italy, France, Germany, and England were semi-barbaric and completely Christian, the Arabs constructed a fine civilization, or reconstructed the Greek-Roman civilization, in Spain and Sicily; and they were able to do this very largely because skepticism again spread far and wide, and the leading princes, statesmen, and scholars who took part in the work were skeptics. To complete the general statement let me add that skeptics constructed, or had the far largest part in constructing, this great civilization: orthodox Moslem hampered their work, especially when they sought to develop the science they inherited from Greeks; and fanatical Moslem and Christians finally destroyed it. Further, this brilliant Moslem culture was able to arouse Europe chiefly because from about 1050 onward there was a considerable spread of skepticism in Christendom, and the slowness with which, except as regards art (which was useful to the Church), it raised Europe out of its semi-barbarism was due to the bloody opposition of the Church.

Now let us take these propositions in order. I must be brief, but the reader may be able to see the full development of and evidence for them in my large work *The Splendor of Moorish Spain* (1935). The prompt appearance and wide spread of skepticism in the Arab world are easily understood. The leading families of Mecca had notoriously regarded Mohammed as an impostor and had yielded only to armed force and, later, to the rich prospect of loot in Persia, Syria, and Egypt. Their skepticism remained in their families, and it was the son of one of the Prophets most contemptuous opponents who founded the first Arab civilization, in Syria, with Damascus as capital. Most of the Caliphs of this dynasty were skeptics, and it was a skeptical descendant of them who founded the civilization in Spain which is wrongly called Moorish. The majority of the rulers in Spain, especially the greater Emirs or Caliphs, were skeptics, and their

people were so widely skeptical that wine, which was an abomination to all pious Moslem, was almost as abundant as it is in Spain and Portugal today. In the sister-civilization of Persia some of the greatest Caliphs were skeptics, and even the orthodox Caliphs employed as their chief ministers Persian nobles and scholars who, historians recognize, were generally skeptics. It was these who did the work.

The impulse to their work came from ancient Greek literature, which they had translated into Arabic, and from the Persian civilization which they had conquered. Their philosophers, scientists, and historians, of whom they had thousands in the course of six centuries, had to be as diplomatic about religion as our modern professors; and they had far better cause, for an open word against the Prophet roused the fanatical minority to murderous fury. Very little of the literature which they wrote, which was incredibly abundant, has been spared by the Christian fanatics who destroyed their civilization, but we at least know the opinions about religion of their leading philosophers. They generally followed Aristotle and taught a semi-Pantheistic system of thought which was utterly inconsistent with the Mohammedan religion. Some of them were credited with most contemptuous epigrams about religion, which were very popular. The extraordinary religious toleration which the Caliphs allowed and the mass of the people genially supported is, seeing that orthodox Moslem were fiercely intolerant, significant enough of the general skepticism.

The civilization which was developed in this skeptical atmosphere and usually under skeptical rulers was in some respects higher than even the Greek-Roman; and this refers particularly to the two features, the cultivation of science and the practice of social idealism, which are most distinctive of a true civilization. If the Arabs fell short of the Greeks in artistic greatness, we must remember that the Koran sternly forbade the sculpture or painting of human and animal figures, and, although even this precept of the Koran was flagrantly defied by many of the great Caliphs, the orthodox opposition was too strong to permit a free development of these arts. On the other hand, the love of beauty spread in all classes to an extent that was unknown to the Greeks and Romans. No other civilization ever had such vast numbers of beautiful gardens, public as well as private; and the craftsmen put beauty into their products as no other ever did. As a result, and in view of the enormous wealth and light taxation, the mass of the people were gayer and happier than in any previous age. There were few slaves in Spain, while four-fifths of the workers in Christian Europe were slaves. The wealth of the country was created—none came from exploited colonies—by free and happy workers in the finest agricultural system the world had yet seen and in the great industries of cities which had quarter of a million to a million inhabitants at a time when no city in Christian Europe counted 20,000.

In their general ideal and conduct of life the people of the Arab-Spanish civilization, which I have chiefly in mind, though the description applies also to Sicily and to Syria and Persia in their best days, easily surpassed both Greeks and Romans. The Greek ideal of life which is so often praised was not shared by the mass of the people, who were not given education. In Spain it was said that even

a poor man would stint money on clothes in order to buy a book. Education was general, if not universal, and the passion for collecting books was widespread. The 10,000 rich mansions at Cordova had not only large and superb gardens and exquisite interiors but also libraries of from 10,000 to 50,000 volumes—royal libraries run to 400,000—at a time when the largest monastic library in England had, like most of the large monasteries, only a few hundred manuscripts. Poetry was especially favored, and even servant girls and working men composed it. Music was just as universally cultivated, and cleanliness was an elementary law of life. Cordova alone had 900 public baths. Ministers of state in the early years gave instructions to all about cooking, clothes, music, and forms of courtesy, and new foods, spices, fruits, and shrubs were brought from all over the world. If we add that there was no puritanism in regard to sex and no cruelty in sport, we get a picture of a richer and happier life than even a modern country, with all its wealth and science, presents to us.

Let me explain that this short account is based upon a critical examination of the entire literature about this civilization, including the works of the chief Spanish experts. I may, in fact, say that when a Mohammedan Persian official of the highest rank wrote me questioning a statement I quoted from an Arab writer, the leading orientalists in London assured me that I was right. But I cannot here tell half the truth, even in summary, about the Arab-Persian civilization and must restrict myself to the few aspects of life which we considered in the last chapter.

I have already stated that education was general. I would not go so far as to say with Scott that there was a school in every village—it may be true but cannot be proved—but all experts find that the people were generally educated. The chief Spanish authority, Ribera, says that “even the humbler class thirsted for books”; and books were never more abundantly written or, for the rich, more beautifully copied, bound, and housed. One scholar wrote 1,100 books on philosophy, history, and medicine. Every branch of science which the Greeks had started was carried to a much higher pitch and new sciences—geology, botany, sociology, etc.—were founded. As a result the education given in the thousands of higher colleges, which was free to poor youths, and the fare provided in the hundreds of public libraries were far superior to those of the Greeks and Romans. Magnificent astronomical instruments were made. Chemistry was richly developed. Physical science was carried so far that there is nothing in Roger Bacon that did not come from Spain.

Medicine was more thoroughly developed than any other science, and thus the healing of the sick was far better than in Greece and Rome. The orthodox Moslem interfered very seriously with this development by forbidding dissection, but the Koran, on the other hand, warmly recommended the free service of the poorer sick, so that here orthodoxy and skeptical benevolence cooperated. Few fragments of the vast Arab-Spanish literature escaped the vandalism of the later Spanish Christians, and we know little about their hospitals. But we read of such splendid hospitals in Egypt and Persia and such abundant provisions of free medical treatment and free drugs that we may take them for granted in Spain.

As to general benevolence, it is enough to quote an incident in

the life of the greatest and most skeptical of the Spanish-Arab rulers, Abd-er-Rahman III. The favorite of his harem died and left her fortune for the redemption of Moslem captives in the hands of Christians. It was found that, in spite of much recent war, there were none left to redeem, and the money was used for the building of a palace in memory of the lady. It cost \$200,000,000. This was at a time when such a sum would have sufficed to buy up the whole of Rome, Paris and London, if not all the cities of Europe. Vast sums were spent in the relief of every kind of distress—here again orthodoxy agreed with skepticism—and raising philanthropic institutions.

In Spain women, who were apt to be harshly treated in Arab countries and were very badly treated in Christian Europe, were free and respected. Many won high positions in literature and scholarship, or as secretaries and librarians. This liberality also took the form of complete religious toleration. There were short periods when fanatical Catholic priests—they were freely permitted to have churches in the Arab cities—whipped up their people against Islam and there was, naturally, some persecution; and in later years the savagery of the Christian crusades led to reprisals. But the Arab policy was complete toleration. The Jews had a Golden Age. Caliphs used bishops as diplomatists and smiled at the fanatical rudeness of monk envoys. Except when the priests made mischief, Christians, of whom there were millions in the Arab area, lived on cordial terms with the Moslem, and Christian scholars and merchants were welcomed to the colleges and markets of the cities. The Arabs thus contributed one more most important element to developing civilization, but this was even more distasteful to the Christian authorities than their science, their amorous literature, and their passion for cleanliness. It would be many centuries before the religion which professed to have a unique doctrine of brotherhood would rise to the height of the Spanish-Arab civilization; not, in fact, until skepticism spread once more in Europe.

CHAPTER III

DEISTS AND ATHEISTS LEAD THE RECOVERY

This civilization was at its height before the year 1000 A.D., or more than a century before any Gothic cathedral, any school of art, or any university or college appeared in Christian Europe. It is, in fact, a platitude of history that Christian Europe, and especially Rome, reached the lowest depth of its debasement in the 10th Century, just when Arab Spain rose to its greatest height. Since the Arabs raised no racial or religious barriers against visitors, and there was in fact a most friendly contact with the South of France through Barcelona—the highest authorities hold that Gerbert or Pope Sylvester II, the only learned Pope in centuries, studied in the Arab colleges—any reader will take it as a matter of course that this brilliant civilization roused Christendom from its squalid slumbers.

Yet since the days when Draper first drew attention to this aspect of the rebirth of civilization in Europe there has been a remarkable reluctance on the part of historians to admit the fact. Their clerical censors would strongly resent this admission. Some historians fancy that they do all that is required of them if they admit that contact with the Moslem in the Crusades did teach Christian Europe a good deal. When you point out that, not only did few of the Crusaders return to Europe, that those who did return were of the genuinely pious type who were rustically indifferent to the higher arts of the Saracens, and that most of the early leaders of the Crusades were themselves skeptics or very indifferent Christians who merely sought wealth and settled in luxury and freedom in the East, you are accused of writing history in a partial and prejudiced manner. And when you point out that the Arab-Spanish civilization was more brilliant a hundred years before the first Crusade than the Moslem civilization was in Syria at the time of the Crusade, and that the friendly contact of the French with Spain—their next-door neighbor, so to say—is far more likely to have stimulated Europe than the hostile contact of ignorant soldiers with the fringe of the Saracen world 2,000 miles away, you are told that the excellence of the Spanish civilization is exaggerated; and the historical writers who say this cannot even read the works of the half-dozen Spanish scholars of the last quarter of a century who have made a thorough study of Arab literature which still survives in obscure corners of libraries in their country.

American historical literature is, on account of the powerful influence of the Catholic Church, particularly defective—one would almost be justified in saying dishonest—at this stage. The fiction that skeptics never construct, and that the recovery of Europe was due to the medieval Church, must not be disturbed by a candid statement of the facts. The truth, which is increasingly recognized

wherever clerical influence is feeble, is that there have been three high-grade civilizations, the Greek-Roman, the Arab-Persian, and the Modern, and that each was associated with a growth of skepticism, especially in the chief builders of the civilization. And just as the second owed its initial stimulation to Greek literature which survived, so our modern civilization owed its first stimulation to the Arabs. Here I must restrict myself to stating a few general and undisputed facts.

The first is that, apart from a short and local revival of art and culture in Saxony owing to the marriage of the prince with a Greek princess, the awakening of Europe from its animal slumbers began in the South of France, and these southern provinces were, as I said, in close contact with the Spanish Arabs. Long before the First Crusade, and while Italy, England and most of Germany and northern France were still barbaric, the South of France, from the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean, began to have hundreds of schools, a rich trade, more refined manners and homes, and a considerable spread of skepticism which culminated in entire provinces deserting Christianity for what is called the Albigensian heresy; which was not "heresy" but a contemptuous rejection of Christianity.

The second fact is that the most conspicuous feature of this dawning civilization was a rich efflorescence of poetry and music. The age of the troubadours and other medieval poets had begun. French experts on this early Provençal poetry find that, as we should expect, it is clearly an imitation of the Spanish-Arab poetry, and the musical instruments came from the same source. Most of the poetry also flatly defied the Church, not only in its glorification of what the Church called vice but even sometimes in ridiculing doctrine. Experts call William Duke of Aquitaine the first troubadour. This prince so far defied the Church that he planned to build a luxurious abbey with selected prostitutes for "nuns" and "abbess" and obscene songs of his own composition for ritual; and, when he did at last so far yield to the Church as to join the Crusade and replace the painting of his nude mistress on his shield with a cross, he nevertheless took "a swarm of loose girls" (a contemporary says) with him. The great scholar Abelard, who was also a troubadour, was profoundly heretical until the outrage of castration and threats of prosecution drove him into a sour orthodoxy.

This light-hearted gaiety of the troubadours, epic poets, and story-tellers, which rapidly spread to Italy, Germany, and England, inspired a free-love movement of the most licentious character and at the same time gave the impulse to the great artistic development of the Middle Ages. I have elsewhere exposed the fallacy of saying that the Church inspired medieval art. Useful as the art was to the Church itself, nevertheless high artistic authorities like Sir F. Leighton insist that the Church actually retarded the development. The Church the richest customer of the age, employed art. But the man who claims that the Church in any sense inspired it has to face this formidable difficulty: Why was the religious inspiration powerful enough to create one of the great periods of art in every country yet so utterly impotent to check violence, vice, dishonesty, and treachery? The last boast of a devout Christian is that his religion inspires art. Its function is to promote virtue. Yet the highest author-

ities on each of the countries of Christian Europe agree that morally this period was one of the worst in history. If, in fine, a man insists that the art itself was a great contribution to civilization, we may remind him of the notorious fact that this world of great artists was full of skeptics.

There was still, relatively to the new wealth, a poor development of hospitals and charitable foundations, but there was unquestionably a considerable growth of schools and universities. We must it is true, not let Catholic historical writers like Belloc exaggerate this. If education was as common as they say from the 12th Century onward, how is it that the people of Europe were still illiterate to the extent of nearly 90 percent in the 18th Century? How is it that Protestant countries like Prussia, Holland, and England were the first to make an attack on this illiteracy and Catholic countries were the last? The truth is that, when the Church saw that the poetical movement and the new school-life were creating a remarkable amount of skepticism, it used its power against them and founded the Inquisition. The new universities were for the most part turned into seminaries for the training of the vast crowds of priests and monks who now appeared in every country.

It puzzles some that the universities of Italy stood out best against this prostitution of the new education for clerical purposes. You have only to notice that Rome itself remained a center of reaction and to recall a little of the history of Italy. The Arabs had created a great civilization in South Italy and Sicily. A large body of Normans settled there and gradually mastered the country. But the Arab culture mastered them, and their leaders were in very large part skeptics. The greatest of them, Frederic II, who extended this culture to the cities of North Italy, was so skeptical that his contemporaries believed that he was the author of *The Three Impostors* (Moses, Christ, and Mohammed), a book which circulated widely in that "age of faith." Even in cities which Frederic did not control there was, Dante tells us, a very large amount of skepticism of the most drastic type. Hence science continued to be cultivated in the universities of many of these cities while the Papacy strangled it elsewhere. Roger Bacon's knowledge of it is now well known to have been learned in a school of Arab science at Oxford, but he was imprisoned for most of his adult life in monasteries as part of the Church's war upon science.

In order to come now as quickly as possible to the modern age I will compress several centuries in a paragraph. The Catholic fanatics completely destroyed the Spanish-Arab civilization, which had already been weakened by Moslem fanatics (the real Moors) from Africa. The equally skeptical civilization in Sicily was ruined by the wars which the Papacy drew upon it; and Turkish fanatics destroyed civilization in the East. I speak of fanatics, but we must remember that the priests, monks, and men who had made a holocaust of Greek culture in the 4th Century and the Christians and Moslem who destroyed the Arab-Persian civilization were simply men who took their religion seriously and consistently acted upon them. Religion again ruined the fine work which skepticism, both in the general atmosphere and in the person of most of the leaders, had accomplished.

That the world was not thrust back into a new Dark Age was

due mainly to the fact that the stimulation received from the Arabs had already raised Christendom to a higher level and secondarily to the gross corruption that again degraded the Roman Court and enfeebled its authority. In its new voluptuousness it encouraged art, and the world of art was full of skepticism; and it was lenient to, if it did not encourage, the cult of Greek and Latin literature which now spread from country to country. The German Reformers hated this pagan literature, and Italy and Spain lost both art and culture when the Catholic fanatics obtained control once more. But in France, England and northern Italy the recovery of the old classical literature brought back to the mind of the race the forgotten ideals of the Greeks and Romans. Germany, we must remember, had its new civilization put back a hundred years by the wars of religion. As to the form of service of the revival of the classical literature I need recall only how Copernicus found in it the idea that the earth travels round the sun which led, in the person of Galileo, to the first great conflict of science and religion: how Thomas More (at that time an anti-clerical) and other writers drew the inspiration of their Utopias from Plato; and how an important group at Paris revived the physical ideas of Democritus and Epicurus.

My thesis is certainly not that all progress in the direction of a true civilization was due to skeptics, but that a more rapid advance was made in ages of skepticism and that in the intervening periods, when skeptics were few and were exposed to severe penalties, they still made notable contributions in proportion to their number. To such a period of religious domination—for all the sects still demanded the punishment of skeptics—we now come: the important period from about 1550 to 1750, when the vital elements of our modern civilization were slowly and furtively gaining strength. Science was, apart from astronomy, still generally despised, and such violent temporary advances as the Civil War in England were not so much assertions of principle, for the victorious Puritans at once became tyrants, as attacks upon particular oppressions. We ought freely to acknowledge that the Reformation had improved the chances of progress by breaking the long Papal tyranny and splitting up ecclesiastical authority. The freethinker who insists that it merely substituted the authority of the Bible for the authority of the Church must candidly face the fact that in the next two centuries England contributed most to progress; and that, if France comes near it in merit, this was unquestionably because there was a very great deal of skepticism amongst its scholars and of sensual indifference in its princes, bishops, and nobility.

Whom should we choose as the men who during these two fateful centuries most stimulated and directed the race in the direction of modern civilization? I do not mean merely men of great distinction, so we ignore such men as Shakespeare, Pascal, Cromwell, and Richelieu, but men who most promoted the growth of scientific conceptions and social idealism. Most historians would, I fancy, agree on this list: Galileo, Francis Bacon, Milton, Montaigne, Shaftesbury, Hobbes, Newton, Descartes, Spinoza, Peter the Great, Locke, Grotius, Buffon, Montesquieu, Leibnitz, Frederic the Great, Voltaire, and Rousseau. Of these 18 men only two were Catholics—and both were denounced and persecuted for heresy in their Church—though at

least half the inhabitants of Europe were still Catholics; and only two were orthodox Protestants (Bacon and Grotius). Milton, who was much influenced by Stoic ideas, gave up all churchgoing long before he died: Newton abandoned the Trinity; Hobbes and Leibnitz were very independent thinkers. Robertson shows in his **Short History of Freethought** that every man in the list I have given was accused by contemporaries of heresy or "unbelief." More than half of them were notoriously, Deists—I give the evidence in my **Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists**—Spinoza (a Pantheist) less than a Deist, and Peter the Great probably an Atheist. If the reader insists on including Shakespeare in the list, it adds nothing to the credit of orthodoxy, for his real belief is unknown, and many authorities claim that there is ample proof that he was a skeptic.

Another aspect of this list of names must be considered. Of the seven who had influence in the first half of the period two were orthodox Protestants, two more or less orthodox Catholics, two Protestant heretics, and only one—and he not openly—a Deist. But of the 11 whose influence falls in the next hundred years only one, Leibnitz, is reckoned an orthodox Christian, and nine were Deists, Pantheists, or Atheists. And in the next section of the history of civilization we shall find the Atheist contributors to the work steadily gaining in number upon the Deists. I should add that the one orthodox name in the second part of the list, that of Leibnitz, has not an indisputable right to be included, while Hume (an Agnostic) and Adam Smith (a Deist) almost fall in the same period.

We will not linger over this period, since it is essentially one of slow and laborious preparation for the great advance which was made in the second half of the 18th Century. Germany was, as I said, prostrate after the Thirty Years War of Catholics and Protestants. Italy contributed nothing, except that the tradition of cultivating certain branches of science was maintained here and there. Spain, the heir of the great Arab civilization as well as of the gold of America, sank rapidly into an astounding condition of mental and economic debility. France produced a large number of men who fought the Church for freedom of opinion and in the many periods of gaiety and license won a large part of the educated class to Deism or Atheism.

Most of the advance on social lines was, until near the middle of the 18th Century, made in England, and here theories of government and liberty were chronically, and often passionately, debated. Some claim that reports about the freedom of life in the new colonies across the Atlantic had at first much to do with this, but the Civil War and the execution of Charles I were much more important. The days of the Commonwealth had made republicanism a quite legitimate political theory, and some approach to an economic revolt was heard here and there. The outspoken Deistic writer Toland was very advanced also on social and political lines, and the rejection of Christianity by the Deists compelled their leaders to formulate a social or ethical philosophy. Most important of all were the poet Milton, who in his prose works was an eloquent advocate of freedom and education, and John Locke.

So careful an authority as the Cambridge Modern History says that Locke's famous **Essay Concerning the Human Understanding**

(1690) was "the chief source of the French philosophy of the 18th Century," especially of Rousseau's teaching; it had considerable influence on the mind of the more scholarly revolutionaries in America; and in England it led to the Agnosticism and ethical philosophy of Hume. When it first appeared, the book seemed to be a dull and uninspiring analysis of the working of the mind. But serious thinkers gradually appreciated its revolutionary character. It challenged the whole philosophic world with the statement that all sound knowledge must reach the mind by way of the senses, and it therefore asserted the supremacy of reason. Moreover it incidentally speculated on social history with even more startling novelty. The Cambridge History sums up one of these speculations by saying that Locke taught that originally all men were free and were equally virtuous and that the accumulation of property and the growth of government had corrupted them. It is easy to see that such a book, as it won esteem in both England, France, and the American colonies in the course of the 18th Century, must have proved a very valuable agency. The late J. M. Robertson, who posed as an authority on this period, includes Macchiavelli (which he spells wrongly) in his **Pioneer Humanists** and does not include Locke, but historians now recognize his great importance as a source of both Rationalism and social idealism.

Locke was the tutor in boyhood of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, who became the most influential Deist of the first half of the 18th Century. In his **Characteristics**, a work which Pope, himself a Deist, claimed to have "done more harm to revealed religion in England than all the works of infidelity put together," and other books he worked out the philosophy which Pope embodies in his poems and which Viscount Bolingbroke made familiar in France. Historians describe the first half of the 18th Century in England as devoid of serious thinking. After 1688, says Gooch, "the chronicle of democratic thinking in England becomes 'silent for half a century'; and the Cambridge History says of the period that "few ages have been less productive in the nobler and more ideal elements of life." This is misleading. It is true that there was a looseness of principle which even extended to some of the Deists, but the ideas I have described were steadily working and would later in the century produce new leaders of thought like Hume, Adam Smith, and Gibbon, skeptical statesmen like the Pitts, and a fiery group of reformers, in touch with the people, who translated the general principles of the Deist writers into definite ideals of social progress. We shall see this later.

The great advance was, however, to begin in America and France, and in both countries the works of the English Deists had considerable influence. Voltaire, notoriously, got such revolutionary ideas as he had from England. He lived in exile in London from 1726 to 1729, and on his return he at once wrote his **Philosophical Letters on the English** which, in spite of his own wish, soon got into print and circulation in France. Most people think of him as merely an aristocratic scoffer at Christianity, though Hollywood did, perhaps unwittingly, a fine service in showing millions of people how he had, in a world of selfish sensualists, a fiery and self-sacrificing hatred of injustice, cruelty, and intolerance in all forms. His brilliant works conveyed these sentiments to millions in every part of Europe.

Rousseau also was, we saw, deeply indebted to English writers. Locke's *Essay*, in a French translation, had a good circulation in France from 1725 onward, and from it Rousseau derived his idea of the equality and happiness of men in a state of nature and the evil that was done to them by the growth of government. Of more influence in France was a small anonymous work with the title *Persian Letters*, which appeared in 1721, wittily attacked the clerical tyranny. It was written by the distinguished jurist Montesquieu, a Deist; and in the course of the next 20 years he wrote his famous *Spirit of the Laws*, which all recognize as one of the gospels of the new humanitarian spirit. Saint Pierre, Deistic author of *Paul and Virginia*, which had an enormous circulation, and the Deistic Marquis d'Argenson, and other writers joined in the work of "enlightening France and preparing it for a development of which they had no idea. Their work was discreetly protected and encouraged, in an age when men were still burned for heresy, by powerful Deistic statesmen like Turgot and Count d'Argenson.

How the next generation of French skeptical writers proceeded from Deism to Atheism and from general principles to specific reforms and the education of the public we shall see in the next chapter. But the first gun of the great fight for the establishment of a true civilization was to be fired in America and we must ask what share skepticism had in the preparatory development. There is a frivolous or a malicious type of critic who would here brush us aside with the exclamation that now these skeptics are claiming the credit of the American Revolution! You will easily silence him if you ask whether he thinks that Franklin, Paine, Jefferson, Adams, Washington, Madison and Hamilton had not much to do with the Revolution. They were all Deists, and Jefferson was a dogmatic Materialist. I have given a summary of the evidence for their opinions and examined the counter-evidence in the case of Washington in one of the *Little Blue Books* (*Seven Infidel U.S. Presidents*, No. 1203).

Any man with common sense will distinguish between the actual revolt against Britain and the ideals incorporated in the Constitution. The first has nothing to do with either religion or skepticism. It was a natural revolt of men of all types against an intolerable tyranny: an inevitable separation of two communities which were geographically destined to form separate nations. It was fully approved by the British liberals and was defended in the House of Commons by skeptical statesmen of great distinction. We do not need to stress the part that Paine had in inspiring it and Washington in leading it.

But skepticism has a very honorable record—no one dreams of claiming more than this—on the constructive side: the assertion of freedom, toleration, and brotherliness. We cannot read without a feeling of irony today the assurance that "all men are by nature free and equal" and have "rights," but to formulate such a doctrine in the 18th Century was an event. No one questions that it came chiefly from Paine and Jefferson. It was included in the Constitution of Virginia before independence was finally won. "Jefferson," says one of the leading historians, "was perhaps more than any other of the popular leaders under the domination of an abstract belief in the rights of man." The word "popular" is misplaced. Jefferson was,

like John Adams and Madison, a man of high culture, and we know that already in youth he had made a study of the works of Deistic writers like Locke, Montesquieu, and Voltaire. In my Little Blue Book (1203) I quoted an Albany preacher saying in 1831 that the leading drafters of the Constitution "voted God out of it," that all the Presidents, including Washington, to that date except J. L. Adams (a Unitarian) were "not professors of religion," and that only three Governors of New York and Pennsylvania had been Christians. It was very decidedly in an atmosphere of skepticism that the most advanced Constitution any country had yet had was drawn up. It is the first godless Constitution; and it reached the high-water mark of civilization at that time, soaring high above every Constitution in the world which appealed to God and Christianity.

CHAPTER IV

FREETHINKERS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

It is difficult for us today to realize what deep and widespread influence this first national assertion of the Rights of Man had upon the race. It put fire into the very numerous groups of radicals and humanitarians which, we shall see, were already fighting for reform in England. In France, where hatred of England secured for the news an even more cordial welcome, there was the most picturesque and prolonged jubilation, and the fight against tyranny was mightily encouraged. In Spain it fired the large body of Voltaireans who were already in arms against the old tyranny and abuses; and the news found and encouraged similar bodies in Portugal and in North and South Italy. It let in Latin America a fire which would not die down until the yoke of Spain was entirely rejected. And the central idea of it all, the rights of common men against the privileged minorities—royalty, nobility, and clergy—which had oppressed and exploited them for ages, was derived from the Deistic writers of England and France.

The American colonists had had the important military advantage that the British had to ship every man and gun across 3,000 miles of ocean in small and slow sailing vessels. The same geographical isolation protected the new democracy in North America until it became a nation too large, rich, and powerful for any of the older nations to venture to challenge. In the rest of the world the struggle for freedom has had a very different history. Latin America enjoyed, once it had won freedom, much the same advantage of isolation as the United States; and it is not necessary here to enumerate the skeptical leaders in the struggle like Bolivar for it was a fight against combined Church and State. In Europe the conditions favored reaction. The autocrats of half a dozen states could, and did, combine at any time to tear down the banner of freedom that might be raised in any one of them.

As a result the struggle to cast off the oppressive yoke of privileged minorities assumed a character which makes the much-lauded Crusades seem, by comparison, a series of piratical adventures and makes a mockery of the so-called Age of Chivalry. For, apart from the men who took arms and died at the barricades or on the field of battle, about half a million men, women, and children who never took to arms were, from about 1790 to 1910, done to death either in massacres, on scaffolds, or in poisonous jails and penal colonies. And the ghastly struggle is renewed in our time. Now that a fourth privileged minority, the rich, are threatened, we have a combination of all the forces which obstruct the inauguration of complete justice and freedom, filthier and more callous in its methods than even the Holy Alliance of a century and a quarter ago was.

It is easy to be cynical about the Rights of Man, but complete

freedom to discuss all our political, religious, economic, and social traditions is an indispensable condition of progress. If a man wants something more than argument about this, let him study the deep reaction that has occurred in Fascist countries. Hence of the separate themes into which we must not break up the record of progress, or of the struggle for progress, we will take this first and inquire what part skeptics of all shades played in it. But do not let us lose sight of the broad fact that the struggle of men for justice, freedom, enlightenment, and humanity has deepened and broadened in proportion as religious belief has decayed. From the 5th to the 18th Century the mass of the people were Christians, and they were, in effect, slaves. In the second half of the 18th Century skepticism spread very widely, and the slaves raised their bowed heads. In the 19th Century the skepticism spread to a very much larger body both of the people and of their leaders; and the demand of reform was more clearly formulated and in great part successful. In our time the majority in every leading civilization have abandoned Christianity; and the demand of peace and justice is more passionate than ever and aims to establish a completely planned new civilization.

A man must be blind with prejudice to deny the significance of this, and a detailed study fully proves that significance. The long struggle has been fiercest and most deadly in Roman Catholic countries. Some years ago I made a careful estimate, in round numbers, of the unarmed victims of the brutality of reaction in the course of the struggle. The total was at least 400,000. But not 5,000 of these men and women were done to death in Protestant lands. In England only a few hundred were killed in collisions with the military or in the foul conditions of the jails. In Germany also a few hundred may have perished in this way, though many more were killed in military revolts; and still less lost their lives in the struggle for freedom and self-government in the smaller Protestant countries. But in Catholic countries the carnage was barbaric. All but a few thousand of the vast army of martyrs to which I have referred were done to death in Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, the Papal States, the Kingdom of Naples, Russia, and Poland, while the number of the men and women who suffered a living death in jails of fiendish cruelty must have run to millions. I call attention particularly to this point because the Church was in Catholic countries intimately allied with the state, and those who fought for freedom were, therefore, much more apt to be skeptics as well as democrats.

Since, as I said, France gave the signal, we will begin with the struggle in that country. As long as the muddled old legend of "the horrors of the French Revolution" was accepted nearly everywhere, no one thought of disputing that the Revolution was one of the fruits of Atheism. This is not too strong an expression. The Deists of Voltaire's day had been succeeded by a generation of leaders who was predominantly Atheists and Materialists. While men like Mably and Morelly derived a sort of sentimental communism from Rousseau's books, a large group of writers of great ability combined a demand of practical reforms with a total rejection of religious belief. Most of these united in publishing the first Encyclopedia (1751-72), which got past the censors by taking its cue from Bayle's famous Dictionary or enjoining the writers that "articles dealing with re-

spectable prejudices must expound them deferentially, and the edifice of clay must be shattered by referring the reader to other articles in which the opposite truths are established on sound principles." This great Encyclopedia, the smaller works written by the brilliant and learned contributors to it, and the works of Voltaire which were still in circulation educated the revolutionaries.

There is no need here to expect the long list of names of famous scientists, economists, and politicians. The most effective of them and the majority of them were now Atheists, as Voltaire himself grumbled. We cheerfully admit that Robespierre was an emphatic believer in God, for he, and not an Atheist, is responsible for the far greater part of the executions which took place. A few others like Lafayette were Deists, but in the entire crowd of leaders, we find only one who claimed to be orthodox, and he—the Abbe Gregoire—was at the end of his life refused Christian burial by the authorities of his Church. On the other hand, not only have the "horrors" of the Revolution been severely curtailed and the revolt itself been shown to have been a quite just and inevitable revolt against a corrupt and tyrannical monarchy and aristocracy, but the constructive spirit of the Revolution is recognized in serious history. The highest authority in English on European history is the Cambridge Modern History. It devotes a large volume to the French Revolution, and the final paragraph runs on such lines as these:

To the Revolution is due the extension of the principle of equality everywhere . . . made it impossible to maintain the disabilities of the Jews. . . . Equally impossible was it to tolerate slavery. . . . In the third place the Revolution marks a turning point in the history of women. . . . And finally the principle of equality gave an immense impetus to Socialism.

Add that the French Revolution gave the modern world the first great scheme of universal free education—drafted by the Atheist Talleyrand—the first unrestricted affirmation of religious freedom, and so on, and you have the measure of the first "fruit of Atheism" in modern times.

I have examined elsewhere the charges against the Revolution and must not repeat the correction here. Napoleon in many directions (education, reform of law, etc.) sustained and developed the principles of the Revolution, and, whatever we make of the enigmatic question of his own creed—he was at the most a Deist—the majority of those who carried out his plans were still Atheists. When he fell, not only were the finest contributions of the Revolution to civilization sacrificed, but there was a massacre of Republicans and Bonapartists which was far worse than the "September Massacres," and the French people had to enter upon a new and bloody struggle for freedom and enlightenment which lasted 50 years. Several thousand men and women were executed or unofficially butchered and tens of thousands sent to the fetid jails and penal colonies in a few years. But the Atheist and Deist leaders—Catholic democrats had a separate movement, which came to nothing—struggled on so heroically that at the Revolution of 1830 the students and workers fought the regular army on the streets of Paris for 24 hours and lost 5,300 dead and wounded.

When the new king, in close alliance with the Church, broke

his oath and betrayed the people, the struggle was renewed. About 20,000 were executed, imprisoned, or exiled in the next 10 years, yet in 1848 they again fought the troops and purchased a victory at the price of more than 10,000 lives. The leaders were now, not Deists like Victor Hugo, but Atheists like Louis Blanc and Proudhon. Another royal perjurer, Napoleon III, got power and allied himself with the clergy, and we need no proof that the 100,000 men whom he sent to jail—such jails that 3,000 died in them of “fever”—exile, or ghastly penal colonies were Voltairean Deists or Atheists. From the start, about the middle of the 18th Century, it had been a struggle equally against Church and State, and three generations of freethinkers sustained it under peril of death, disease, or ruin until in 1870 they made a final end of both royalist and clerical tyranny.

Not less heroic was the struggle in Spain. Here again the Church was so intimately associated with royal brutality that all revolt was a revolt against both in the eyes of the Church. It is true that at first the Spaniards asked no more of the Church than that it should suppress the Inquisition and condemn the repeated perjury of Spanish monarchs, so that large numbers of Catholics joined with freethinkers in the early revolutions. On the other hand, the Spanish bishops, priests, and monks joined in and encouraged the punishment of rebels more vigorously than the clergy did in any other country, and it is significant that from the Revolution of 1820 onward the workers at every victory burned churches and convents until they were checked by the middle-class Liberal authorities. Liberalism was, in fact, expressly condemned by the Popes, yet from first to last the leaders in the struggle were Liberals.

The recovery of Spain from the pitiable economic, social, and intellectual condition into which it had rapidly fallen after it had become entirely Catholic had begun in the 18th Century. A liberal monarch, disgusted at the barbarism of his country, had given power to Count d'Aranda, a Deistic noble and friend of Voltaire. In time the clergy had ruined him and destroyed his work, but the ideas remained—Spanish translations of Voltaire's books circulated by the hundred thousand—and under Napoleon a democratic Constitution had been set up. The exiled king won his way back by promising to support it, but he at once broke into a savage orgy of repression. There then followed a 50-year struggle in which the Spanish people fought with a bravery that was exceeded by no other nation in Europe.

To tell it briefly, in the course of that half-century about 150,000 Spaniards suffered grievously for claiming elementary liberties, and of these about 50,000 men, women, boys, and girls lost their lives on the scaffold, in massacres, or in the horrible jails. The campaign against them, which was often directed by ecclesiastics, was as brutal as the Nazi orgy of a few years ago, yet they never desisted until they won constitutional liberty. Five times they won the victory, in four cases a bloodless victory and yet they never made reprisals upon the clerical-royalists. On the other hand, the kings and queens of the Bourbon dynasty with which the Church was allied, were, according to all historians, the vilest and most licentious in Europe. Yet the Church still clung to the miserable last monarch of the dynasty, Alfonso XIII. More lives were sacrificed and tens of thousands imprisoned in the long fight against him; medieval tor-

tures were used in the jails upon prisoners, who were now all skeptics and mostly Atheists; and today thousands of innocent women and children are added to the terrible list of Spanish martyrs. From 1931 onward every leader of the people and the majority of the people themselves have been skeptics.

In Portugal the struggle against Church and State led by Liberals, which in that age invariably meant Deists or Atheists, lasted only about five years (1829-1834), but the savagery of the clerical-royalists and the cynical perjury of prelates and king were even more loathsome. In the 18th Century a Deistic noble, the Marquis de Pombal, had, as in Spain, tried to lift the country to the level of comparative civilization of the rest of Europe. The Church defeated him, but Voltairean ideas still so far had the allegiance of the educated class that the French armies of Napoleon were welcomed, and the Portuguese set up a Liberal Constitution. As in Spain, a perjured and dissolute prince cheated his way to the throne, and it is enough to say that in the short time of the struggle against him, in one of the smallest countries in Europe, 17,000 anti-clericals were executed, 30,000 were sent to the horrible jails and penal colonies, and further tens of thousands were ruined or exiled. It was an orgy of savagery; and we still have fragments of sermons in which royal chaplains shrieked at the king in church to "hang, starve, or poison them." Out of a total population of 2,000,000 at least 100,000 suffered acutely.

At that time the island of Sicily and the southern provinces of Italy composed the Kingdom of Naples. Here the monarchs were as brutal and perjured as in Spain, the clergy were just as intimately associated with them and condemned their perjuries and crimes and in proportion to population (2,000,000) more men and women sacrificed their lives than in any other country of Europe. A contemporary Neapolitan general who was in the royal army tells us that 100,000 died in the struggle for liberty between 1795 and 1825; and the scholar who has written the continuation of his history asserts that a further 150,000 lost their lives in the next 30 years. Though the "reds" never made reprisals when they won in the long struggle, the clerical-royalists and their supporters behaved with savagery when their turn came. We read of generals drinking blood from the skulls of the democrats, of troops bayonetting women and babies, of jails of such horrors that the famous British statesmen Gladstone at last brought the anger of Europe upon them. By that time these jails had stunk with their masses of closely packed prisoners for half a century.

The Neapolitan struggle was unique in the fact that a large number of Catholic priests and monks joined the rebels, though the Church sternly condemned them and in the worst period the commander of the royal armies was a cardinal. In the Pope's kingdom, Central Italy, the rebels were, of course, all skeptics of one shade or other. American Catholic writers now blandly claim that our ideas of democracy and liberty are derived from the Catholic theologians of the Middle Ages. This is one of the most glaring instances of the way in which the new fashion of truckling to them encourages them to make the most fantastic misstatements. Of the 400,000 who were done to death in the 19th Century **solely for demanding just**

those rights all but a few thousand died in countries which the Papacy ruled. A Pope sourly condemned the supposed Rights of Man at the French Revolution. A Pope later condemned them in Syllabus, when Catholic rulers were still butchering men who demanded them. And in face of all these well-known facts—you can verify in the Cambridge Modern History all that I say about the struggle—scores of Catholic writers now assure America that our civilization owes its sense of rights and liberties to their Church!

You will read also in the Cambridge History, as you will in every authoritative historian, that the Pope's kingdom, instead of being so wisely and justly ordered that it was a special crime to rebel against it, was the worst and most vicious in Europe. The Pope, as king, had the unique humiliation of being publicly admonished by the four leading powers of Europe—two of them Protestant—to reform his states. Yet of the men who demanded this reform tens of thousands were thrust into jails as foul as any that existed in the world. Orsini, who spent years in them, saw men who had been condemned to from 10 to 20 years—none lived through the term, he says—chained to the wall in filthy dungeons, never released even for sanitary purposes, and fed on tallow, bread, and water. In Rome itself he and nine others were confined in a cell, swarming with vermin, which was so small that they could hardly turn round. At one time there were 8,000 political prisoners in the jails of the Pope's small secular kingdom, and practically all of them were either Atheists like Garibaldi or Deists like Mazzini. Between 10 and 20 thousand of them lost their lives in 30 years in the jails, by execution, or by massacre. Many were women and boys, and torture was used habitually.

The northern provinces of Italy and, of course, Hungary then belonged to Austria, except that there were a few small independent duchies. The White Terror spread over practically the whole of this area for 40 years. It was an empire, a writer of the time sarcastically said of 23,000,000 people and 30 newspapers. One must not imagine that the proverbial good nature and refinement of the Austrians made the struggle for freedom less terrible here than elsewhere. From Milan and Venice to the fortresses of Bohemia the crowded prisoners were vilely treated and brutally tortured, and after the insurrection of Hungary in 1848 the reprisals of the Austrian generals were so brutal that when one of them shortly afterwards came to London he had to be protected from the workers by the police. Nearly all the leaders, from Mazzini, Gonnafioneri, and Silvio Pellico in the South to Kossuth in Hungary were in the earlier stages of the struggle Deists. Later the larger proportion of them were, like Garibaldi and his comrades in Italy and the Socialist leaders in Vienna, Atheists.

We must here take account also of Russia and Poland, for even the former was Catholic of the oriental type. Since the movement for liberation in Poland was in the main a patriotic attempt of Roman Catholics to throw off the Russian yoke, I will not dwell upon it here. In Russia, on the other hand, the movement was from the start led by and mainly consisted of skeptics, indeed for the far greater part Atheists. There was only one religion known; the Orthodox Church, and it warmly defended all the brutality of Tsars

and nobles during nearly 90 years of murderous struggle against rebels. How many Russians—men, women, youths, and girls—fought to the death for liberty and enlightenment between 1825 and 1912 no man can estimate. It was said by contemporaries that to find a parallel to the number of folk butchered or killed in jails under Nicholas I (1825-1855) it was necessary to go back to the days of the medieval savage Ivan the Terrible, yet his son is said to have killed or ruined a further 50,000. Out of this struggle emerged the secretly organized Nihilist party, more than half of its members being university students, and largely girls. It was a body of Atheists, and the heroism with which they sustained the struggle is not surpassed anywhere in history. Tens of thousands were either shot or done to death in the jails or in Siberia. In spite of all this the Society opened the 20th Century with 3,000,000 secret members, and the struggle became tenser and more brutal. Only 30 years ago there were still about 700 executions a year, mostly of youths and girls, and 174,000 were in jails in which hundreds died every month from typhus or cholera, and young women were driven to suicide by the brutality of the jailers at the rate of more than a hundred a month.

This fight by two generations of Atheists—for Deists of the early type hardly existed in Russia in the second half of the century—is a finer movement of self-sacrifice than the Christian Church (which moreover, promised heaven to the victims) can show in any "age of persecution." Its fruit is a civilization with more efficiency, more justice, more humanity, and finer treatment of the young than in any other civilization of our time. It will in time prove to be the greatest contribution to civilization that has ever yet been made. Yet religious writers continue to drone about the danger of Atheism making people selfish and sapping the foundations of states!

In Germany and England it was, as I said, not so much the fear of death as the very pressing danger of imprisonment in the old deadly type of jail that the claimants of liberty had to face. This was, however, a fearful risk at a time when the jails were filthy and diseased beyond description, and when refined men and women were herded in common dungeons with the vilest types of humanity and, generally, no regard whatever for decency. It required a high degree of heroism to sustain the struggle for three quarters of a century, and I will show how in the case of England, where the story is better known, it was chiefly skeptics who led and inspired the people.

Few Americans know that there was a widespread struggle for liberty in England itself long before the revolt of the American colonies. So far were the workers and a large part of the middle class in London from supporting the autocracy of the Georges that as early as 1768 they fought the troops on the streets and lost more than a hundred killed and wounded; and a minister said in the House of Commons that there was "actual or impending riot in every part of the country." The leader was John Wilkes; and, since he combined a cheerful defiance of the Church's code of morals with his genuine passion for liberty, no writer is anxious to count him a Christian. This movement developed rapidly, and, as the successive news of the American and the French Revolutions, both of which were cordially greeted by the radicals, reached England, clubs and propagandist societies to further the war against tyranny sprang up

in all the cities. "Nine out of 10 of these," says the Cambridge History (VIII, 764), "were outside the Established Church." From the history of the period I select the names of the men who led the advance: Priestley, Horne Tooke, Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Paine, Hardy, Holcroft, Byron, and Shelley. Three were notoriously Atheists and four were Deists; if we include the Unitarian Priestley in that group. The two whose creed is obscure and who may have been Christians are probably unknown to the reader. But we must add distinguished politicians like Fox and Lord Holland who were just as zealous against tyranny, and scholars and writers like Savage Landor (called "the mad Jacobin") and Southey (at that time a rebel). All these were at the most Deists.

When the French Revolution went to extremes and proclaimed England the great enemy, as it assuredly was, the authorities entered upon a truculent reaction, and thousands of the more active opponents of tyranny went to jail. Idealism was quenched only for a few years, and in the first decade of the 19th Century, a new and broader movement for reform, demanding education, reform of law, suppression of war and slavery, etc., as well as constitutional liberty spread in the cities. The leaders now were almost all distinguished middle-class men: the great jurist Jeremy Bentham, the economist Ricardo, the historian Grote, the rich banker Sir Francis Burdett, the leading statesman Fox (until his death in 1806), Francis Place, and, presently, Robert Owen. All but Burdett (a Deist) were Atheists. Cobbett was the only professed Churchman who posed as a champion of the people, and he was a queer type of reformer. He used the vilest language about the other reformers when they demanded the suppression of slavery in the British colonies.

Twice in those days the workers of London threatened to destroy the Tower, as the French workers had destroyed the Bastille. The persecution continued and used the foulest methods, yet the movement spread throughout the country until the workers in the populous centers met in crowds of one, two, and three hundred thousand. They won, chiefly under the leadership of the Atheist Place, the right to form unions, and, when political reform was still refused they began to drill and arm themselves, to attack cathedrals and bishops and pelt the king with mud, until the fear of civil war secured the first instalment of constitutional liberty.

When the middle class had secured their own right to vote (in 1832) they became, on the whole, less zealous for reform. Owen was faithful all his life but to secure the next extension of constitutional liberty, the emancipation of the workers, they had, in the teeth of violent opposition, to form their own movement, the Chartist movement. Since the bishops were bitterly hostile, and the other Churches indifferent, the leaders of the Chartist movement were still predominantly skeptics. "In its weakness," says the Christian Socialist writer Joseph Clayton, "the Labor Movement found the bishops always amongst its enemies" (*The Bishops as Legislators*, p. 82). It was not until the middle of the century, when the main battle was over, that the Christian Socialist movement appeared; and its founder, the Rev. Charles Kingsley, expressly said that his chief aim was to "Christianize Socialism," or check the drift of working men from the Church. What was going on in other reform-movements we

shall see as we proceed, but in urging the people to rebel against the old tyranny, which was the cardinal reform and for advocating which the most brutal punishments were inflicted, the great majority of the leaders were, as in all the rest of Europe, skeptics.

CHAPTER V

SKEPTICS MAKE AN END OF SLAVERY

The thesis of this book is, as I said, not that skepticism always, and Christianity never, inspires men to work unselfishly for the reform of this crude and cruel civilization of ours. It is, therefore, completely irrelevant for our opponents to pick out a sincerely Christian man or woman here and there who was distinguished for social service. Bad as the social record of Christianity is, we should shrink from the appalling contention that in the long ages when it comprised the great majority of the people it contributed **none** to the building of a new civilization. This, let us be quite clear, makes the quoting of individual Christian reformers, a waste of time. The serious issue is whether religion generally inspires men to unselfish service and Atheism generally does not so that with the increasing abandonment of religious beliefs progress is likely to be suspended.

To a mind with any sense of logical proportion the historical facts make this question seem entirely ridiculous. We have now studied the course of a reform, the struggle for constitutional liberty and democratic rights, which our Catholic critics so far admit to be fundamental that they now claim that it was their Church that inspired it! In view of the frantic alliance of their Church with the worst tyrants throughout the struggle and the fact that it allies itself today with Fascist tyranny wherever it is allowed to do so, we can say only that nothing is too fantastic for a Catholic apologist to say in our age of good will—or of crass ignorance of the facts. Since the English workers were fighting the troops and the French were preparing their rebellion in 1768, the struggle has lasted 170 years. During the first half, if not three-quarters, of that period the majority of the people in every European nation were Christians, and therefore, the immense majority of leaders of reform ought to have been Christians. On the contrary, we saw, Deists and Atheists were the majority, and definite representatives of Churches were a very small minority. That ounce of fact is worth a ton of apologetic rhetoric. The irresistible conclusion is that skepticism was far more inspiring than religion.

But am I fairly presenting the facts? As I said, you may consult any manual of history that has not a clerical purpose, but here I will give an easier test. We turn to the second great reform of the last century, the abolition of slavery. Well, I ask the reader who suspects that I may be selecting names that are favorable to my theme to read the article on slavery in a work that certainly never obliges skeptics, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He will find that the names of 19 Americans are given as those who did most for the reform or led up to it. To save the reader trouble, in fact, I will give the names: Franklin, Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, Patrick Henry, Lundy, Lloyd Garrison, C. P. Lovejoy, Wendell Phil-

lips, Charles Sumner, John Brown, W. E. Channing, R. W. Emerson, Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Whitman, and H. Beecher Stowe.

Four only of these were definitely Christians and one was a Quaker; and of the Christians, except P. Henry and H. Beecher Stowe, we may justly say that there were in the days of Lloyd Garrison scores of Atheists who worked as heroically as they. Fourteen of the men in the list were Deists or less (Emerson and Whitman). I have given the evidence in my **Biographical Dictionary** except as regards Charles Sumner, the most impassioned orator against slavery. His ideas about religion are carefully concealed by most biographers, but, though his friends gave him a religious funeral, he had a pagan ode of Horace sung over his grave, and his will never mentions any Church or religion. Newell D. Hiller in his story of the struggle tells us that someone denounced Sumner to President Grant as a skeptic. Sumner "does not believe in the Bible," the man said. Grant replied: "Of course not—he didn't write it." But everything confirms that he was at the most a Deist.

Hiller, a clerical writer, adds to our list no name of consequence, but it will be obvious to the reader that the list has three extraordinary omissions: J. Q. Adams (a Unitarian), Stephen Douglass (a Deist who "never identified himself with any Church," as his biographer Johnson quotes). Theodore Parker (Unitarian), above all, Lincoln (a Deist). Probably we ought to add Horace Mann, who was, we shall see later an Emersonian non-Christian Theist. Hume in his historical sketch of the abolition-movement reminds us that we must add women-fighters who in years of courageous struggle far surpassed Harriet Beecher Stowe. As leaders he suggests Lucretia Mott, the Grimke sisters, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton: three Quakers and two Atheists.

How is that for an impartial record of service? The fight for political liberty in America had had nothing to do with religion and had required no inspiration except the common human anger against tyranny. In the corresponding fight in Europe the Church of Rome and the Church of England had been intimately allied with the tyrants, and it was therefore, the critic may say, natural that the leaders of the rebels should very largely be skeptics; though this does not detract from their heroism and self-sacrifice or lessen the guilt of the Churches themselves. But here, in the fight against what has often been called the worst crime of man against man, there is no reason whatever, **unless skepticism has more social inspiration than Christianity**, why, at a time when Christians were four-fifths of the community, they should be enormously outnumbered by Deists and Atheists in the very arduous fight for this great reform.

If we look into the matter more closely, we see that this remarkable moral obtuseness of the Christian majority must be ascribed, not to the refusal of individuals to carry out the teaching of their Churches, but to the Churches themselves. As I explained in the first chapter, the quite common idea of the relation of the Christian Church as a whole to slavery is historically false, indeed ludicrously false. The most powerful Christian leaders in the Roman world supported slavery. When political and economic causes then destroyed slavery of the classical type, it is supposed that the serfdom of Christian Europe was at least an improvement upon it. This

is false. The medieval serf was far worse off than most of the slaves of the 4th Century had been, and his hard lot was now extended to at least five-sixths of the workers. But the worst blunder of all is to suppose that when serfdom was generally abolished in Europe—again by political and economic causes—in the 13th and 14th Centuries, the Church had at last conquered the old evil. Not only had the Church nothing to do with the change—it is acknowledged by Catholic writers that ecclesiastical owners of serfs were the last to free them—but it continued to consent to the real slave-trade that was still maintained by several Catholic peoples (Venice, Genoa, etc.), and the horrible trade in Africa slaves was simply a continuation of this and was taken up with great enthusiasm, on account of the large profits, by both Catholics and Protestants. Neither Church had ever condemned slavery.

Hence the fact that the Christians in America, apart from the non-ecclesiastical Quakers, were, on the whole, amongst the fiercest opponents of the abolitionists. This has been shown so often and was asserted so strongly by leading abolitionists at the time that we need not linger to prove it. A recent and much-commended religious writer on the abolition-movement, Jesse Macy (*The Anti-Slavery Crusade*, 1920) says that the slave-owners "substituted the Greek doctrine of inequality and slavery for the previously accepted Christian doctrine of equality and universal brotherhood" (p. 13). It is a rich specimen of the way in which even our university folk now truckle to the Church. It is ludicrous, because the same author has to admit on a later page (p. 74) that "the authority of nearly all the leading denominations was directed against the abolitionists." Ministers and members of the southern Churches owned 660,000 slaves (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*), and their Churches officially declared that this was in accord with unvarying Christian tradition and with the Bible. Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian conferences decided to expel any minister who attacked slavery. At the Presbyterian Conference of 1840 a minister, Rev. R. N. Anderson, howled: "If there be any stray goat of a minister among you tainted with the bloodhound principles of abolitionism, let him be ferreted out, silenced, excommunicated." Parker Pillsbury was told that unless the Bible was wrong about slavery, he was "a horrid monster of infidelity and blasphemy."

The revolt against this great crime began, naturally, with the Quakers, as in the 17th and 18th Centuries they were the only organized body which was independent of the Church-authorities. Skeptics, however, began to attack slavery at a time when they were still a scattered handfull and had no wealth and organization like that of the Quakers. Washington and Jefferson, living in slave-owning States, were not very explicit, but they did in effect condemn the institution. Franklin and Paine, however, were clear and emphatic. We may almost trace the beginning of the abolition-movement to them. Paine's *African Slavery in America* (1775) roused his many readers, and a few weeks later the group at Philadelphia founded the first Anti-Slavery Society, with Franklin as president and Paine as its most active spirit.

This was during the War and Independence, and at its close the Philadelphia Society petitioned Congress to abolish slavery. But the

new unity of America was already seriously threatened by this question of slavery. If all men were equal, as the Constitution declared, slave-owning seemed a greater crime than ever. In the original draft of the Constitution there was a passage which was struck out. It threw the blame for African slavery upon the king. This was true enough—"slavery as an institution was forced upon the colonies by the mother country," says the Cambridge History—but the representatives of the southern States strongly resented any implication that it was a crime, and the Constitution had to remain the ambiguous document that it is in regard to the equality of men. Franklin died, and Paine went to Europe. Washington, Jefferson, and Madison passed into a politic silence on the subject; and so, apart from the sustained but futile opposition of the Quakers, the agitation died down until about 1830.

By that time slavery had been condemned by several countries, and the abolition-movement in England was approaching success. The time was ripe for an advance, and the great fight began when, in 1829, Lloyd Garrison took the lead. He began to publish the *Liberator* in 1831. Since Garrison is admittedly the grand figure of the movement, clerical writers are now eager to prove that he was a Christian. This is amusing when we reflect how bitterly even the bulk of the Unitarians opposed him, but it is wholly futile when we have the assurance of his own children in the official biography of him that, though a Theist, he had "quite freed himself from the trammels of orthodoxy" (W. L. Garrison, IV. 336) and never went to church. I gave on an earlier page the names, as selected by an impartial encyclopedia, of the distinguished orators and writers who helped most in forming public opinion against slavery in the next 20 years. Ten out of 12 of them were Deists, some not clearly even Deists.

As to the crowd of lecturers who bore the brunt of the battle and in some cases literally took their lives in their hands, it would be impossible to count heads, but the Atheism which was now in America just beginning to replace the older Deism—America was in this respect far behind France and England—was richly represented. Putnam tells how Garrison advertised in a Boston paper for some place in which he could speak on abolition and "no Christian house in the city could be opened to him, but the Atheists hall was offered to him gratis." Closely associated with Garrison was Parker Pillsbury, a fiery worker, who passed from the Congregationalist ministry to freethought when he realized the apathy or hostility of Christians. Dr. G. W. Brown, editor of the Kansas *Herald of Freedom*—his office was once sacked by a pro-slavery mob and he was arrested—had been expelled from his Church for heresy. S. Sharp, a rich Ohio manufacturer, spent large sums in the cause. Robert Thorpe, a leading Pittsburgh lawyer and a Rationalist was "an ardent opponent of slavery."

But practically all members of the increasing freethought societies supported abolition. More remarkable was the number of Deist or Atheist women who, in face of the vulgar contempt that women-speakers were apt to encounter in those days, went from State to State delivering fiery speeches against slavery. Besides the atheistic ladies Susan B. Anthony and Mrs. Cady Stanton, who were also the

leaders of the feminist movement, practically all the women speakers in the skeptical organizations took up the cause; for they linked the emancipation of the slaves with the emancipation of women. Ernestine Rose, eloquent daughter of a Polish rabbi but converted to Robert Owen's views and expressly describing herself as an Atheist, traversed the slave-owning States lecturing brilliantly on abolition. Lucy Colman, a teacher who turned from the Churches to Atheism, worked with Garrison, Douglass, and W. Phillips. Helen H. Gardener, daughter of a rich Virginia family who freed their slaves and migrated to the North, a brilliant skeptical writer, lent her pen to the cause. The veteran feminist and Deist orator Frances Wright was "a devoted adherent of the anti-slavery cause." Lydia Maria Child, "a favorite of the wealth and culture of New England" and a Theist, wrote one of the first books against slavery (1833) and edited the **National Anti-Slavery Standard**. What list of women in the Abolition Movement who were identified with the Churches can, even if you include the Unitarians and Quakers, be drawn up to compare with this list of brilliant Deist and Atheist ladies? Yet radical heresy was still comparatively rare in America, and the very high proportion of such workers in the abolition-movement makes nonsense of the claim that it contains no inspiration.

It is usually said in America that, while the attack upon slavery in that country certainly had a predominantly skeptical appearance, it was quite otherwise in Great Britain. In fact, most people know of only one English abolitionist and are under the impression that he was all his life a devout churchman, so that his inspiration must be ascribed to his creed. No one would wish to belittle the service of William Wilberforce in the attack upon slavery in England, but students of these matters ought to be informed, and never are, on three points. First, that Wilberforce is acknowledged by his sons, who wrote his life, to have been anything but a devout Christian up to near the age of 30, and it was in this early non-Christian part of his life that he began to attack slavery. At the age of 16 he wrote, from the 'school in which he is expressly described as losing his religious belief, a letter to the Press condemning "the odious traffic in human flesh." This was in 1765, and I assume that he had been reading the French skeptics or possibly Locke.

Secondly, on every social question except slavery Wilberforce was in his maturity a truculent reactionary. As the French Revolution developed, Pitt, as I have said, fell upon all reform-societies in England with brutal severity. Spies and provoking agents were everywhere, and thousands suffered in the vile jails. In this Pitt had no more zealous supporter than his friend William Wilberforce. He was a smug comfortable man who encouraged any means to stamp out the threat to wealth and religion. If his Christian creed inspired his zeal to end slavery far away in the West Indies, why did it leave him so callous to suffering and injustice in all other matters? Not of that type were the Deist and Atheist leaders of the movement in America.

Thirdly, since Wilberforce is one of the bare half-dozen reformers whom the Christian Churches can claim in England during the fierce struggle from the middle of the 18th to the middle of the 19th Century, his share in the abolition of slavery has been magni-

fied out of all proportion. There were not at any time a large number of black slaves in England, but planters who returned from the West Indies used occasionally to bring them, and they were bought and sold, rather as novelties. An odd preacher here and there is quoted as condemning this, but they generally condemned only cruelty to slaves, and not one of them ever approached this plain declaration which Locke gives in his first *Treatise on Civil Government* (1689):

Slavery is so vile and miserable an estate of men, and so directly opposite to the generous temper and courage of our nation, that it can hardly be conceived that an Englishman, much less a gentleman, should plead for it.

It is therefore not true that the Quakers, copying their American brethren, were the first to condemn it: much less that Wilberforce, Clarkson, and their churchgoing friends were the first. The society for the abolition of the slave trade which these formed in 1787 had only 12 members. It was, in fact, the ordinary law court which made the first advance by ruling that a slave became free the moment he landed on British soil (1772).

Slavery was now, as stories of cruelty spread, attacked by all sorts of people: by the founders of Methodism, Wesley and Whitefield, by the sturdy churchman Dr. Johnson, by the Deist economist Adam Smith, even by the distinguished statesmen Fox (Atheist), Pitt (probably the same, at most a Deist who "never went to church"), and Burke. But, though the secession of America had removed hundreds of thousands of slaves out of the sphere of British interest, the opposition was formidable. The West Indian planters and the British seaports angrily said that they would be ruined. There were 800,000 African slaves in the West Indies. Pitt in 1788 introduced a resolution in the House of Commons to the effect that the question of the slave trade would be taken up. This was carried without opposition—and in the absence of Wilberforce. But the worst period of the French Revolution now occurred, and Pitt apostatized from all his humanitarian ideals. The influence of the Wilberforce group dwindled, and it was not until Fox, who never relaxed in his indictment of slavery, and Grenville attained power in 1806 that a bill prohibiting British merchants to take part in the slave-trade was passed.

Without the support of Pitt and Fox, both notorious skeptics though they were at this time the leading statesman of England, Wilberforce and his party would never have accomplished so much as this; and it was not much, for the law was shamelessly evaded. Now Pitt was hated by all progressives, and Wilberforce, who eagerly supported him in every reactionary measure, shared the odium he incurred. For a time the cause languished, but it had struck deep sentimental roots in the English people. A song called *The Negro's Complaint* was sung everywhere. Travelers came home repeatedly from the West Indies with stories of cruelty. It was found that the prohibition of the traffic had, by reducing the number of slaves, laid a heavier burden upon those who were already in the islands.

In short, in the third decade of the 19th Century a real abolition-movement began. Instead of tracing it, I will just say that its leaders were men of all types of thought and included several of the greatest freethinkers of the time: Sir Samuel Romilly, one of the

greatest lawyers of the age and, as his son said, decidedly "not a Christian," Jeremy Bentham, the famous jurist and reformer and an emphatic Atheist, Lord Brougham, an arch-trimmer in regard to religion but not more than a Deist, and Sir James Mackintosh, another famous jurist and a Deist. Behind these was the entire force of skeptical humanitarians which was gathering strength under such Atheist leaders as Robert Owen, Bentham, James Mill, Francis Place, and the historian Grote. These mixed with royal dukes, peers, churchmen, Quakers, etc., in an indignant attempt to end the scandal, and in 1833 the slave-owners of the West Indies were bought off with an indemnity of \$100,000,000.

It is thus clear that the practice of representing the reform in England as having been carried by a religious movement led by Wilberforce is a travesty of the facts. Without the support of such skeptics as Pitt, Fox, Romilly, Mackintosh, and Bentham, who were amongst the most distinguished and most influential men of their time, the Wilberforce's group, which the workers and middle-class men generally regarded as an eccentric handful of pietists, would have accomplished little, if anything. It is, perhaps, even more important to realize that this group of powerful skeptical supporters would not have existed if they had not been inspired with a humanitarian zeal by the Atheists of France.

France gives us an excellent opportunity to expose the hollowness of Roman Catholic claims. Not only were there hundreds of thousands of half-slaves or serfs, in that country to the time of the Revolution, but in the French colonies there were the same masses of black slaves as in the British West Indies. No bishop had a word to say against it. The Church had never condemned it. It was reserved for the wicked skeptics Montesquieu, Voltaire, and the Encyclopedists (mostly Atheists) to condemn it. The most that had been done to that time was the drafting of a Black Code to protect them from cruelty; and it was generally evaded. In 1788, on the eve of the Revolution a Society of Friends of the Blacks demanding the abolition of slavery, was formed at Paris. One Catholic joined its committee; and he was the ambiguous Abbe Gregoire to whom the Church authorities refused Christian burial. The others were Deists like Lafayette and La Rochefoucauld or Atheists like Brissot, Petion, and Mirabeau. The Constituent Assembly in 1791 decreed that all the blacks in the French colonies were citizens of France, but this led to insurrections and years of terrible fighting; and with the fall of the Republic and Napoleon the whole gain was lost. It was not until the people had carried two further revolutions against throne and Church that slavery was abolished in the French colonies.

It had been comparatively easy for the Danes to denounce the slave trade in 1792, under the influence of French ideals, since they took very little part in it. Other powers followed in fair proportion to the influence of skeptical writers. Holy Russia still had 40,000,000 slaves (serfs who were bought and sold like cattle) until the middle of the 19th Century. The sleek Protestant merchants of Holland maintained slavery in the Dutch West Indies until 1863, when the Rationalist writer Dekker stirred the country against it. Brazil, still the most Catholic of the Latin Republics, and Portugal (for its colonies) clung to slavery until 1888. Belgium kept it still later in its

African colonies. It is necessary to give many names and details in treating such subjects as this, but the reader must keep a large sense of proportion. Clerical writers are now zealously seeking proof that some Catholic priest or some Protestant bishop condemned slavery in recent centuries or joined in the Abolition-movement. We never denied it. It is as irrelevant as the height of Mount Elias or the length of the Mississippi. We are meeting the claim that skepticism does not inspire men to fight for justice and progress, and that Christianity does. Yet every sociological manual of the history of slavery gives facts which make this claim as ludicrous as if you said that Cotton Mather introduced gaiety into American life and its theater-folk were joy-killers. From the 4th Century to the 10th the Roman Church held that slavery was just. From the 16th Century to the 19th the Protestant Churches were as morally obtuse; for I decline to take account of a few divines who condemned cruelty to slaves and did not condemn slavery. The campaign against it begins just when skepticism begins to multiply, and the great majority of the effective workers for abolition, both in America, England, and France were non-Christians. We add a second deeply honorable page to the record of modern skepticism.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIGHT FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

Liberty without enlightenment may be a social menace. Where the leaders of the community are sound and unselfish, we may look to oratory for this enlightenment, but as American experience showed as soon as the fervor of revolutionary days faded, leadership, with its meretricious accompaniments of prestige and wealth, is even apt to corrupt the leader. This is more dangerous than ever in an age when the leaders voice is magically raised to a bellow that can be heard in every village of the land, and when science arms him with a hundred devices for duping his followers. Therefore, while new problems such as the production and multiplication of wealth have arisen in our time, the next fundamental problem after securing civic and political liberty for all was to ensure that the men and women of the new self-governing democracies should have vigilant and well-informed minds.

The importance of this contribution to civilization increases when we consider it from the social angle. The rebels who in the 18th Century began to warn people how they were duped by religious literature, especially historical literature, perceived a remarkable fact. What people called the Christian Era was universally represented as an era of justice and virtue in comparison with the older civilizations, yet they found themselves, after nearly 15 centuries of Christian domination in Europe, living in an age of tyranny, gross exploitation, dense ignorance, and abounding crime. Skeptical scholars found, moreover, that the farther you go back in the history of Christendom, the worse the social condition was. In other words, and contrary to the myth that is still propagated even by writers who call themselves emancipated, the long period of Christian domination was one of appalling crime and crass ignorance. It was clear that the two were connected, and the new humanitarians insisted that general education would lead to a material reduction of crime. That claim has been fully vindicated in all countries where conditions in regard to the detection and punishment of crime are normal.

The demand of general education therefore began almost at the same time as the demand of relief from tyranny. We are apt to smile today at the fervor with which our reforming predecessors regarded education as a social panacea. We today spend hundreds of millions annually in the "education" of a mass of boys and girls the great majority of whom will for the rest of their lives use their equipment only to read an unscrupulous daily or the shoddiest of fiction. We forget that in the days of Horace Mann it was quite impossible to foresee our pernicious commercial development of printed matter. What the early educators had in mind was a generation of workers being taught to read and using this faculty to secure enlightenment from the serious literature, especially pamphlets, which

would be provided for them. We perceive today, of course that this ideal will not be attained until the control of capitalism and reaction is removed from every form and organ of public instruction and, as in Russia, the state substitutes ideals for the caprices or cupidities of private enterprise.

Meantime the struggle for the enlightenment of the people was a great social service, and we have to ask to what extent skeptics joined in that struggle. At first blush we should expect, since we hold that knowledge is the deadly enemy of superstition, to find the work almost entirely conducted by freethinkers and opposed by religious people. Hence some are puzzled when, in reading sketches of the history of education, they learn how the Jesuits were the great founders of colleges in Europe, how (which is not strictly correct) American education began amongst the truculent Bible-readers of New England; how in the 19th Century scores of thoroughly orthodox men and women had a high position in the promotion of higher education.

Let us get two points quite clear. The first is that "education" may be used to serve very different purposes. Take three or four 18th-century pioneers. Pestalozzi (a sentimental Deist) advocated general education on moral grounds: an educated people would, he believed, be a better-behaved people. Adam Smith (intellectual Deist) advocated it partly on economic grounds: educated workers would produce more wealth than uneducated workers. Diderot and the Atheists generally advocated it because it would help to destroy political and clerical oppression. Mary Wollstonecraft (Atheist) and other women fought for it because woman had an equal right to it with man. And the Puritans of Massachusetts and the founders of Sunday Schools and Bible Societies in England supported it because they wanted folk able to read the Bible, the prayer book, and the sermons of the more fiery preachers. Hence the variety in the founders of systems of education. But, obviously, any system of education which restricts the amount or the nature of the knowledge that is to be given is **not** a social service, so we do not put Jesuits and Puritans in the same class as genuine reformers.

The second fact is that the demand for real education began only in the 18th Century, the period in which large-scale skepticism began and so many ideals sprouted. I have not the slightest idea here of examining the village-schools of Massachusetts, the grammar-schools of England, or the Jesuit colleges of Spain and Austria. One simple fact disposes of all the bloated claims of both Catholics and Protestants. It is that after all the vaunted work of medieval schoolmen before the Reformation and of Jesuits and Lutherans after it—you read whole chapters about this in the academic writers who now trim their sales to catch every breeze of clerical favor—at the **opening of the 19th Century nine-tenths of the people were still illiterate**. Even in England it was admitted in the House of Commons in 1807 that only one in 20 could read and write; in other words, that the workers were practically all illiterate. Prussia alone was then in better condition, and that was due solely to the work of the skeptic Frederic the Great. Spain, Portugal, and Italy were in so much worse condition that as late as 1840 seven-eighths of the population

were still illiterate; and Russia and the Balkan countries were worse than this.

So do not let us be duped by stories about how many schools and colleges the Catholics or the Protestants opened before the 19th Century. They were, in any case, mainly for religious purposes, and, where they professed to educate the children of the poor, they were usually atrocious parodies of schools. The broad historical fact is in full harmony with the general statement I made in the first chapter. There have been three eras of general education as part of a high state of civilization: the later Roman, the Arab-Persian, and the modern. Yet preachers continue to mouthe that Christianity gave the world schools! But we remember that nowadays even employers and dictators profess a great zeal for education—of the right sort—so we examine with care the list of pioneers and great workers.

Take such a work as Professor Merle Cuti's **Social Ideals of American Educators** (1935), which is part of the Report of a Commission on the Social Studies and is not at all tainted with skepticism. The educators to whom the author devotes a full chapter each instead of the few lines or page or two which others get, are as follows: Franklin, Jefferson (who as governor of Virginia in 1779 got his advanced ideas incorporated in a Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge), Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, Booker T. Washington, W. T. Harris, Bishop Spalding, Francis W. Parker, G. Stanley Hall, William James, Edward Lee Thorndike, and John Dewey. If we put out of the list Bishop Spalding, who worked solely for his Church, and Booker Washington, who was interested only in the education of the blacks, what have we? Not one single orthodox Christian.

The great pioneers Franklin and Jefferson were admittedly Deists, and Jefferson was a Materialist with an acrid scorn of Christian doctrines. Horace Mann, whom most writers put in a class by himself as creator of American education, is described in the Dictionary of American Biography first as "a Unitarian," then as "a Puritan without a theology," and thirdly as a man who owed his ideas to Emerson and George Combe, especially his "unswerving faith in the unlimited improbability of the human race by education." In other words, he believed in an impersonal God but denied immortality and all Christian doctrines. Mann was also a zealous Abolitionist.

The same Dictionary, which is, we shall see, always very reluctant to admit that one of its heroes was not a Christian, says that in 1835 Henry Barnard, who ranks next to Mann in the creation of American education, was urged that it was in his interest to "make a public profession of religion." It adds that "it is not recorded that he did or that he was ever a churchman, but those who knew him intimately gave testimony to his deep religious faith." Why not use plain American? He refused to make a profession of Christianity and, in spite of the same acrid hostility of the Churches as Mann suffered, refused always to make such a profession. We are accustomed to these anonymous friends and relatives who testify to a man's "deep religious faith" when he is dead. William T. Harris, who is counted the third great worker, was a Hegelian philosopher, and, though he professed to reconcile his (impersonal) Absolute with a nominal Christianity—chiefly in his case because the Churches help-

ed to keep the workers out of Socialism—he was no more a Christian than John Dewey is. Francis Parker is described by Curti as an Emersonian, and Stanley Hall as “from the orthodox point of view an Agnostic.” William James was not even a Theist; Lee Thorndike followed him closely; and John Dewey has probably already repented of his one pathetic attempt at God-making.

So there we are. According to an academic authority, writing in an academic publication, all the greater workers for education in America were skeptics. The Puritan school-movement had served its very narrow purpose and died with Puritan theology. At the time of the Revolution there was so little thought about the education of the people, in spite of Franklin and Jefferson, that it is not mentioned in the Constitution. Echoes from England of the educational work of Lancaster (Quaker) and Owen (Atheist) then stirred American cities to some extent, but it is enough to recall that when Horace Mann was appointed secretary of the first state Board of Education (Massachusetts) in 1837, he found that the average wage of male teachers was \$185 a year and of female teachers \$65 a year; that there were no schools for one-third of the children of the State; and that a large number of those who did go to school were away at work for nine months out of the twelve. Then the skeptics got to work.

In Europe the story is much the same. Here again we ignore all work before the second half of the 18th Century, because in point of fact all countries were 'sodden with illiteracy. American visitors are often amused by the painted signs (red lions, kings' heads, etc.) hanging before the doors of inns in Europe. They are relics of the days when no worker could have read a printed sign. The pioneers who began to stir Europe were, notoriously, Rousseau (Deist), Pestalozzi (Deist), Froebel (Pantheist), and Robert Owen (Atheist). The Prussian government, under the Deist Frederic, took up the ideas of Pestalozzi, and the French Revolutionary government gave the world the first grand charter of an education which must be “free, universal, the same for children of both sexes, and must regard adults as well as children.” This was drafted by the Atheist Talleyrand. The subsequent disturbance of the country caused the scheme to be suspended, and Napoleon only very partially and unenthusiastically worked at it. Even the few hundred schools he built were closed by the Catholic reactionaries after Waterloo, and the lead passed to England.

Adam Smith, Hume, and the other skeptical humanitarians of the latter part of the 18th Century so strongly pleaded for general education that a Bill was actually brought before the House of Commons in the year 1807. What is more, it passed this House, but it was rejected by the House of Lords, in which the bishops vigorously attacked it. Into the details of the 60 years struggle of the reformers against the bishops we need not enter. On all sides there was now a feeling of shame at the appalling neglect of the children, but the bishops fought tooth and nail to get control of any government expenditure on schools, while the advanced reformers wanted a purely secular system. The bishops founded a large system of church-schools, supported by voluntary contributions and, later, by government grants, and a Quaker, Lancaster, founded a rival system in which only undenominational or general Christian teaching was ad-

mitted. In both systems the teaching, teachers, and schools were of the most miserable description, and the main line of reform was elsewhere.

The Welsh Atheist Robert Owen, a very successful textile manufacturer and a singularly independent little man, established schools of the strictest secular character for the large industrial community which he controlled in Scotland. The curriculum was quite modern in comparison with the wretched teaching in the Bell or the Lancaster schools, and the result—combined, of course, with all Owen's other reforms—was such that statesmen, students, and even princes came from all parts of Europe to see the "model community." "Man's character is made for him, not by him" was Owen's motto: which ought to entitle him to be classed as a very early pioneer of social psychology. Of his general work and extraordinary influence I shall speak later. It is enough to say here that his school was the first great landmark in the advance of British education.

Owen was at first chiefly supported by Atheists like Jeremy Bentham, Francis Place, and James Mill—his Quaker business partners ruined his work in Scotland because he would not have the Bible read in his schools—but the demand of a government system of schools was now taken up by many others. The chief worker was Lord Brougham, who would certainly have resented the suggestion that he was a skeptic; though there is good reason to regard his nominal adhesion to Christianity as part of his cloak of respectability. The bishops considered him their greatest enemy. Diplomatic and opportunist, as usual, Brougham, who was a very sincere advocate of education for the lower middle class but indifferent or hostile to the education of "the common people," deserted the original plan of a system of purely secular schools and urged that the Bible be read, with comments by the teacher, as is still done in British schools. This opened the door to the increasing body of Nonconformists, and the proportion of skeptical fighters for a national system in the next quarter of a century naturally fell. They generally, like Huxley, supported the plan—and lived to repent it.

It is neither possible nor necessary to study the development in every country. The proportion of skeptics in the lead in early days is the same everywhere: Franklin, Jefferson, Mann, and Barnard in America, Hume, A. Smith, R. Owen, and Bentham in England, Rousseau, Diderot, and Talleyrand in France, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Herbart in Switzerland and Germany, and so on. The leaders of the Churches violently opposed them and made a strong point of the danger that educating the children of the workers might make them "discontented with the condition to which the Almighty had called them." We do not recognize as pioneers of education men who founded schools in which the teaching was expressly directed to prevent the children, as they grew up, from reading and thinking on religious, political, and economic matters with perfect freedom. Such founders of schools did not contribute to the progress of the race but used education for the purpose of preventing such progress.

This applies particularly to all claims which Roman Catholic writers make for recognition of the work of their Church in this field. Pedagogists now give quite respectfully an account of the Jesuit colleges in France, Spain, and Austria, the work of the con-

gregations of teaching brothers (Christian Brothers, etc.) and nuns, and so on. They are supposed to be showing themselves superior to the sour anti-Catholic prejudice of the last generation. They are, in reality, sacrificing the scientific spirit to Catholic pressure. They dare not analyze this outstanding fact that at the beginning of the 19th Century Catholic countries were even more densely illiterate than others and, what is worse, they remained for half a century in this crass illiteracy while the Protestant nations struggled out of it. They dare not analyze this further fact that, while the rate of illiteracy differed in different Catholic countries, it was worst in the more strictly Catholic countries. In the central provinces of Italy, which the Pope ruled as king until 1870, there were schools, and of the most miserable type, for only two children in every hundred: in Rome itself schools for only one child in every 10. In other words, no education at all was given to the workers. And the kingdom of Naples, Spain, and Portugal, where the faith was similarly protected from opposition, were just as poor in schools. In face of these facts one hardly requires a power of scientific analysis to see that in Catholic countries schools and colleges were provided only when Rome's interest required them. The Jesuit colleges, in particular, were factories of mendacity and religious hatred in the interest of Catholicism.

We shall have to leave to a later stage the final and decisive proof of my proposition. We have had in recent years several instances of Atheism holding complete control of cities or countries and of Roman Catholicism regaining such control by alliance with brutal military adventurers. The result is well known. Spain and Vienna made magnificent progress in education as long as Socialists ruled them and the work was destroyed when the Church regained power. Mexico has, in spite of its peculiar difficulties, transformed education under its anti-clerical rulers. Italy has, on the contrary, starved and prostituted education since the alliance of the Fascists and the Vatican began. Russia, which has the most purely atheistic government in the world, surpasses every historical precedent and every contemporary nation in the efficiency, wisdom, and humanity of its educational system. But we will return to that later.

We must defer also a consideration of the share that skeptics have had in the support of the work of enlightenment by voluntary contributions to educational institutions. If we shut out of consideration gifts and legacies for purely sectarian purposes (missions, religious colleges, etc.), we shall find that wealthy skeptics have played a notable part. Many institutions have, in fact, forgotten or no longer press upon public attention the share that skeptics have had in nursing them in their early and most difficult years. About 10 years ago, for instance, I gave a series of lectures in Montreal, and, although the general public gave me large audiences, I saw no trace whatever of anything like organized freethought. Yet S. P. Putnam in his **Four Hundred Years of Freethought** (1894) describes a very flourishing Montreal Pioneer Freethought Club in the closing years of the last century and says that "donations of over a million dollars have been made to McGill College by supporters of the club, and some of its members occupy the highest places in commercial and civic life" (p. 585). We will take up the point when we come to discuss the general question of philanthropy.

CHAPTER VII

ATHEIST FOUNDERS OF SOCIALISM

I have, doubtless, many readers who are not Socialists, who may even consider Socialism a menace, and they will require an explanation why I venture to include the founding of Socialism amongst the contributions of skeptics to the progress of civilization. Twenty years ago such an objection would have been more reasonable. In face of the magnificent success which Socialism has had in creating a civilization in Russia the objection may seem to have lost its force, but the critic I have in mind will probably retort that the merits of the Russian civilization are disputed, and we must leave that point to the last chapter. Meantime let us take Socialism as an ideal.

It has doubtless been necessary during the last hundred years to attack the evils of the old civilization one at a time or at least to organize independent movements for the reform of each. It would have been too slow a task to educate the majority of the community into a comprehensive resentment of royalism, religious traditions, slavery, the subjection of women, and so on, whereas workers could unite with bourgeois on a single issue such as the attainment of political liberty or the criticism of religious untruths. The alternative to what we may call departmental reconstruction was at that time utopian fiction: writing books in which the author describes an ideal commonwealth that is free from all the evils and blunders which we criticize. This was done repeatedly when the revival of classical literature taught thoughtful men that beyond Christianity in the historical record there lay, not a number of corrupt and misguided nations stumbling in the dark but a civilization with finer ideals than Christian Europe had. Plato's description of an ideal republic is in many respects not to our task but it did move various classical scholars like More to fall back upon utopianism. The authors of those bold suggestions that man could remake the world much better than God had made it either had (like More) to remain anonymous and be content with few readers or to face persecution. The practice died out, and the age of sectional reforms began.

Sectional reform is, however, in many ways unsatisfactory. Members of a movement which aims to secure a single reform may remain violent opponents of many other reforms that are just as urgently needed. We saw how the British abolitionist Wilberforce was in all other respects a very determined reactionary. Another British reformer, Lord Shaftesbury, who is heavily praised in works which please the clergy, confined his zeal to helping child-workers and actually had to barricade his windows against their parents because of his thorough reaction in all other matters. Most of the orthodox and quite a number of the skeptical reformers I have so far mentioned had these limitations. There is a great gain in having an all-round ideal of a reconstructed life, and the greater reformers have

generally had this. Socialism raised such an ideal before the mind of the race: an ideal of life without poverty, crime, war, legal inequality, discrimination against women, religious bigotry, and so on. There is, as Shelley shows us in *Prometheus Unbound*, a fine inspiration in picturing to oneself a life from which all these ancient evils have been banished.

In its first form the Socialist ideal of such a world was due to the Atheist Robert Owen. He, being the sole employer of labor, virtually ruled the isolated small town in Scotland where his mill was situated. He owned the schools, houses, stores, halls—he had no church or parson in the place—public-houses, etc., so that he could act as a benevolent despot. Whatever one may find to smile at in his work he, by giving better wages and conditions of labor, building better houses and insisting on cleanliness, enforcing sobriety, and so on, raised the character and welfare of the entire town in a way that astonished the world. He did all this without troubling to learn what other social reformers said or wanted.

Then he appealed to other manufacturers to do the same. The British population was to be split up into so many model industrial villages or small towns under benevolent middle-class despots. But the manufacturers warmly refused to spend in this way the money which the workers had made for them—Owen spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on the welfare of his workers—and he appealed to the government. He had a surprising body of supporters, including royal dukes, but the religious folk wrecked his influence by compelling him publicly to declare his Atheism. He then formed a large society, rising to 100,000 members, of men and women who agreed with him about religion and everything else. They were themselves to finance and form model industrial or agricultural or mixed communities. Since he called himself the Social Father, they came to be known as Socialists. The movement, of course, failed, but Owenites, or men and women trained in the idealism of Robert Owen, were in the van of every movement for reform for a generation after his death—in many cases until the 20th Century—and his son, Robert Dale Owen, carried the spirit to and successfully propagated it in America. It was the most splendid failure in the history of reform.

There were somewhat similar movements in France. Before the Revolution a skeptical ex-priest named Morelly had developed Rousseau's ideas into Communism, and during the Revolution this was taken up and advocated by the Atheist Babeuf. It died with him, but a very aristocratic and wealthy man, the Count Henri de Saint-Simon, who had been a pupil of the Encyclopedist D'Alembert, soon afterwards put forward a new form of Socialism. His experience of the Revolution had given him a distrust of politicians, especially of the democratic school, but he was far from orthodox as regards either the restored monarchy or Church. All the means of production were to be taken over by the nation and to be controlled by experts such as bankers, industrialists, and engineers. Property could not be left to descendants, and so could not accumulate in private hands. Saint-Simon, was a sort of sentimental Deist, had a large number of followers, mostly of the middle and wealthy class, after 1820.

Still more folk, and many in America, followed Charles Fourier,

who, like Owen, advocated dividing the working population into model communities. Fourier was a dreamy and mystic Deist, though he included free love amongst the attractions of life in his communities. But you can see the details of his scheme in any encyclopedia. All that we need note here is that a wealthy admirer of his later in the century built, at great expense one of these community homes, and that the spirit of blended liberty and brotherhood which was the essence of his ideal had a very widespread and healthy influence. In many a home in America where reformers like Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips gathered for discussion the basic ideas of Fourier were very respectfully debated.

But all these early forms of Socialism were more admirable in sentiment than in intellectual quality, and their service is solely that they did concentrate the eyes of millions upon the better world, of some shape, that lay below the horizon. It was necessary to appeal to the new ally of the race, science, to give such form to the vague dream of an all-round reform of life that it would appeal no less to the intellect than to the emotions. Some would claim that the first man to do this was the French politician, Louis Blanc, an Atheist. As early as the year 1840 he published a work in which he urged the need of state-organization of the economic life. His immediate proposal was that the state should start agricultural and industrial enterprises which would afford work, at good wages, for the whole of the unemployed, but he did advocate that in the course of time the state should go on to acquire and control all the means of production. The Revolution of 1848 gave an opportunity to found a few national workshops, but they were not in accordance with Blanc's ideas and their failure was used to discredit his scheme.

Meantime the real beginning had been made, as everybody knows, by two German Atheists, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: some would prefer to say by three German Atheists, meaning that Ferdinand Lasalle moved independently to much the same position. These details do not concern us. In fact, it is hardly necessary even to recall that these German Atheists founded Socialism in the form in which it became one of the great powers of recent times. Whether the metaphysical form which Karl Marx gave to his theory by applying certain formulae which he had learned in his classes on Hegelian philosophy are really essential to it, or whether the analysis of capital and labor which he made in the middle of the last century is just as applicable today, and so on, are not questions to be discussed here. All that we have to do, now that ecclesiastics (like the Dean of Canterbury in England) are beginning to utter the inevitable "God Bless Russia" or "Thank God for Russia," is to insist upon people remembering that it was Atheist rebels against Church and state who, nearly 100 years ago, laid the solid foundations of the system they now bless.

And for the next half-century it was Atheists, and Atheists alone, who, at great sacrifice, protected the new creed from the fate which had overtaken every earlier ideal of a reconstructed commonwealth, won a steadily increasing support for it, and in the course of time developed it into a comprehensive reform of social life. During the 60 or 70 years when Socialism was fighting for its place in the sun its members and leaders were as obnoxious to the Church-

authorities everywhere as were members of Atheist or Rationalist societies. Every congress of leaders was a solid gathering of Atheists, and the literature of the movement in its various branches was truculently anti-clerical. Whether one accepts or rejects the economic creed of Socialism, one has to count this impassioned fight for an ideal by two generations of Atheists, in spite of libel, contempt, and sometimes persecution, one of the innumerable developments of modern life which make one wonder how any serious person can ever echo the preacher's cry that Atheism leaves men selfish and callous to the common interest. Even the Rationalist who regards the movement as unsound in principle must see that its history is a magnificent testimony to the effectiveness of Atheism as an inspiration to work and sacrifice for the common good.

The attempt is now made to blunt the edge of this argument by attaching an exaggerated importance to what is called Christian Socialism. About the middle of the last century a group of members of the Church of England—Maurice, Kingsley, Ludlow, etc.—began to issue a paper which they called *The Christian Socialist*. They were men of real zeal for social reform, and in many ways they helped the cause of reform. But they were never Socialists in the sense in which we take the word, and in no country in which the movement was later taken up (Germany, Austria, France, and Italy, chiefly) were they ever Socialists in the strict sense. One of their chief aims from the first was to check the leakage from the Churches by showing that social idealism was not confined to Atheists. A writer of the time who was not opposed to them, Woodworth, said that the aim of the British Christian Socialist group was "primarily religious." As to the later imitations of the movement which appeared in Germany, Austria, and Italy, it is enough to point out that they gave birth to the brutal modern anti-Semitic craze, and that it was the Christian Socialists of Austria, led by the treacherous Dollfuss, who wantonly destroyed the Socialist administration at Vienna which was a model of social service.

Apart from these lambs in wolves' clothing the entire body of Socialist leaders during the decades when fighting for Socialism meant real work and sacrifice, not a comfortable post with two to three thousand dollars a year, were Atheists. I am here using the word in a broad sense: not, of course, so as to include movements which, like the Labor Party in England, call themselves socialistic but have narrow and inadequate programs, but including all the really advanced organizations which grew out of international Socialism, such as Communism, Bolshevism, and Syndicalism. If we could not reasonably bring Anarchism under the same heading, though its founder Bakunin called himself a Collectivist, we can at least say that all members and leaders of the party since its formation have been very decidedly Atheists.

America's experience with a Federation of Labor, an aggregation of Trade Unions without a Socialist program and without any opposition to religion, ought to convince any man that the path to progress and social reconstruction is not through such bodies. They lend themselves to corruption, have no ideals, and secure very poor results for their members. Consider, on the other hand, the inspirational value of the full Socialist ideal. Wherever the men and women who

share it secure power or are numerous enough to influence those who hold power, the regeneration of the community proceeds rapidly. Mexico is an imperfect illustration, but under Socialist pressure far more has been done in 10 years for the education and social welfare of the people than had been done in the previous hundred years of Liberal rule. Vienna under a Socialist municipality for 10 years and Spain under a Socialist majority for two or three years are clearer illustrations. But the supreme and decisive proof is in Russia, which we must reserve for separate treatment.

There came a time in the history of the Socialist movement in most countries when what we may call the official antagonism to religion was relaxed so as to secure more speedily the desired majority of the voters. In such countries as America and Great Britain, where the party was small and grew slowly, the traditional opposition to religion was not long sustained; and today in England even the Communists have locked away in their private cupboards Marx's famous slogan that "religion is the opium of the people" and are eager to cooperate with the Churches. On the other hand, in Spain, Italy, and Austria, where religion was known only in its Roman Catholic form, the hostility was never relaxed, for the Church was as persistent an enemy as the state. In Germany, where for half a century every Congress had reaffirmed the Atheism of Marx and Engels, Bebel and Liebknecht, this policy was abandoned before the War and, under the pretext that it was intolerant for an economic creed to inquire into the religious creed of its adherents, the attacks upon religion ceased, and doubtless large numbers of Protestant workers now began to support Socialists at the elections: which was the sole purpose of the surrender of the tradition of the party. Socialists would do well to remember that when at last the Nazis were strong enough to treat Socialists and Communists with the same savagery as they treated the Jews, not a single minister of any of the religions which they had tried to conciliate said a word for them. The quarrel of Niemoeller and other pastors with the Nazis is purely about interference with their own Church-affairs.

But the Socialist ideal had been fully developed long before Socialist organizations ceased to be solidly atheistic. It is, in any case, the leaders and deputies who draft the program, and not a single man or woman who was not an Atheist had any share in this work. Long before the end of the last century it was fully recognized that the nationalization of the means of production and distribution was a means to an end, and that the end was something immensely larger than an increase of the worker's wage; though this in itself was chiefly esteemed on the view that it would lift the worker to a higher social and intellectual level. However that may be, Socialism meant everywhere the attainment of power, political and economic, for the purpose of carrying out a comprehensive program of reforms: the abolition of war and militarism, the suppression of crime, the extinction of poverty, unemployment, and insecurity of employment, satisfactory pensions for the aged, free service of the sick, the complete emancipation of women, the reform of law and prisons, vastly increased expenditure on schools, the rationalization of marriage and divorce, full religious liberty, relief to poor mothers, and so on. The ideal flowered into this cluster of reforms long before the move-

ment ceased to be entirely atheistic. The reader may or may not believe that the economic action of Socialism would give it funds to carry out these reforms. That is a different question. The point here is that the reforms are genuine fruits of Atheism.

It will, further, hardly be questioned by anybody that in most countries some measure of these reforms was embodied in legislation just because they were attracting men and women to Socialism. Take the case of Germany. Bismarck first fought the Catholics, then invited the Catholics to cooperate in checking the growth of Socialism. But they failed to check it, and the government then passed a series of social-welfare measures (pensions, insurance, etc.) to attain the same object. It was the same again during the five years before Hitler cheated his way to power. Under pressure of the very large Socialist-Communist body Germany made more real progress than it has done under all the boasted efficiency of the Nazi regime, and without an atom of the sour truculence and slave-like drilling of recent years. It was said in the European press that when, in 1937, the Duke of Windsor proposed to visit Germany on a tour of social inspection, the Nazi authorities were greatly embarrassed because most decisive reputations of the charge that Atheism leaves men, or been raised in the years when Socialism and Communism had a predominant influence on the government.

Thus, whether or no one accepts the economic principle of nationalization, one must count the history of Socialism one of the most decisive reputations of the charge that Atheism leaves men, or makes men, selfish and deaf to the social call. In this case it is not even possible for clerical apologists to name a few individual Christians occupying important positions in the reform-movement, as they do in other cases. From 1848, when the Socialist movement was launched by the publication of the Manifesto of the Communist League, until the first decade of the present century every man or woman of any importance in it was an Atheist. A clerical collar at a Socialist Conference would have looked as incongruous as a painted lady at a clerical gathering. At the international conferences of the leaders, the men who developed the ideal and bore the brunt of the fighting, a suggestion that any branch of the movement would ever be disloyal to Marx's drastic hostility to religion and try to come to terms with the Churches would have been received with incredulity.

No one questions that many of the churchfolk who have in recent years joined the Socialist movement—I speak of genuine Socialist bodies not milk-and-water parties—want social reform as much as any. How far they are also concerned to save the faces of their Churches we need not ask. For their presence in the ranks today or at any time during the last quarter of a century does not in the least affect the claim that Socialism is a definitely atheistic contribution to social progress. Not only was the full ideal developed at a time when Atheists alone cooperated, but for more than half a century, when fighting for Socialism meant real work and often real suffering, it was left entirely to Atheists.

Who will ask us to compare the work of the Christian minister of today who makes a comfortable rail-journey to deliver a much-cheered public lecture on Socialism with the work of two generations—literally hundreds of thousands—of Russians who worked passion-

ately under sentence of death or of a jail-sentence that was almost as bad? What is there today in America or England to compare with the life-long exile and poverty of Marx and hundreds of other French and German leaders in the first quarter of a century of the struggle for Socialism? And what is the creed of the hundreds of thousands of Socialists and Communists who in our own time stood firm against the revival of the old anti-Socialist brutality in Italy, Austria, Spain, Germany, Japan, Poland, Brazil, and other countries? Who are the Socialists and Communists who still, in face of deadly risk, keep the faith, and even the organization, alive in Italy, Austria, and Germany? Preachers still repeat their ridiculous cry that Atheism makes men selfish while a hundred thousand of them suffer in jail, even suffer torture, for their convictions and a million more are looking eagerly to the day when they can again risk their lives for the cause. It is not the admission of Christians to the ranks that has put this fire into modern Socialism. It is a return to the fighting spirit of the days when all Socialists and Communists were Atheists.

CHAPTER VIII

PIONEERS OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

There are social writers who claim that the best test of a civilization is its treatment of women. We may at least admit that one test of true civilization is to inquire whether its men grant freedom, justice, respect, and equality to their women folk. I am not here, like the writers who rather exaggerate this test, assuming that woman is by nature a weaker, more tender, more dependent type. Most of my readers will be aware that I emphatically reject the "elm and vine" theory of the sexes: the idea that the woman must cling to and be protected by the male. Woman's character is what contemporary society makes it. The test of civilization which I have in mind is whether a particular society does drive its women into a position of dependence, inferiority, and comparative helplessness or whether it is free from these despotic masculine traditions which have prevailed in many ages and countries.

And in this connection we get a further striking confirmation of the general truth which I stated in the first chapter: that there have been only three periods in history of highly and evenly developed civilization—the Greek-Roman, the Arab-Persian, and the Modern. In one respect, however, we must qualify this. In the oldest civilizations, those of Mesopotamia and Egypt, woman enjoyed a remarkable freedom and was in effect equal to man. It was the Aryans, who are now so ludicrously glorified in Germany, and the Hebrew branch of the Semitic race that initiated a new policy; except, as I said, in pleasure-loving Lydia. However, the feminine struggle for equal rights began in Greece and attained a thorough success in the Roman Empire. Details must be read elsewhere (or see my Little Blue Book No. 1122, "The Degradation of Woman"), but this is now recognized in all the numerous histories of woman.

It is equally recognized by all serious historians that all that the women of Rome had won, or the Stoic-Epicureans had won for them, was lost within a hundred years of the Fall of Rome and not regained, in Christian countries, until the skeptical 19th Century. Historical sketches in which clerical writers try to counteract the terrible lesson of ordinary manuals of the history of woman during the last 2,000 years throw dust in the eyes of readers. They absurdly groan that in the Roman Empire woman was "the creature of man's lust" and that Christianity emancipated and uplifted her. In proof of this they select out of the history of the next 14 centuries—more than 40 generations of women—a few saints, abbesses, or queens who have for one reason or other got into biographical dictionaries. As a matter of fact, women were not in any of these centuries so universally depressed as is commonly supposed. I could write a gorgeous book of notable women of the Middle Ages, from Brunichildis and Fredegond in the 6th Century or Theodora and

Marozia (the mistresses of Popes) in the 10th to the crowds of aggressive and domineering women, of the noble or the knightly order in the later Middle Ages. But clerical writers would not thank me, because all these robust women were aggressively immoral in every sense of the word, particularly in regard to sex.

Since I have not had occasion in any earlier work to enlarge on this point and have only in recent years made thorough research into it, I may usefully say a word here. And since what I discovered so flatly contradicts the accounts of the later Middle Ages (or the Age of Chivalry) which you still find in American and British manuals of medieval history, it will be best to put it in the words of a half-dozen of the highest authorities on the life and literature of the period in each of the leading countries of Europe. Professor Luchaire, the highest authority on French life in the 12th and 13th Centuries, says (*Social France at the Time of Philip Augustus*, 1912, p. 351):

In the majority of cases the lady of the castle in the time of Philip Augustus was still what she had been in the centuries preceding feudalism: a virago of violent temperament, of strong passions, trained from infancy in all physical exercises, sharing the dangers and pleasures of the knights of her circle. . . . All had at least three or four husbands. Modesty and delicacy are as yet unknown.

Of the two leading authorities on the literature (songs, epics, and stories) in which their character is reflected, Gautier (*Les epepees francaises*, II, p. 53) says:

It is always the woman who attacks: alway the man who defends himself. These shameless creatures are all alike.

He is, of course, referring to sexual aggression. Of the unmarried young women of the noble class, who are usually represented as coy and dainty maids embroidering in the seclusion of the womens' quarters, he says (I, p. 31):

At first sight of a young man they throw themselves at his feet without hesitation, modesty, or struggle, and pray him to satisfy the brutality of their desires.

The other authority, Meray, says (*La vie au temps des trouveres*, p. 25):

The ladies of the castles were no less robust and adventurous than those terrible vow-makers, their husbands and sons.

Nyrop, a third authority, says that "we hardly ever find a modest or chaste thought in them."

Of women of the same class in Germany in the cathedral-building age the highest authority, Professor K. Weinhold (*Die deutschen Frauen im Mittel alter*) writes always as if there are tears in his pen:

Marriage was of no account. . . . The pearl of womanhood was cast into the dust and trodden underfoot. . . . The worm of vice was nourished in the rose of the garden of chivalry and romance. . . . Women give their love by preference to the cunning, the coarse, and the brutal, and many offered their love for money. . . . Lusty adultery and frivolous vice were praised or smiled upon.

For England J. F. Rowbotham says that "immorality was fostered

as it has rarely been before or since," and Professor D. J. Medley another leading authority, speaks of "the gross immorality which fills all the chronicles and romances of the time." I could quote in the same vein the leading authorities on the women of Spain and Italy, but the above will probably suffice.

When, therefore, we speak of the Christian Era as the age of the subjection of women we refer to the majority of the women of the race: the wives of burghers, artisans, merchants, and peasants. This extraordinary license of practically the whole of the women of the noble and knightly orders during four or five centuries was a flat defiance of the orders of the Church, and it was generally softened by the Church when, in the 15th and 16th Centuries, the kings won despotic power over the nobles. Far different from this was the freedom and respect which women of all classes enjoyed in the Arab-Spanish and Arab-Sicilian civilization. In that skeptical atmosphere they did not wear the veil which the Moslem religion ordered; they moved freely amongst the men on the streets and in the gardens, were free to earn their living, hold property, and bring cases to court, and many—both Arab and Jewish women—rose to high positions. All this freedom perished when the Christians took over Sicily and Spain.

This extinction both of the irregular freedom—in many respects it was a really criminal license—of the Christian noble women of the Middle Ages and the healthy freedom of their life in skeptical Spain fairly coincides with the rise of Protestantism. But the new religion gave women no compensation for her loss. Luther had as profound a disdain of women as he found in his favorite literature, the Bible and the Latin Fathers. The result was that when the age of skepticism opened in the 18th Century woman was throughout the whole breadth of the European-American civilization in so complete a condition of legal and social subjection that we may almost say that she was more unjustly treated than she had ever been in any earlier period of civilization.

In a speech which he made while distributing prizes at a girls' college in the latter part of the last century the famous British statesman Gladstone said:

It is almost terrible to look back upon the state of woman 60 years ago . . . the gross injustice, the flagrant injustice, the shameful injustice to which, in certain particulars, they were subjected.

Gladstone had a poor sense of humor, and he probably never even reflected upon the fact that this state of things existed after 14 centuries of Christian domination and that the comparative reform had been carried in 60 years of rapidly increasing skepticism. In fact, although the chief historians of the emancipation-movement in America, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, gave in her work a summary of the almost brutal injustices to which woman was still subjected in America (and British) law in the second half of the 19th Century; although famous jurists like Maine traced this entirely to the influence of Church Law on Civil Law; and although world-skepticism was very far advanced before reform began, women still listened, and listen, respectfully to preachers who assured them that Christianity had rendered magnificent service to their sex.

In point of fact, few of the contributions of our modern age to real civilization were more clearly due to skeptics, very largely to Atheist women, than this. As usual, the clergy and their lady-admirers entered the field with their bands and banners at the last moment, when the Churches could no longer afford to be hostile or indifferent, and they now boast how they fought for the reform. The trickery is ironical. In one of the closing years of the last century I sat in the vestibule of the British House of Commons awaiting the outcome of a ribald and contemptuous debate on women suffrage. I was then almost the only man in public life to support them, and the two leaders of the women who were with me were Atheists. For 10 years I lectured and wrote, without a cent of pay, for the cause. But when, 20 years later, 100,000 women gathered round 20 platforms in the central London park to celebrate the victory, I was not invited—and a score of clergymen were!

During the century and a quarter when the supporter of womens' rights had to face ridicule and bitter hostility on every side the work was almost entirely left to skeptics. I know of no clergyman and few orthodox Christians who helped; but there were always many in the crowd of scoffers. Charles Kingsley, the Christian Socialist, was as hostile as any. "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever" was his message to girls and young women. He had taken up the cause of the workers because they were quitting the Churches in disgust. When, half a century later, their wives and daughters also began to quit the Churches, the clergy discovered that the Christian message had been misinterpreted, and they began to form Suffrage Societies. Even the Catholics, in England, had one. I ignore entirely these late maneuvers and confine myself to the pioneers whose work was so thoroughly done that the world compelled the clergy to turn their coats.

We may here ignore an occasional voice in earlier centuries and date the beginning from the period when the French Revolution sent through the world the echoes of its famous cry, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Some of the leading women of the Revolution at once raised the question whether this equality did not embrace their sex, or whether the revolutionary statesmen contended, as bishops had contended in a medieval Council, that the word "man" did not include woman when it was a question of rights. Political emancipation was, however, then too startling a conception to win immediate acceptance, and, as the men themselves soon lost their revolutionary rights and liberties, the cause passed from France to other lands.

The enthusiasm of Shelley for the emancipation of women was not due to an individual impulse. He learned his zeal for the reform, as he learned his Atheism and his broad passion for freedom and justice, in a radical school which had very numerous representatives in all English cities and even at Oxford University where Shelley encountered it. Amongst the leaders of this radical school was Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the most brilliant and independent women of the age. It was her daughter who first lived with and later married Shelley. When Burke attacked the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft published a vigorous **Vindication of the Rights of Man**, and two years later she followed this up with her **Vindication of the Rights of Women**, (1792), the bugal-call to the long battle. Her hus-

band, William Godwin, in his prime one of the leading radicals and Atheists of the day, weakened in his later years, as Shelley himself did to some extent, but Mary and her daughter never wavered, though the cause seemed to be lost in the anti-revolutionary reaction.

A very remarkable young Scots woman, Frances Wright, was the next notable pioneer. Finely educated by her Atheist father, to whose skepticism she remained faithful all her life—"kind feeling and kind action are the only religion," she said—she came to maturity just in the years when Britain was in the depths of the reaction. At the age of 18 she published a spirited defense of the philosophy of Epicurus, with which she identified herself. But, especially when Robert Owen quitted Scotland, she found herself in a dreary world and, like so many other radicals, she crossed to "free" America. Like the other ardent pilgrims from Europe, she found that the glow of revolutionary days had faded, and, having money, culture, an eloquent tongue, and a comely presence, she became known everywhere as a fiery rebel against all that was conventional. She denounced slavery, pleaded for education, demanded woman's rights, and derided the conventional idea of love and marriage. "Fanny Wright Societies" were formed, and were denounced in the press as nests of Atheism and free love. To her is directly traceable the inspiration of the long campaign for woman's rights in America, and she put it firmly on an anti-Christian basis. "She constantly denounced religion as the source of all injustice and bigotry, and of the enslavement of woman," says Helen K. Johnson in her *Woman and the Republic* (1909, p. 252).

Historians of the movement describe how in Europe the direct demand of woman's rights was little heard until J. S. Mill inspired a new campaign with his little work *The Subjection of Women* in 1869. In point of fact, Mill's own idealism was part of the education he had received in the atheistic school to which his father had belonged. Bentham had included justice to women in his powerful plea for general justice, and Robert Owen, who seemed to assimilate at once all reforms of which he ever heard, had imposed the claim of woman's rights upon his followers, who were now about 100,000 strong and included many of the most notable local reform-workers.

Whereas some of the best writers on the woman-movement in Britain find a virtual blank between the death of Mary Wollstonecraft in 1797 and the publication of Mill's *Subjection of Women*, I showed in my *Life and Letters of G. J. Holyoake* (2 vols., 1908) that long before Mill wrote, Holyoake was most effectively propagating the feminist creed. In 1847 he had begun to urge women to found a movement and a journal of their own, and his private correspondence—I had whole trunks of it to sift—shows him firing all the women he knew to rebel. Amongst his friends and correspondents were: Harriet Martineau, one of the weightiest women writers of the time and an Atheist, Barbara Leigh Smith, the foundress of Girton College and (as Mme. Bodichon) one of the most respected figures in the history of the higher education of women in England, Bessie R. Parker, mother of Hilaire Belloc but at this time, like Barbara L. Smith, an adherent of Holyoake's Secularism, Jesse White Mario, famous in the Italian struggle, and other distinguished women. All were skeptics. Under Holyoake's lead they founded a *Woman's Journal* in 1847 and

some years later established the first committee to conduct a campaign on behalf of women's rights.

I do not care to distract the reader with lists of forgotten names, but it is necessary to show how the pioneer work of skeptics is now buried under eulogies of workers in later and easier days. I have before me one of the most scholarly of recent histories of the feminist movement in England. It speaks of a blank in the direct agitation throughout the first half of the 19th Century—in fact until about 1870—and claims that in this period the cause of woman was most effectively promoted by able women who were generally indifferent to the political issue and were content to prove in their own careers what woman could do.

In point of fact, nearly all these distinguished women were skeptics, and most of them were in very friendly correspondence with George Jacob Holyoake, who was then one of the best known popular lecturers and writers on Atheism in England. Harriet Martineau expressly calls herself in her Autobiography "an Atheist in the vulgar sense." Barbara Leigh Smith (Mme. Bodichon), the honored founder of Girton College (Crambridge University) to which she subscribed more than \$50,000, the model of George Eliot's *Romola*, got Holyoake to publish several of her pamphlets and secretly supported him. Mary Somerville, who won high honors in science, was a Deist and rejected all Christian dogmas. Florence Nightingale, famous the world over for breaking a path for women into the nursing profession, publicly rejected Christianity and even Unitarianism. Mme. Belloc (or Bessie Rayner Parker) was before her marriage one of Holyoake's warmest supporters and distributed large numbers of copies of his Atheist weekly. George Eliot's Agnosticism is as well known as that of (at a later date) Mary Kingsley and Olive Schreiner. Full evidence for each is given in my *Dictionary of Rationalists*.

Thus whether we consider the men and women who fought explicitly for what were called woman's rights or the women who supported that claim by the distinction of their own literary or other achievements, we find that in Britain skepticism, and indeed generally Atheism, had a brilliant share. It was the same in America; except that, since the cause of the emancipation of woman was in America linked with the abolitionist cause, a number of Quaker women are found amongst the pioneers. On the other hand, since the press was less restrained in America than in England and there was more disorder at public meetings, the work there demanded far more courage, if not heroism, and the fact that the feminist orators drew upon themselves the venom of the anti-abolitionists as well as of the religious bigots greatly intensified the risks they ran.

Every manual of the history of the movement in America gives the same list of women who, in face of bitter ridicule and often of physical danger, spent their lives traveling from city to city and building up support of the movement. After Frances Wright, the brilliant and fearless pioneer, they are Lucretia Mott, the Grimke sisters, Abby Kelly, Lucy Colman, Matilda Jocelyn Gage, Lydia Maria Child, Ernestine Rose, Amy Post, Helen M. Gardner, Susan Wixon, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony. Of these 14 who defied the ban of the Churches on woman-speakers and in nearly all cases fought for justice to the slave—and in many cases to the work-

ers—as well as woman, four were Quakers (though fiery little Abby Kelly was by no means an orthodox Quaker), one a Deist, the remainder Agnostics (as some of them preferred to call themselves when that word gained currency) or Atheists.

Almost every type of womanhood was represented amongst them. Lydia M. Child is described by Putnam as “a favorite of the wealth and culture of New England,” yet in her writings on woman she, while clinging to theism, warmly condemns Christianity. Ernestine Rose, the sprightly daughter of a Polish rabbi, wrote a **Defense of Atheism** and lectured eloquently against slavery in the slave-owning States. Mrs. Gage, at one time president of the National Women Suffrage Association, shows her complete skepticism in her outspoken **Woman, Church, and State**. Helen M. Gardner was one of the most cultivated women in public life. She was the daughter of a clergyman, yet her first book, **Men, Women, and Gods** was published by the Truth Seeker Company. Some of her books were translated into French, German, Russian, and Japanese. Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, daughter of Judge Cady and a very accomplished woman, the chief author of the four-volume **History of Women Suffrage**, wrote boldly in her autobiography, in her eighty-second year, that “the religious superstitions of women perpetuate their bondage more than all other adverse influences” (p. 467). Miss Susan B. Anthony, her life-long and equally cultivated colleague, having spent more than half a century in (apart from her profession) fighting for the feminist, abolitionist, and other causes, had begun life as a Quaker and had become, as far as I can trace her ideas, an Agnostic.

No country had in the course of the 19th Century a braver or more brilliant band of skeptical women fighting for their rights and the rights of others than America, yet there is probably no country in which the clergy are more successful today in persuading women that Christianity “has always been their best friend” and that Atheism is so devoid of social inspiration that it is dangerous. One might add others who though they did not join the band of platform-workers, did much for the emancipation of their sex. Every woman writer in America now boasts, for instance, of the gifted Margaret Fuller, but they do not remind their readers that Margaret says in her **Credo**: “You see how wide the gulf that separates me from the Christian Church.” She was at the most a Pantheist.

I do not admire temperance-movements which advocate interference with other people's liberty, and American experience under Prohibition does not commend this as a contribution to civilization. But in the early days probably few temperance lecturers thought of prohibition, and we have merely to regard them as idealists who sought to educate people into sobriety. It is therefore piquant to notice that all these Atheist ladies were, at the time when the general public as well as the preachers had the darkest possible views about Atheism, just as fervent in preaching temperance as they were in advocating woman's rights, abolition, or education. In those early days so high a proportion of the more prominent Atheists everywhere took up the temperance-cause that many Christians regarded this as one of the evils with which they threatened society. An amusing statement was made at the Hartford Bible Convention of 1854. A speaker told how he had once attended a convention of

Presbyterian ministers at Edinburgh when one of them proposed this resolution: "That a committee be appointed to inquire into the tendency of total abstinence societies to Infidelity." This was "solemnly argued" until one of the ministers with some sense of humor proposed the amendment "that the committee be instructed to inquire into the tendency of drunkenness to Christianity."

A good deal of puritanism was, naturally, combined with this zeal for temperance in the early years, though Frances Wright and some other leaders were not orthodox in regard to sexual relations. Others, like Miss Anthony, who was the daughter of a rich Quaker, greatly modified their attitude in later years, especially when the Comstock Era began. The puritans—if one may give that name to the hypocritical crowd who enforced the Blue Laws—openly said that their war was against "Freethinkers and Freelothers," and the Freethinkers retorted vigorously. Ingersoll—I made the mistake in my L. B. B. on him of making him a total abstainer (as I found all other members of his family to be)—drafted the resolutions which condemned the slimy Comstock agents at the successive Liberal Congresses. One year they sent to Congress a petition against the law with no less than 70,000 signatures, and they had considerable influence in educating the public in a saner standard of conduct.

CHAPTER IX

PHILANTHROPY OF SKEPTICS

Where religious controversy is conducted on a low cultural level, which means throughout nine-tenths of the field of such controversy, there is a practice of asking skeptics, with an air of triumph: Where are the hospitals, the orphanages, the homes for the aged that you have built? In view of the magnificent skeptical record of service that I have described and will further describe this question is childish. To the serious social student the issue is: Are religious folk right when they claim that skeptics are selfish and indifferent to the social welfare because they have not the inspiration of the Christian creed? The several chapters of this book decisively answer that question.

It is not, let us always remember, a question whether skepticism inspires. If you allow the issue to be put on that foolish ground, the apologist meanders into a tiresome dissertation on how a negative can be inspiring. That is not the point. The whole controversy arises from the religious claim that Christianity inspires men and women to social service and, if they lose their Christian faith, the inspiration ceases. This is so baseless and arbitrary a statement that only men who are ignorant of the historical facts can make it. Social inspiration or the impulse to work for the betterment of the world has increased just in the same proportion as the Christian Churches have lost influence. No sophistry can obscure the significance of that.

There is, moreover, a particular fallacy in this rather silly question about hospitals and orphanages. It is prompted mainly by the false statement, which is still amazingly current in religious literature, that Christianity was the first to build schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions. This statement, which I have already shown to be grotesquely false, is not confined to Catholics and Fundamentalists. Within the last few weeks I have heard it stoutly asserted by the head of a large Congregationalist college, and in debate the head of one of the chief Methodist colleges in England has urged it upon me. It has been refuted for the last 50 years in every expert manual of the history of schools, hospitals, or charitable institutions.

The religious layman who learns the truth on this point has still a difficulty to put to us. If he travels in the older countries of Europe or reads about their life in this respect, he finds large numbers of old foundations—schools, orphanages, homes for the aged, etc.—which very clearly had their origin long ago in Christian acts of piety or legacies left by dying Christians. Very little reflection should be required for him to see that these things are really witness to the general social callousness of the ages of faith. The provision of social service which these old foundations represent is a mere tithe of the service that was needed. The Christian state never educated its children and never provided medical attendance

for the sick poor; and it had in its "poor law" the crudest and most mischievous pretense of relieving poverty generally. Heathen or liberal Moslem states had done these things: the religious states which succeeded them did not. The result was that the nine-tenths of the population who lived, as workers, in a despised poverty were almost totally illiterate and suffered so much that it took two or three—in the early Middle Ages four—centuries for the population (which would now double every 30 years) to double. Is it remarkable that one rich man or woman in hundreds of thousands was touched with sympathy for them?

How little was really done I have shown in the chapter on education. Catholic and Protestant writers vie with each other in claiming how their predecessors before the 19th Century multiplied schools. The fact is, we saw, that at the time of the French Revolution 85 to 90 percent of the population—which means practically all the workers—were still illiterate. One finds much the same situation in regard to hospitals. One of the largest and most pretentious works on the history of philanthropy is by a French Catholic writer, Leon Lallemand (*Histoire de la charite*, 1902). His first volume is on philanthropy in the ancient world and, as usual, gives the reader to understand that these callous Romans were almost devoid of it. The second and third volumes carry the story as far as the 16th Century and tell of some hundreds of small hospitals which were founded to cope with the monstrous amount of disease (leprosy, plague, insanity, etc.) that then racked Europe. This Catholic period occupies 550 pages, which are very largely devoted to rhetorical considerations. But the next part, from the Reformation to the Revolution, runs to 1134 pages; and then, when the author reaches the age of skepticism, he seems to have been overwhelmed by the masses of facts, for he abandoned the work at the year 1800!

An English work, B. Kirkman Gray's *History of English Philanthropy* (1905), is equally unflattering to the silly legend that philanthropists sprouted like mushrooms in the solidly Christian period and began to fall off with the advance of skepticism. Mr. Gray shows that in the year 1700, in spite of all the wealth that had accumulated since the Reformation, there were only two general hospitals in London, and not one in England outside London. These two were, of course, miserable in their service, and out of the immense mass of London's poor they could treat only about 3,000 a year. The personal founder of the next to be built, Sir Thomas Guy, was a bible-printer who turned to crooked finance and made a fortune that stank. The other London hospitals were built by subscriptions which were given by men of every type, from purely humanitarian reasons—so the story runs.

It is thus in an atmosphere of myth and mendacity that the Christian apologist moves when he formulates his foolish request to see our hospitals and orphanages. All this work, moreover, was badly and very inadequately done as long as it was left to the caprices of a few charitable folk. From the time of the French Revolution onward skeptics have demanded that it should be undertaken by the state, which could secure, by taxation, that the selfish majority should no longer escape their responsibility. Hence the long fight for state-systems of education, in which skeptics played

a leading part, and the steady growth of the ideal of communal responsibility which finds its first full embodiment in the magnificent free medical service, educational system, and all the other princely social services provided in Soviet Russia today.

But let it not be thought that in premising these very necessary considerations I am evading the genuine challenge that can be flung out to us: Whether in the period when philanthropic work or social service depended entirely or mainly upon voluntary action skeptics were, in proportion to their numbers, less generous than Christians. It would be a remarkable fact if middle-class and working-class skeptics were so splendidly represented, as we saw, in the van of every reform-movement, as long as the work was arduous if not dangerous, yet wealthy skeptics were far behind these in contributing the one resource that they had. In that case we might suggest that it was their wealth, not their skepticism, that corrupted their social instinct. In point of fact we need make no such excuse. The record for individual philanthropy of Deists and Atheists during the last century and a half is one of which a skeptic may be proud. Most of us today attach far less importance to this than to the kind of service I describe in other chapters. The millionaire who writes a 10,000 or 50,000-dollar check now and again for a university (which thereupon flatters him to the teeth) or a museum is not to be compared in social inspiration to a Jefferson or a Lloyd Garrison, a Horace Mann or a Frances Wright; besides that the source of his millions is often tainted. However, let us get to the facts.

That nothing like a complete record of skeptical philanthropy, even for America alone, can be given here will be easily understood. Amongst the innumerable and valuable monographs which the universities and other academic institutions publish annually you will look in vain for compilations of facts which would enable the public to form a sound opinion on subjects which are heatedly discussed in the press and current literature. How many Christians are there in America today? What are the motives which persuade some 30 or 40 millions to cling to the Churches? Has the general character improved or deteriorated with the advance of skepticism? And so on. Students and masters of sociology desert science when they reach even the fringe of these questions and just mumble vaguely that the Churches are to be counted amongst the chief factors of civilization. As to the specific question of this chapter, what amount of philanthropy has been shown by wealthy skeptics, even the universities which have profited most by such philanthropy would not dare to issue a factual reply to it. The sermons preached in their chapels and the apologetic works of their Christian professors would be discredited.

The fairest test that suggests itself to me is to examine the catalogue of "philanthropists" in the new **Dictionary of American Biography**, though the research has been laborious. Scattered amongst the 20,000 heroes and heroines in this American Walhalla are about 200 men and women who are expressly described as philanthropists. These are men who did not give their blood and sweat to an arduous and despised cause for quarter or half a century but men who, usually from a very considerable wealth, gave large sums of money for educational or charitable purposes and received in return, not

rotten eggs and jeers like the reformers, but the very flattering homage of their fellow-citizens. My task is made harder by the very obvious fear to offend the Churches which taints so much of recent literature. When one of these philanthropists is a quite orthodox member of a Church, the biographer effusively says so. He even strains the evidence to make men "profoundly religious" when they demonstrably rejected the creed of the most liberal Churches. But in case after case, even of the greater and more sincere philanthropists, not a word is said about creed. In many of these cases I have by independent research established, fully or with practical certainty that the donors were skeptics, but I have had to omit 20 or 30 who were probably skeptics though friends or relatives or fulsome biographers have concealed the facts.

First let me point out a few general features of this list of American philanthropists since the middle of the 18th Century. It will hardly be claimed that very few of the thousands of ministers and prelates who are admitted to the Dictionary were wealthy enough to be philanthropic, yet the fact is that only one minister of religion in the whole 20 volumes is classed as a philanthropist! In the next place Roman Catholics, who are the loudest in boasting of the inspiration of their creed, are the most miserably represented of all denominations. Their Church has been notoriously rich in wealthy men and women during the last hundred years, yet only five or six of these are found in the class of philanthropists, as determined by the Dictionary, and these confined their donations exclusively to Catholic churches and institutions. So this richest Church in America has a third distinction. I have shown elsewhere that it is the poorest in men of cultural distinction (as is shown by an analysis of the names in *Who's Who*) and that it is far and away the best represented in the criminal class (as is shown by several analyses of the religion of prisoners). We now add that it has the poorest record in the list of American philanthropists, even if we count as a philanthropist a man who makes no large donation except to his own clergy and their institutions.

Of the entire 200 philanthropists at least one-fourth gave away sums which hardly give them a right to that title, and a further one-fourth gave only to churches and sectarian institutions. Of the less than 100 who gave or bequeathed large sums of money for the advantage of the general public or for non-sectarian education only about one-half are definitely identified with Churches or were such generous benefactors of Churches that we may assume a connection. In a large number of cases nothing is said about religion—it is amusing that in the long articles on such men as Adams, Jefferson, and Lincoln not a word is said about their creed—and I do not propose to build upon an assumption. In the first volume, for instance, we have Benjamin Altman, a poor Jewish boy who, apparently by clean trading and with real regard for his employees (as such things go), made a fortune of \$35,000,000 in the last century, endowed the Altman Foundation and other philanthropies, and left an art-collection worth \$15,000,000 to the Metropolitan Museum. But I find no explicit reference to his views about religion and pass to clearer cases.

One of the earliest and best known cases in that of Stephen Girard (1750-1831), founder of the famous college for orphans at

Philadelphia and the greatest philanthropist in the history of America (or Europe) to the time of his death. In this case the boldest apologists refrain from claiming that the man was "really a Christian." He was so thorough a Votairean Deist that he gave the ships he owned such names as Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Helvetius, etc. He was, Freeman Hunt admits in his *Lives of American Merchants* (1858, I, 252), "a total disbeliever in the Christian system." That no one has ever disputed, nor do any challenge the generosity of his character. During the epidemic of yellow fever at Philadelphia in 1793, when all who could afford to do so fled, Girard's conduct was heroic; and he was already the richest man in the city, some say the richest man in America. Putnam says of him:

This grand self-sacrificing man remained in the city, went to the hospitals, and devoted to them his entire services as director, manager, and nurse. For 60 days he thus battled with disease and suffering. He often met the sick and dying at the gate and carried them in. Many a poor creature did he bend over, receiving his last words as the breath left the body. He was the most heroic and faithful nurse in the whole city. He also gave freely of his money to relieve those in want.

I wonder if the history of multi-millionaires affords a parallel to that; yet this man's sole inspiration was Voltaire, "the scoffer."

Girard left a fortune of \$7,000,000, an exceptionally large fortune at that time. "No one shall be a gentleman on my money," he said. After dividing about a million in charities and gifts to the city and State he bequeathed \$6,000,000 to build a magnificent home and college for orphans. It is now estimated to be worth about \$40,000,000, and, in spite of the emphatic and solemn terms of his will, the people who assure the public that skeptics are selfish have captured it. In his very lengthy will he says:

I enjoin and require that no ecclesiastic, missionary, or minister of any sect whatever shall ever hold or exercise any station or duty whatever in the said college; nor shall any such person ever be admitted for any purpose, or as a visitor, within the premises appropriated to the purposes of the said college.

This is the only passage in the will which he underlined, yet in 1894 Putnam said that "the college is now under Christian supervision, a Christian chapel is now built within its walls, and Christian theology is taught." One of Girard's workers, William Wagner, followed in his spirit and is classed as a philanthropist. Though never rich, he saved enough to build and endow the Free Institute of Science at Philadelphia.

Benjamin Franklin is numbered amongst the philanthropists in the Dictionary, and only the wildest apologists venture to claim him for "the Brotherhood of Thieves," as he once called the Churches. He was a Deist. Franklin was never rich—he probably never had more than \$15,000 a year—and his social service lay chiefly in education and in introducing reforms into the city of Philadelphia. He founded the first circulating library in America—doubtless Girard in his youth gained much from it—and did wonders for the improvement of the city of Philadelphia. What he did for the country every child in America knows. Fiske (in Appleton's *Encyclopedia of American Biography*) counts him "one of the greatest of Americans,"

Another distinguished Philadelphian of the time, Samuel Archer, must be included here. He married a Quaker, and he was buried in the Friends' burial ground, but the **Dictionary** admits that he never joined the Society. Archer was one of four rich men who bought for the city a large plot of ground for building a home for orphans. His biographer says that "charity, benevolence, and uprightness seemed to be the natural qualities of his character exhibited throughout life."

Since such men as Jefferson, Adams, and Washington are not admitted to the august category of philanthropists we pass on to the next generation. Notable amongst these was James Lick (1796-1876), a poor Californian lad who left a fortune of more than \$3,000,000, all of which except \$200,000 was devoted to public purposes. When he died the San Francisco **Evening Bulletin** said that "so long as San Francisco and the State of California shall endure the name of James Lick will be associated with them." The phrase is saved from exaggeration by the fact that Lick left \$700,000 for the construction of the famous telescope which is known all over the world as the Lick Telescope and in the pedestal of which he is buried. Our respectable **Dictionary** is here candid enough to say that Lick was "not a religious man"—apparently the candour is because it also records that he had illegitimate children—but that is too mild an expression. He was a Materialist and a generous supporter of the Freethought movement, assigning a very valuable property of his in California to the Paine Memorial Hall. Besides finding the money for the great telescope, then the most powerful in the world, Lick left \$600,000 to found the California School of Mechanical Arts, \$150,000 to the city to erect free public baths, \$100,000 for a home for aged ladies, and other benefactions.

It is not so well known that his contemporary philanthropist in New York, Peter Cooper, founder of the Cooper Union or Institute in Astor Place, was an advanced skeptic. This institution was intended to provide free education for the workers of New York. Cooper paid \$660,000 for the building and in the course of his life spent a further \$1,550,000 on it. The clearest and most authentic statement of his views is in **The Political and Financial Opinions of Peter Cooper** (1877). This was written during Cooper's life by Professor J. C. Zachos, the Curator of the Institute and therefore intimate with its founder. In regard to creed he says (p. 22):

Mr. Cooper is so broad, sincere, and catholic in his religious principles that I believe he would be recognized by any minister of the Christian religion as a truly religious man; but his ecclesiasticism was with a simple respect for all Churches.

In other words, he was a non-Christian Theist, though how vaguely or definitely he held to belief in God is not stated.

Cooper had a warm friend and co-worker in Abram S. Hewitt, and Allan Nevins has written a work on both (**Abram S. Hewitt, with Some Account of Peter Cooper**). Nevins is diplomatic about religion, but there is not a single reference to any church-affiliation of either man in his very detailed book. In his youth, he says, Hewitt was a great reader of Gibbon and Hume, and if in later years he occasionally praises Christianity, it is clear that he does so because he believes that there were no labor-troubles before skepticism spread to the workers. He was not rich like Cooper, yet "he gave so largely and

made such repeated sacrifices to maintain employment at Trenton and Durham that he was often pinched for funds" (p. 553). Cooper, on the other hand, was a severe critic of "the aristocracy of wealth" that was growing up in America, and in his *Ideas of a Science of Good Government* (1883) he goes very far in the direction of Socialism. At his death in 1883 New York gave him, the press said, the greatest funeral that had yet been seen in that city.

The inventor John Ericsson (1803-89) also is classed in the *Dictionary* as a philanthropist. He was never rich, as he withdrew from money-making as soon as he had made enough to live in comfort, yet he was a most generous giver. The *Dictionary* says:

For his means his private gifts were numerous and large, and they were made with a whole-hearted generosity. During his later years his public benefactions also were notable and amounted to no inconsiderable part of his income.

The writer of the article does not think fit to mention his views on religion, yet they were well known. He was a warm friend and supporter of Ingersoll, and Ingersoll (*Works*, VII, 319) calls him "one of the profoundest Agnostics I ever met." At his death his body was taken back to his native Sweden in a U.S. cruiser.

Contemporary with him was Jonas Gilman Clark, the founder of Clark University. He was another who worked his way from poverty to affluence, and he decided to use his money to give poor youths the chance of higher education which he had never had. For this he assigned \$2,000,000, which was "the largest sum ever given in New England up to that time by any individual for education," and at his death he left it a further \$1,200,000. In spite of the heavy pressure of his first President of Clark, Stanley Hall, he refused to have any religion taught in the university.

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, was a very different type of philanthropist. This slender little farmer's daughter, only five feet in height, became known throughout America in Civil War days as the Angel of the Battlefields or the American Florence Nightingale. She lived to be 90—died in 1912—and in her old age was still traveling over the world (Armenia, etc.) on a mission of mercy. General N. A. Miles called her "the greatest humanitarian the world has ever known." The *Dictionary* admits that "she was brought up in the Universalist Church but was never a Church-member" and, though she toyed for a time with Christian Science, she "never adopted it." She was, her biographers tell, a non-Christian Theist.

George Peabody (1795-1869) was well known as a philanthropist on both sides of the Atlantic. He was a self-made man, and he acquired a large fortune without any taint of the growing dishonesty. In London, where certain tenement-blocks still bear his name, he gave \$2,500,000 for building decent homes for the poor. In America he spent millions of dollars in founding educational institutions. In all he devoted to public service about \$10,000,000, or nearly his whole fortune, yet he only once gave to a church, and that was at the request of his sister. He very emphatically stipulated that there must be no Church-influence in connection with his tenement-blocks in London or his museums or other institutions in America. As usual, there is in biographical notices great reticence in regard to his

views on religion, but the complete failure to connect him with any Church and the firm anti-clerical provisions of his benefactions show that he was at the most a non-Christian Theist.

William Marsh Rice (1816-1900) is still known by the Rice Institute at Houston, Texas, which he founded. It is now worth \$15,000,000 and trains 1,300 students yearly. Rice began life in poverty and left nearly his whole fortune, \$8,000,000, to give poor youths a cheap higher education. "His reputation for eccentricity," says the biographical sketch in the **Dictionary**, "was increased by the humorous skepticism with which he tended to regard the theological views of his neighbors."

Gerrit Smith (1797-84), "one of the best known abolitionists in the United States" and cousin of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, gave away hundreds of thousands of dollars in charity and in helping reform-movements (abolition, temperance, feminism, etc.). He quitted the Presbyterian Church, to which he is often assigned, at an early age and published **The Religion of Reason** (1864) a Pantheistic work. Sophia Smith (1796-1870), founder of Smith College, was at the most a liberal Theist. Her chief adviser was a Congregationalist minister, but she refused to leave her \$500,000 to any of the institutions of his (or any other) Church. She further stipulated that no creed was to be taught in Smith's College, though the Bible might be used in literary classes.

Leland Stanford (1824-1893), who founded Leland Stanford Junior University in memory of a dead son, is neatly presented in the **Dictionary**, on the assurance of his widow, as "a profoundly religious man," though "the narrow walls of a creed could not confine him." We know what that means. The chief writer on him, G. T. Clark, quotes letters of his youth in which he rejects all religion. At the most he may have been a Theist. He left \$2,500,000 to his foundation.

There may be some murmuring if I include here one of the most liberal and accomplished philanthropic ladies of New York in the early years of this century, Elizabeth Milbank Anderson, but there is every reason to believe that she was an advanced skeptic. At the time of her death she had given away \$8,000,000, and she left a further \$2,000,000 to the Milbank Memorial Fund. Women who have \$10,000,000 to give away do not forget the Churches, if they take any interest in these. Miss Anderson does not seem ever to have mentioned a church; though her Trustees after her death used half a million of her money to build a sumptuous chapel at Princeton. She repeatedly said that her sole aim was to "improve the physical, mental, and moral condition of humanity." She gave a million to Barnard College and devoted enormous sums to helping the New York poor, in whom she was closely interested, and for the advancement of medicine (chiefly in view of the sufferings of the poor).

Nathan Straus (1848-1931) was a poor Jewish boy who made good. In the panic years 1892-4 he distributed millions of tickets for food, milk, and coal, opened cheap lodging for the poor, helped the hospitals, and so on. "As the years went on," says the **Dictionary**, "philanthropy became his ruling passion." He never gave money to sectarian institutions, Jewish or Christian. In the last 20 years of his life he spent two-thirds of his fortune in helping the now creative

work in Palestine, but he insisted that all the institutions he helped were to be equally free to Christian, Jew, and Moslem. The writer of the biographical sketch in the *Dictionary* superfluously observes that "his humanity transcended creed and race."

There is, in fine, Andrew Carnegie, the most portentous philanthropist in history. He, in fact, rejected the name philanthropist and described himself as "a distributor of wealth for the improvement of mankind." It is enough to recall that he gave away \$350,000,000 or nine-tenths of his entire wealth. Barton J. Hendrick says in his recent *Life of Andrew Carnegie* that he was a skeptic from youth. "You would have enjoyed the sermon today, Andra," his mother said to him one Sunday. "There wasn't a word of religion in it." I have given in my *Biographical Dictionary of Rationalists* proof that he was to the end an Agnostic, though he was always reluctant to label himself. "We are but young in all this mystery business," he says in his *Life of James Watt* (a skeptic).

To these easy philanthropies, as we may be tempted to call them, the liberal gestures of men and women with more wealth than any human ought to have, we ought to add hundreds of thousands of men and women who gave constantly all their lives from middle-class or even poorer incomes. I have already quoted Putnam saying that the members of one Freethought Society in Montreal "gave donations of over a million dollars to McGill College." Every university in America depended upon this kind of support in its early days. If we bear in mind that the real point we are discussing is whether skeptics are selfish, we shall look more to the millions than the millionaires. Ingersoll made heavy professional and political sacrifices in order to maintain his freedom to attack superstition, yet from his moderate income he was a most generous giver. Luther Burbank, another great Agnostic, enriched America but not himself.

On the other hand, consider the lives of many of the church-going millionaires. Marshall Owen Roberts is said to have made a fortune out of the Civil War by crooked means. The *Dictionary* can tell us of no philanthropies of his but says: "He had an art collection appraised at half a million dollars . . . and he worshipped for years at the Broadway Tabernacle." John Pierpont Morgan, who died in 1913, spent \$50,000,000 on his art-collection. Old Cornelius Vanderbilt, founder of the dynasty, made a fortune of \$100,000,000, largely by crooked means. Of this he left \$90,000,000 to his eldest son, \$7,000,000 to a few grandsons, and "to express his contempt for womankind" he left less than \$4,000,000 to be divided amongst his eight daughters.

This chapter has already run to an inordinate length and I must be content to say that the record of British skeptics for philanthropy in the last hundred years is just as honorable. The fortunes made are smaller than in America, but, on the other hand, there is a higher proportion of Atheists in the list. At the beginning of the last century we have Robert Owen, Atheist, who spent his entire fortune of \$500,000, every cent of which he had made himself, upon the workers or the propaganda of his views. We have the elegant London banker Sir Francis Burdett (Atheist) not only spending very large sums on reforms and education but being sent to the Tower of London for persisting in denouncing injustice. We have the group of Atheists

who cooperated with Jeremy Bentham in supporting reforms and virtually founding the University of London as an entirely secular institution. Roland Detrosier, Deist, founded the first Mechanics Institutes in the North of England. Samuel Bailey, of Sheffield, a Deist who severely criticized Christianity, astonished all England at that time (1870) by leaving \$400,000 to his city. George Baillie of Glasgow in 1863—long before his death—devoted his fortune of \$90,000 to establish a college for the workers. George Birkbeck, a Theist, founded a number of Mechanics Institutes as well as the Birkbeck Institution in London. John Passmore Edwards, the most idealistic editor who ever lived and a Spencerian Agnostic, was the most notable philanthropist in England in the last quarter of the last century. Edward Dresden (died 1903), who demanded that the fact that “he believed in no religion but that of being charitable” he inscribed on his grave gave almost his entire fortune of \$1,700,000 to good public works. Sir Josiah Mason, Theist, devoted almost the entire fortune of \$2,500,000 which he had made himself, to founding charitable institutions. So the record runs on, to close about the end of the century with Cecil Rhodes, an Agnostic, who left almost his whole fortune of \$30,000,000 for education; Sir Ernest Cassel, Jewish Atheist, who distributed \$10,000,000 amongst charities while he lived; and W. Beit, also a Jewish Atheist, who left \$10,000,000 to charity. What the present prince of philanthropy in England Lord Nuffield thinks about religion I cannot ascertain, but I never read of his building churches.

I could show the same record in all countries, but I have already given so much detail that I must end on a note of principle. Much as small-minded apologists make of this question of the benefactions of rich men and women, I insist that it is the least important part of the massive contribution that skeptics have made toward the development of civilization. The fortunes themselves are often tainted; the gifts are too often rewarded with academic or other honors. Far more impressive are the hundreds of thousands who gave proportionately more of their income and far more of their time and devotion to causes which the millionaires commonly despised. But, if any reader is particularly liable to be worried by these “where-are-your-hospitals” folk, let him read the preceding pages with a discriminating eye.

The score of American philanthropists whom I have described are not just 20 in several thousand, as one is apt to think. The **Dictionary of American Biography** lists, as I said, less than 200 out of 20,000 names as “philanthropists.” More than half of these are just rich Christians who, naturally, endow the institutions of their sect. We have nothing to do with these. We may choose also to put on a lower level the contributions of millionaires to Yale, Harvard, Princeton, etc., since the object generally is to maintain capitalist control of higher education. The reader must have been impressed, in going over my list of **skeptical** philanthropists, by the fact that most of them use their money to help the poor, even when they found colleges. In a word, my score of skeptical philanthropists gave far more money for real service to the entire community than all the other philanthropists in the **American Dictionary** put together! If you will further remember that the question is not whether all

rich skeptics have been philanthropic—we certainly do not ask our critics to prove that all rich Christians are philanthropic—and that in the social world to which most of these characters belong the skeptic is not very free to express his opinions, you will see that the list I have here given is very honorable to the humanitarian feelings of skeptics.

CHAPTER X

THE REFORM OF LAW AND PRISONS

From this side-issue of the philanthropic activity of wealthy individual skeptics, which we have been forced to consider in order to meet the persistent and ignorant statement that non-Christians never build hospitals or other charitable institutions, we return to our main inquiry. Even the most generous philanthropist usually serves only a very limited number of the population. He may found a large orphanage, a home for sick children, an institute for assisting the workers to get some education in the evening, or a university in which youths and girls whose parents can give them little aid are able to get higher education. But this service is small in comparison with that of the man or woman whose work helps millions: the leading abolitionists, the pioneers of woman's emancipation, the great educational reformers, the martyrs for the rights of the people, and so on. In all these major services to the race or to some large proportion of it skeptics have, we saw, a superb record of accomplishment which is out of all proportion to their numbers.

We have still one such general reform or contribution to civilization as a whole to consider. This is the reform of law, legal procedure, and the treatment of criminals. Here again the observations of the Christian apologist, when he does venture to touch the subject, are slovenly, superficial, and ignorant. The whole story begins and ends for him with the names of John Howard and Mrs Elizabeth Fry. Let us note in passing that neither even of these belonged to any major branch of the Christian Church. Howard was a Dissenter, Mrs. Fry a Quaker. Let me further make it clear that the confused impression which is given to religious readers, that these two British "reformers" had a preponderant share in securing the reform of the foul old penal system, is quite wrong. Howard, whose self-sacrificing work lay in the last quarter of the 18th Century, rendered a high service by traveling all over Europe and exposing the condition of the jails. But in practice he secured very little reform. Those who took up his work about 1820 found that the jails of England and Europe generally were almost unaltered; besides that his sourness in his own home-life greatly reduced his influence. His many enemies told everybody how at his marriage he exacted a solemn agreement from his wife that his word would never be questioned, and they insisted that by his harshness he had driven his only son to insanity. The son did, in fact, become completely insane, and the harshness of his father is not open to dispute. Mrs. Fry, on the other hand, did no more than alleviate the condition of the female prisoners in a few of the jails of London—she was mainly concerned about their moral and religious conditions (or complete lack of it)—and help the growing body of reformers in her time to educate public opinion.

But there is a more amusing defect in this sort of apologetic. I am not sure that I ever read a religious apologist with a sense of humor, but certainly the immense majority of them must be completely devoid of it. Howard's work began in 1773, when he was appointed High Sheriff of his county and the spectacle of the jails he had to inspect filled him—he was a man of extreme nervous tension—with horror. It never seems to occur to the Christian apologist who admiringly describes this that these unspeakable jails **had existed without reproach from cleric or Christian layman for a thousand years.** Indeed, the further we go back in Christian history the fouler we find them. Throughout the Christian Era torture, which had been almost abolished in Roman law, was used habitually in the jails, and the torture was often as brutal as it was agonizing. Boiling oil or pitch was poured upon prisoners. They were hung up by their thumbs or their wrists until they became unconscious, then laid upon the floor of the cell and treated with hot oil or pitch. Cords were tied to men's genitals and a weight attached or the jailer ordered to use his strength. Castration was a normal punishment for several offenses in every country, and there are several cases in English history in which the highest nobles were thus mutilated by the public hangman in the presence of a crowd of civilians, apparently including women and children. As late as the 16th Century we read of Jews being so treated in the city of the Popes for daring to have intercourse with Christian prostitutes and the executioner's assistant carrying the man's testicles on a pole through the streets. Limbs were dislocated on the rack, thumbs crushed in thumbscrews, bodies broken on the wheel, prisoners slowly starved to death or lashed until their flesh hung in shreds. This was public law, civil and ecclesiastical, all over Europe. Tyrannical monarchs and nobles who sought a higher ransom from the merchants they seized on the high road invented further and indescribable tortures.

For a Christian writer to ignore how the Church had encouraged this sort of thing for centuries and to boast that in the year 1773—long after Voltaire had scarified the system and at a time when the work of another Deist violently denouncing the system was read from one end of Europe to the other—a good Christian at last takes compassion on prisoners is as I said, simply amusing. To describe how Elizabeth Fry found about 300 women, many with their children and all of the lowest type, herded together in two wards of a London jail, a festering mass of coarseness, license, filth, and disease, and not ask why this sort of thing existed in the greatest city of Europe after 13 centuries of Christian influence is ingenuous. By this time (1813) torture, as such, was no longer used in British jails, though it was in some form used in the jails of Catholic countries. In Spanish jails it was used in some of its most odious forms (torture of the genitals, thirst-torture, etc.) as late as the first decade of this century. But jail-life was itself a slow torture, especially for men and women of some character who were convicted of political offenses.

I gave in the fourth chapter some idea of the murderous condition of the jails of Russia, Austria, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, but even English jails were quite uncivilized until, in the first quarter of the 19th Century, Jeremy Bentham and his skeptical friends secured a gradual reform. In the Criminal Court at London it is still cus-

tomary to put aromatic herbs or flowers on the judges desk. This is a reminiscence of the days, which lasted until less than a century ago, when the jails were so sodden with fever that the judge had to be protected against infection from the prisoners by a barrage of sweet and strong odors; for naturally, no one then knew anything about bacterial infection. The jails or wards, dark dank dungeons for from 10 to 100 or more men or women (in small places both), undrained and never cleaned, never provided with retiring places, were just hotbeds of moral as well as physical corruption. In most cases very little water was provided—never for washing the person—food had to be provided by friends or charity, collections were made (or alms begged) for occasional orgies of all, and the jailers were men of the coarsest type. The results, seeing that the prisoners were free to talk or sing all day and there was no supervision of behavior, can easily be imagined. Scores of children were herded with the adults.

As I said, the further back we go in the Christian period, the worse we find them. In the Middle Ages they were simply shambles. Hands, feet, and ears were cut off, eyes and tongues were cut or burned out, women's breasts and men's genitals were tortured, so freely and frequently that a medieval crowd must have presented a very different appearance from what it does in the more jovial medieval paintings. And if we go back far enough, we find, as we do in the case of nearly all these medieval barbarities, that we come at last to a period of sanity and comparative humanity: to the "pagan" period or the Roman Empire. That this period had its evils—slavery and gladiatorial combats, for instance, neither of which Christianity abolished when it came to power—is natural enough. The Romans had in a few centuries worked their own way, under the tutelage of the Stoic-Epicurean philosophy, up from a level of barbarism. The Christian writer who deplores the lingering, and generally greatly modified, evils and then has nothing to say about the lingering of even worse evils in Christendom after 15 centuries of Christian domination does not command our respect.

In regard, however, to law and penal practice, which many sociologists consider the best test of a civilization, the Romans had made the same progress as in other humane improvements upon the barbarism they had inherited. The greater lawyers or jurists of the imperial period, the men who really condemned and mitigated slavery and emancipated woman, were just as zealous for justice and humanity in the penal law. It is one of the few candid ecclesiastical historians, Dean Milman, who says of them in his *Latin Christianity* (II, 11):

The inimitable principles of justice had been so clearly discerned by the inflexible rectitude of the Roman mind so sagaciously applied by the wisdom of her great lawyers, that Christianity was content to acquiesce in those statutes which even she might, excepting in some respects, despair of rendering more equitable.

We overlook the inevitable assumption that there was some sort of moral superiority on the Christian side, but in point of historical fact a reaction began with the Christian Emperors, a hundred years before the Goths and Vandals disturbed the fabric of the Empire. Constantine, it is true, abolished crucifixion, on obvious religious

grounds, but he introduced the penalty of being burned alive; and Gratian imposed this penalty upon slaves who denounced their masters except for treason against the Emperor himself. Constantine also revived an old law, which the pagans had abolished, allowing a father to sell his children into slavery. In the second half of the 4th Century, moreover, the bishops persuaded the Emperors to abandon one of the most distinctive principles of Roman law, religious toleration, and to impose heavy penalties, even to the death-sentence, upon all who professed any other religion than the Christian. The Church thus directly inaugurated one of the foulest legal practices of the next 13 centuries, the torture and barbaric execution of men for religious opinions.

The apologist would plead at least that we must put to the credit of Christianity the famous code of law which is known as the Justinian Code. But no historian supposes that the boorish and ignorant Emperor Justinian, who picked his Empress from the lowest cesspool of circus-life, had anything to do with the compilation of the code. He had in his service one of the last of the great Greek-Roman jurists, Trebonianos, and, as Milman says, we have every reason to believe that this man was a pagan. The schools of Athens, we may remember, were still pagan until Justinian suppressed them. In any case, one fact dispenses us from considering the Justinian Code as a contribution to civilization: it is that the Greek Christian world for which it was compiled fell speedily into such debasement of character that even Lecky pours contempt upon it.

By this time Rome had fallen, and the Dark Age had begun in Europe. Law became utterly barbarized. For centuries criminal investigation sank to one of the lower levels of justice of uncivilized peoples. The accused was simply tried by ordeal: by boiling water or burning coals, or thrown into a large tank of water to sink or float, or compelled to engage in mortal combat with the accuser. This was done under the direct auspices of the Church and blessed by its priests and ceremonies all over Europe. In the later Middle Ages, especially when monarchs became jealous of the clergy and anxious to secure the fines of criminals for their own treasures, secular courts of justice were set up. The procedure was ludicrously clumsy and unjust: the code of law was still half-barbaric: the poor—four-fifths of the population—had rarely any chance of justice from abbots, nobles, and judges; and the torture of accused and punishment of the convicted were, as I have already shown, below the level of civilization. Ecclesiastical courts, such as those of the Inquisition, were just as foul with torture and even cruder and more unjust in procedure.

The jails which Howard visited and exposed in every part of Europe in the latter part of the 18th Century were the direct descendants of the medieval Christian jails and were supposed to have been improved under pressure of better sentiments since the days of Elizabeth. Probably nothing that I could say will give you a better idea than this of the complete failure of Christianity to develop the saner and humaner elements of civilization. And the reform began, as all other reforms did, with the opening of the age of skepticism. The notion that John Howard was the first to perceive the need of reform is absurdly wrong. He began his inquiry into the

state of the jails in 1773. Seven years before this Voltaire had secured the attention even of English Protestants by his **Treatise on Toleration**, because in this he vehemently attacked the French judicial authorities for the corruption of their procedure against French Protestants and the barbaric punishment which French law still enjoined. Two years later (1768) he had published his **Commentary on the Criminal Code**, a demand of legal and penal reform which had won almost equally widespread attention. Rome, of course, put both these superb works on the Index.

An Italian Deist had preceded Voltaire in the field of reform. The earlier skeptical writers Montaigne, the essayist, and Bayle, the first encyclopedist, had made discreet reflections upon the stupidity and viciousness of the law and penal practice. Montesquieu had been much more explicit in his **Persian Letters** and his **Spirit of the Laws**, and his works had directly inspired the Atheistic Encyclopedists (Diderot, etc.) with their zeal for the reform of the law. Not for a moment do I contend that no Christian scholar after the Reformation condemned the system. But it is significant that the few critics were always laymen, never priests or ministers, and were generally suspected of heresy. There was, for instance, the German jurist Thomasius, of the 17th Century, who protested against the brutality of the witch-trials and the use of torture; but he called himself a Christian Rationalist and was much persecuted by orthodox Lutherans. The main line of reform does not, in any case, run through these isolated critics. We trace it first clearly and definitely in the Deists and Atheists of France; though these, as we saw, owed much to John Locke and the English Deists.

To Paris in the days of Diderot and his famous Atheist colleagues came a young Italian marquis, Beccaria-Bonesana, to be educated. He warmly adopted their opinions, especially about the treatment of crime, and in 1764 he wrote in Italian a book entitled **Treatise on Crime and Punishment** in which he contemptuously attacked the whole system. He opposed capital punishment and held that the best way to reduce crime was to educate the people. This book was translated into every language in Europe—the French translation being done by Voltaire himself and Morellet—and had an incalculable influence. It is not in the least likely that Howard, who was a very narrow-minded country gentleman, read it, but it had an influence far beyond that of Howard. Beccaria, living in Italy, had to be very discreet in his references to religion. As he wrote Morellet, he had in his ears “the noise of the chains rattled by superstition and fanaticism.” But it is undisputed that he learned his gospel of reform from Voltaire and the Atheists of Paris, and the Catholic authorities in Italy had no illusions about his sentiments.

Between this date and the French Revolution the ideas of Beccaria spread so rapidly, and to men and women in the highest positions, that the reform of law and prisons seemed to be certain. The reaction against the Revolution, however, put it on the shelf with so many other plans of reform. Frederic of Prussia, Catherine of Russia (at the most a Deist and a genuine reformer before the Revolution), and other monarchs were prepared to reform their codes and jails, but all was lost in the blind hostility to every revolutionary sentiment. In Catholic lands the foul old jails, which the French

revolutionaries had closed wherever their troops went, were reopened and for decades crowded with democrats and humanitarians.

Since jails in America did not go back to the Middle Ages and the law was reformed at the Revolution, our story is less concerned with them; and the later scientific reform of the treatment of prisoners was the outcome of an entirely secular controversy about the problem of the criminal which does not concern us here. The main line of progress was now in England, and the greatest of the reformers was the distinguished jurist and emphatic Atheist Jeremy Bentham. He has several times entered this story and, since even few English people know anything about him and his great work, it will be well to introduce him here.

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and Robert Owen were, each in his own way, two of the greatest social reformers of modern times. Owen sprang from the people and though he made a fortune, remained in touch with them all his life. Bentham, son of a rich father, a child of such ability that he began to learn Latin at the age of five and French at the age of six, graduating at Oxford (where he found only "mendacity and insincerity") at the age of 16, was brought up a Tory and all his life was on equal terms with the most brilliant men in London, indeed in Europe. He studied law but despised the practice of it, and he devoted a long and laborious life to the work of reforming it and to other humane reforms. He soon shed his Toryism and was one of the founders of what was called Philosophical (as distinguished from popular) Radicalism. He was Owen's most powerful supporter in his New Lanark experiment, and he was equally zealous for popular education. He was one of the chief founders of the London University College (nucleus of the later University) as a place of higher education from which all clerical influence should be rigorously excluded. If the name Agnostic had been in use at that time, doubtless he and his co-workers (Owen, Sir F. Burdett, James Mill, George Grote, Francis Place, etc.) would have adopted it. As it is, we justly class them all as Atheists. Bentham despised Christianity, referring to it in his unpublished manuscripts as Jug (Juggernaut), and he collaborated with George Grote, the distinguished Hellenist and historian, in writing a popular Atheist work under the pseudonym of Philip Beauchamp.

Bentham's wealth and high cultural position gave him an influence which he used most devotedly all his life for reform. Eminent judges like Sir Samuel Romilly, who was equally zealous for law-reform and equally opposed to Christianity, and Sir James Mackintosh (Deist) cooperated closely with him, and his very numerous writings were received with respect all over Europe except in the degenerate Catholic countries. It was he who formulated the first principle of all law and ethic, that they must seek to promote "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," and in applying his principles to the treatment of crime he concluded that "all punishment is evil." He spent a large sum on plans of a model prison, and he had the chief share in instigating the authorities to build at least a greatly reformed institution, the Millbank Penitentiary. Other London jails were then as bad as they had been in the days of Howard. His writings, the **Dictionary of National Biography**, a very sober judge, says, "contained the germs of most modern reforms

in the treatment of criminals," and "a whole system of rubbish toppled and fell to the ground under his blows." So restrained a judge as Sir James F. Stephen says that his writings "had a degree of practical influence upon the legislation of his own and various other countries comparable to those of Adam Smith and his successors upon commerce." He was hardly less zealous for political-reform—the French made him, like Paine, a citizen of the Republic—education, sanitation, the promotion of industry, and the rationalization of ethics; and, though rich, he worked long hours and disdained public recognition. When the Czar of Russia once sent him a valuable ring, he sent the package back unopened.

The reader will now see how absurd it is to dismiss the question of legal and penal reform with a eulogy of John Howard and Elizabeth Fry. Years before Howard began to be interested, Europe was shaken by the powerful works of Voltaire and Beccaria; and the very fact that Elizabeth Fry found London jails so foul as ever quarter of a century after Howard died shows how very little he had accomplished. The real work began with Bentham and his group. At that time British law was still so stupid that more than 150 crimes incurred the death-sentence. A man or youth was condemned to death (but generally sent to the penal colonies in Australia) if he stole property of the value of \$1.25 from a shop. Law seemed to exist for the defense of property or wealth, and the people were encouraged in callousness by making a public festivity of the weekly hanging of one or more criminals. Such were law and penal practice 14 centuries after the establishment of Christianity, and in spite of three centuries of "reform." In half a century a body of men who were mainly Atheists and in few cases Christians corrected all the blunders of the Churches and brought their iniquitous structure to the ground.

It is not necessary to discuss the reform of the law in regard to religious toleration. Skeptics of all shades naturally worked for this, but every religious minority was just as interested to secure it. It is, as I have shown elsewhere, amusing to find American Catholics now claiming that they were the first apostles of toleration. They were from the start the minority in Maryland, so that they merely worked for toleration for themselves. But both Protestants and Catholics, even when they had to tolerate each other, insisted upon the persecution of the Jews, and a few words about reform in this field may be useful.

One of the most impudent of modern Catholic claims is that during the horrible period of the Middle Ages, when the treatment of the Jews age after age was unspeakably brutal, they found their best protectors in the Popes. As examples they quote a number of Popes who were heavily bribed by wealthy Jews to check some local persecution of their poorer brethren or who protected the Jews only because they drew a very large income from the toleration of them. Medieval Christendom was hell to the Jewish race. In Arab Spain alone they had perfect freedom and respect, and they rose to high distinction; only to be cast back into the "slavery" which Thomas Aquinas declared to be their just condition when the Christian Spaniards destroyed the Moorish civilization. The Reformation brought them no relief. "The Jews are brutes," said Luther, "and their synagogues are pig-styes and ought to be burned." It was only when the

weakening of clerical authority permitted a considerable growth of liberal sentiment that the terrible old prejudice began to be laid aside.

There is an amusing and significant page in the history of this reform in England. Amongst the educated folk apart from the crusted Tories and Churchmen, the Jews had won much sympathy by the end of the 18th Century. Liberalism and radicalism had, as we have seen, grown very considerably in the cities, and these had created a general resentment of tyrannies and monopolies. In regard to the Jews, however, they did not carry the body of the people with them until a few Jewish organizers induced the young men of their race, especially in London, to take up boxing. They were, naturally, light-weights and had to develop skill to compensate for their slightness of physique. This they did so effectively that they began to beat the English champions and win great favor with the crowd. Jewish historians tell us that this had great importance in the destruction of prejudice in England.

In other words, it was not, as in the case of the reform of the penal law, the idealist opposition of any body of critics that chiefly won for the Jews, relief from their long living martyrdom but their own efforts and advantages. Holland has the distinction of first relaxing the prejudice against them; though Dutch sympathy was shaken for a time when the Jews who found refuge from persecution there turned upon their greatest scholar, Spinoza, and persecuted him for heresy. The great body of the Jews in every European country in which they were tolerated had, being severely isolated from their Gentile fellows, remained at a low level of culture and in a condition of truculent fanaticism. It was the skill in trade and finance of the abler men of the race that first conquered prejudice. From the cities of North Italy the wealthy Jews were attracted to Holland, which had a rich trade owing to its Asiatic and African possessions, and they formed a large and, on the whole, respected community there.

England next opened its sea-gates to the Jewish merchants. They had been expelled from England in the year 1290 at the demand of the Pope and the English bishops, and Cromwell readmitted them in 1655: again not from humanitarian motives. The merchants of London declared that "the wealth they brought into the country and their fruitful commerce, especially in the colonial trade, soon revealed them as an indispensable element of the prosperity of the city." Charles II, at the restoration, did not revive the old law against them because he had very largely used Jewish gold to recover the throne. The rapid growth of Deistic humanitarianism in the 18th Century also helped. A law was passed granting them the right of citizenship in the American colonies and, but for the bitter opposition of the Church, they would have had the same right in England. It was not until 1845 that all their disabilities were finally removed, and a Jew, Disraeli, rose to the highest position in England short of the throne.

The German Jews contributed in a different way toward the emancipation of their race. Frederic the Great, tutored by Voltaire, had at first declared that "to oppress the Jews never brought prosperity to any government." But he had special difficulties to en-

counter, and the Jews in Germany remained poor and despised until the brilliant Moses Mendelssohn settled in Berlin and won a high repute for his scholarship and liberality. He inaugurated the modern tradition of skepticism in the Jewish world and opened their long series of scholars, artists, poets, and musicians of the first rank. From that time they prospered in Germany until Bismarck turned upon them, on account of the number of Jews in the ranks of Socialism, and Catholics then took up the cause and developed modern anti-Semitism.

To this point we can say only that such relief as the Jews had obtained—they were still everywhere excluded from citizenship and the large poor majority of them were badly treated—was mainly due to their own services, helped by the advance of Deism or of a general skepticism which in some degree thwarted the hostility of the clergy. In every country the clergy and the more religious layman, Catholic and Protestant, bitterly opposed their emancipation. As in the case of so many other reforms it was the outflame of humanitarianism at the French Revolution which opened the final phase. This is candidly acknowledged in Graetz's classical **History of the Jews**, the supplementary volume of which says that "modern Jewish history, as the term is understood today, goes no further back than the French Revolution." It is the usual story. Half the reforms we have studied begin or are greatly accelerated, in the period of humanitarian skepticism which preceded and culminated in the Revolution, yet the kind of popular educator we have today—the journalist, essayist, and brayer on the ether—still points out to folk that the French Revolution is an appalling historical warning of the consequences of a wide spread of Atheism!

The French liberated the Jews in all countries to which their armies spread, but they were thrust back into subjection at the triumph of reaction after Waterloo. The Popes, whom the American Catholic now represents as their best friends, sustained their real tradition by treating the Jews in Rome worse than they were treated in any other country. They were compelled again to live in the ghetto and on Sundays to attend Catholic services at which preachers made an effort to convert them. In 1848 they in most countries fought in large numbers and with great bravery on the side of the people, and for some months the cry went from end to end of Jewry that the day of emancipation had at last dawned. Again they suffered in the reaction, the Pope, on recovering his throne, treating them with the traditional harshness until the Italian troops took from him the disreputable remnants of his royal power. After the middle of the century, however, they had the benefit in nearly all countries except Russia and Rumania of the general growth and skepticism and demand of reform. How their new liberty came soon to be overshadowed by the spread of modern Anti-Semitism I have told in full elsewhere (*Appeal to Reason Library*, No. 2).

CHAPTER XI

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SCIENCE

I have several times remarked that the two chief constructive influences of civilization are science and human idealism. Our conventional sociological literature, with its constant concessions to the clergy, would grant religion the same rank as these, but no sociologist ever attempted a strict scientific proof or justification of this claim. He relies loosely upon the traditional and entirely false statement that the European-American civilization owes its progressiveness to Christianity, and he never analyzes the outstanding truth of recent times that the greatest advance that has yet been recorded in history has coincided with the most notable period of decay of religious influence. The facts which we have seen in every chapter of this book show that to claim religion as a constructive influence is merely to repeat, idly, a cliché of conventional literature. More plausibly art might be claimed as the third great factor. Certainly a civilization without art, if we can conceive one, would be profoundly unsatisfactory, but when we note such facts as the splendid flowering of medieval art during centuries when life was too debased to be called more than half-civilized, we must put art in a different category of influence.

On the other hand, a true civilization requires a strict balance of the intellectual constructive force, science, and the emotional constructive force, idealism. The contemporary development in Italy, Germany, and Japan reminds us that when science is divorced from sound sentiment and humanity it can rapidly and thoroughly barbarize a civilization. It becomes a glorification of strength or power, and this, once it is built up, inevitably leads to aggressiveness, cupidity, callousness, and dishonesty. Religious writers have always described it as one of the dangers of a decay of religion that we should probably get an atheistic science developing on these lines. The facts again completely discredit this prediction. Mussolini, Hitler, and Goering profess at least a belief in God and are loathed by nine-tenths of the Atheists of our time. Of the other apostles of this gospel of brute strength—Pilsudski, Rydz-smigly, Horthy, Dollfuss, Vargas, Franco, Queipo de Llano, etc.—all are either Catholics or in closest association with the Catholic hierarchy. President Atatürk, the only definitely Atheist Leader apart from Russia, stands emphatically for peace, justice, and social welfare; as the Russian leaders notoriously do.

Idealism, however, essentially requires the aid of science. The schemes of social service which have developed out of the struggles I have described in preceding chapters were not possible in pre-scientific ages. We saw, for instances, how there were in the Roman world and in the Arab-Persian world of the Middle Ages schemes of general education and a generous provision of medical service for

the sick poor. But the great majority of the schools were not above the level of the schools of a hundred years ago which stirred the blood of educational reformers. There was, it is true, no call in those days for any higher type of school for the children of the mass of the people. There was nothing corresponding to the body of positive knowledge which we have today and to an elementary acquaintance with which we gradually lead the child. It was enough in ancient times that the child should be taught to read and write, and it did not seem particularly important whether or no the children, as they grew up, read the literature, mostly poetry, which circulated in manuscript in the educated class. In any case, the wealth of the age did not permit social services such as we have today. A good deal of nonsense has been written about vast accumulations of wealth in the hands of a small minority in ancient Rome. Even in Republican days the richer capitalists had nothing like the wealth of the richer capitalists of our time, and in the period which concerns us in this book, the later centuries when there was a good deal of social service, the patricians were much less wealthy.

Thus genuine schemes of adequate social service—which means that as long as a community maintains an economic order in which the mass of the people get too low a wage to supply their own wants the community itself must supply them—had to wait until the application of science to industry created the necessary capital-resources. But this is only one, and perhaps the lesser, of the services of science to the race. Far greater is the service it rendered by its effect upon the mind and, through this, upon the organization of life. Let us for the moment put out of mind the familiar controversy about science and religion: whether religion helped or hindered the development of science, how many “great scientists” were or are religious and how many Freethinkers, and so on. We will have a word about this presently, but we are here more concerned about a broader aspect of the relation of science to life. This is plainly seen in such matters as education, medical service, and the treatment of criminals. Humanitarian sentiment demanded and won reform, but the new service to the race in each of these departments would have been far less effective if science had not been very largely consulted in the character of the service.

Literary essayists often sneer at our claim that science has been one of the greatest constructive forces of modern times. They usually loathe science and are temperamentally incapable of the intellectual concentration and patient mastery of detail which a study of science requires. They have therefore just a vague idea that it means atom-splitting, measuring the distance of stars, preserving live dissected tissues in salt-solutions, finding a formula for a new poison-gas, and so on. They are, as a rule, just as incapable of accuracy and detail in their views of history so that they completely fail to appreciate the vast progress, due as much to science as to idealism, which the race has made since the beginning of the last century, of which we have some illustration in every chapter of this book. No man who knows it could possibly underestimate the service of science.

Yet in some respects science is only at the beginning of its service and is, in fact, prevented from serving the race as it could

and as it desires to do. It will suffice here to give two illustrations. We today consult science, more or less, instead of trusting to the sermons and services of chaplains in the treatment of criminals, especially in the effort to prevent the youth who first strays into the criminal path from becoming an habitual criminal. But criminal behavior is just an extreme type of unsocial behavior, and far more suffering is caused by the kind of unsocial behavior of millions of which the law and police take no account—and no one wishes them to do so—than by actual crime. Take an ordinary small suburban street or a large tenement-block. Probably no "crime" is ever committed in it, but the lives of half the people in it are soured or frequently disturbed by the selfishness, meanness, slander, bad temper, or extravagance of themselves on their neighbors.

It is usually said that these are ineradicable faults of human nature, and that all we can hope to do is to induce folk to go once a week to listen to a preacher exhorting them to be good. The papers and magazines which tell folk about the latest atom-splitting gun or large telescope never mention that science is just as ready to tell us how to raise the general level of character. It is accepted in social history that the establishment of a system of schools for all has already made a considerable improvement, but the social psychologist smiles at the idea that this schooling, and possibly attendance at church once a week, are all that we can do. Even during the 10 years of schooling the child is, you will find if you care to calculate, subjected to educative influences during only about one-third of its waking hours each week during three-fourths of the year; and much of this time is lost in mental cramming. It as a rule, responds more readily to the influences of home, street, movies, club, camp, etc., than to really educative forces, and at the age of 15 or 16 it is surrendered entirely to those and the equivocal influences of the shop, store, office, or daily paper. In other words, our training in behavior is as miserably inadequate and unscientific as medical service was a few centuries ago. No one wants the kind of regimentation which has been used for the perversion of mental attitudes in Germany and Italy, but science could work out ways of using the many and powerful influences which in most cases entirely control behavior today without any compulsion or regimentation. Religion as a molding force of behavior has been tried for a thousand years and has dismally failed. It is time we turned to science.

The other illustration is the familiar truth that scientific production could today in a rational economic order produce wealth enough to make an end of poverty, material discomfort, and insecurity of employment. It has been shown by conservative economists that if we produced one-fifth more wealth than we do we could with this ensure that no family would live below or even near the poverty-line; and we could, in a rational economic order, produce 50 percent more wealth than we do. This great increase of wealth would enable us, not merely to give the highest possible efficiency to the work of the teacher, but to construct a quite voluntary and attractive scheme of post-school training in behavior that would rapidly raise the general level of what we call character. Close observation and reflection will convince any man that at least half the mutual irritation of folk comes, not from some mystic thing that we

call human nature, but from wrong mental attitudes induced by economic causes and by sheer empty-headedness or lack of substantial interests.

It is thus ridiculous for journalists or essayists in search of something new and catchy to say that science has developed in advance of human nature. It is exactly the opposite. We refuse to let science extend the same study and practical application to the improvement of what we call human nature as we permit or encourage it to devote to material production. We refuse to recognize that the time has come to substitute the psychologist and the physiologist for our totally discredited preacher; and we use every means to keep from the minds of the general public the fact that we could produce wealth enough to destroy the roots of at least half the unsocial behavior of millions. Let us use plain English about the matter. Rich clerical corporations would suffer heavily if we recognized that all behavior is a scientific problem just as its extreme unsocial form, crime, is; and, numbers of people, many of whom control the organs for creating mental attitudes—press, radio, colleges, public libraries, etc.—would have to be content with reasonably comfortable incomes, honestly earned, if science were fully applied to the economic order. It is from the restriction of science not its undue development that we suffer. The very people who misuse it for inventing more deadly engines of warfare forbid it to develop fully its more beneficial powers.

It is in this light that we must consider a question which is so familiar in form but so often treated in a superficial and misleading manner: the question of the relations of science and religion. The question whether the truth which science discovers is or is not consistent with traditional religious doctrines is relatively unimportant. It is, of course, easily answered by any man who is equally acquainted with both; and no other man should consider himself capable of forming a sound opinion. Not only have such inquiries as those of Professor Leuba shown that the more science a man has the less apt he is to retain even the most fundamental of religious beliefs, but even the most advanced forms in which the Christian writer expresses his belief today are totally unscientific.

Let me give one illustration. The Debating Society of a British University recently invited me to take the affirmative in a debate on the thesis: "Christianity is based upon superstition." My opponent was the Principal of a Congregationalist College, and he, scornfully observing that I was flogging a dead horse with my analysis of the familiar Christian doctrines, insisted that Christianity means today just a surrender of one's personality to the dynamic and transforming influence of Jesus. The line will be familiar to the reader from Congregationalist literature in America. It is put forward, often with considerable arrogance, as the quite final and, as far as science is concerned, impregnable Christian position.

To call this an advance, a new position, is absurd. Dr. Moncure Conway describes in his Autobiography the camp or revival meetings of Methodists, both white and colored, in Virginia a hundred years ago. The procedure was just the same as that now advocated as a new Christian form by Congregationalist writers. It, in fact, goes back to the very beginning of Methodism in the 18th Century,

and it is by no means confined to Christendom. You find the same thing, for instance, in the more serious Buddhist communities of Japan and other Asiatic countries. It is one of the most ancient of religious phenomena and is simply one form of self-hypnotism. Psychologically it is just an illustration of the power of an idea, whether it be true or false. The only difference in the case of this "new theology" is that you will invariably find that it is accompanied by or based upon just the same historical untruths as the old theology. The life of Jesus in the gospels is accepted with complete indifference to critical scholarship, and the whole fraudulent story of the social record of Christianity in European history is put forward as proof of the "dynamic inspiration" of Jesus. At the very least the advocate of this form of Christianity emphatically insists that Jesus not only was but is a living person. There is a whole theology in that assumption.

Here I need say no more on that point, and it is not necessary to say much about the historical relations of science and Christianity. On the analogy of the other chapters of this book it would at first sight seem, since science is now one of the greatest boons of the race, that I ought to inquire what was the proportionate share of Freethinkers in developing it. But there is a material difference between this and the other services I have described. The emancipation of slaves or of women, the establishment of a school-system, the destruction of political tyranny, etc., are from the moment the idea occurs to men seen to be practical services of great value to the race. It is far otherwise with science. It must reach an advanced stage of development before, in most of its branches, a practical use can be recognized. Apart from medicine, it is in its early stages a mere satisfaction of curiosity, an impulse of the awakening intellect. This is a welcome sign that priestly or traditional authority no longer stupefies the mind but it is a development of which the future value can no more be guessed or suspected than men could foresee how the first crude speculations in political economy would in time lead to a constructive economic science of the greatest value.

It is significant enough that science was born and labored through its early speculative stages only in periods of general skepticism. The little real science that Egypt and Mesopotamia discovered in 3,000 years could be described on half of a page of this book: a little elementary astronomy, mathematics, and chemistry. In anatomy and medicine they remained to the end grossly unscientific. Genuine scientific inquiry began, at first predominantly in the form of guesses at the nature of things in the cities of Asia Minor which I described in an earlier chapter as extremely skeptical. The tradition was best maintained in the Epicurean school of Greek thought, and in the skeptical atmosphere of the new city of Alexandria it reached its highest development in the ancient world. Except that one or two Christian writers, whom not one man in a million would read in the next seven centuries, did preserve a few of the Greek scientific ideas in their little manuals of knowledge. Christianity completely extinguished this early science. It was disinterred only when a new age of skepticism opened in the Arab-Persian civilization, and as we saw, it was from the Spanish Arabs, largely through Jewish mer-

chants and travelers that a few Christian scholars derived their science from the 12th Century onward.

How the Church prevented the awakened and vigorous mind of Christendom from further developing Arab science as it ought to have done is a familiar story. The Spaniards who finally conquered the Arabs made just the same mighty bonfires of their vast scientific literature and magnificent astronomical instruments as the Greek Christians had made of Alexandrian science in the 5th Century. If men of genuine scientific genius like Roger Bacon and Albert the Great had been permitted to direct the further development of science from the stage to which the Arabs had carried it, civilization would today be four or five centuries more advanced than it. Instead, the Church forced the new and striving intellect of Europe into the narrow channel of theology, and science was almost exterminated once more. We do not include as benefactors of the race popes or bishops who encouraged chemists who professed to be able to make gold for them or patronized medical men to cure their diseases or astrologers to warn them of dangers.

The result was that when at last the crippling of ecclesiastical authority left men free in certain countries or parts of countries (the cities of North Italy, for instance) to cultivate science, only a genius like Francis Bacon, to whom in this respect few listened, had any suspicion that it was a savior of the race that lay in the manger under their eyes. It is significant that the chief science to make progress in the new Europe was the one which turned its back upon man and his affairs and was the least likely of all ever to render practical service: the science of astronomy. But even the chemist, with his acids and gases, and the physicist, with his electrical apparatus and galvanic batteries, could give men no inkling of the wonderful services they would one day render. We do not therefore need to ask what proportion of Freethinkers joined in the work at a time when none could anticipate the future of science. Science had not yet, except to the ignorant Catholic authorities who held until the 19th Century that Copernicus was wrong, even disclosed its serious menace to religion, so that Christians might co-operate just as easily as skeptics like Halley and Buffon until the development of geology opened the historic battle over the legends of Genesis.

Thus the Catholic who compiles a long list of "great scientists" of his own creed before the 19th Century is just drawing wool over the eyes of his readers. It was the spread of materialism just before the French Revolution that opened the battle which would presently be taken up by the geologists and then by the evolutionists. From that time, the middle of the 18th Century, onward the Catholic apologists list of "great scientists" who shared his creed grows steadily smaller from one generation to another while the general list of leading scientific workers expands enormously. Today in the four leading countries in which scientific research is conducted in the interest of the race, not in the interest of some national group and its murderous leaders, the vast majority of the greater scientific men reject even the belief in a personal God and immortality, to say nothing of the articles of even the slenderest Christian creed. Professor Leuba has shown this for the United States. I have

shown it in the case of Great Britain by an analysis of the replies to a questionnaire sent to Fellows of the Royal Society by the Christian Evidence Society and published by them. In the case of France and Russia it is hardly necessary to make research. Only a rare scientific man of any distinction has been a Christian, or anything but an Atheist, in France during the last two generations, and in Russia, where scientific research is already second to none in the world and will soon lead the world, all are Atheists. An international congress of distinguished men of science who plainly profess some Christian creed would be so unrepresentative of science that the Church-authorities themselves would be strongly opposed to the holding of such a congress. An international congress of Catholic scientific men of distinction would consist almost entirely of teachers in Catholic colleges and universities and would provoke a smile. Great Britain might contribute one deputy, a Jesuit astronomer, to it.

But let me again warn the reader that these considerations more properly belong to a discussion of the question whether scientific truth is compatible with religious belief, and that even in this regard the beliefs of experts in many branches of science—mathematics, physics, engineering, and chemistry, for instance, to which most of the “religious scientists” belong—have no significance whatever. What concerns us here is the cultivation of science as a deliberate service of the race. Here again, as I said, science differs from the other great services to the race which I have taken up in successive chapters. The men and women who worked in the other reform-campaigns which we traced sacrificed time, energy, and often fortune, with the single aim of serving the race or the cause of progress. The scientific man just works at a paid job and up to the present has been, as a rule, deplorably reluctant to consider broad human problems and needs. Even where his science proves to be of immense value in increasing the production of wealth, as is the case with physics and chemistry, he is completely indifferent to the question of the distribution of the wealth and the misuse of it in the selfish luxury of millionaires or the creation of vast armaments. In most branches of science we get the same single-track mind. Scientific research is as exacting as it is absorbing, and the scientific worker, who is almost always a paid employee, is hardly more free than a civil servant to think and act like a live member of the human family.

Happily there are signs that at least the spectacle of the wastage of the wealth which science creates and the chaotic condition of the productive machine is stirring scientific men to rebel and claim their right to speak on human problems. All who are not blindly absorbed in their immediate jobs perceive with alarm what is happening to science in the gradual Nazification of the world. It is eviscerated of all idealism and prostituted in the service of organized brigandage and brutality. We may yet see scientific men as a body claiming that this community shall recognize the mighty resources for progress which they are developing. It is in this sense that I include this short chapter on science as a contribution to civilization. Already it has shown that every department of life that has been detached from religious control and put under scientific direction has gained enormously. Science is freethought, or purely secular thought, in action. It stands for the direction of life with-

out gods or spiritualities, and its efficiency discredits the age-old blundering of the clerical corporations. The extension of its control to systematic training in behavior and of its realistic and critical spirit to the mind of the community as a whole will take the race a long stride forward toward real civilization.

CHAPTER XII

AN ATHEIST CIVILIZATION

In drafting the plan of this work I have surveyed the vast controversial literature which it has been my job to follow during half a century but I have in addition made a careful analysis of what we mean, or ought to mean, by civilization so that I should not overlook any important element of it. I have disdained to waste time in defining civilization. Scientifically it is an expression of the attainment of a certain stage of mental, not moral or social, development. Archeologists dispute whether certain pre-dynastic cultures we find in Egypt, going back to 4000 or 5000 B.C. (some say earlier), and certain pre-Sumerian or early Sumerian cultures we find in Mesopotamia ought to be called civilized. Since we know nothing about the social or moral aspects of this early Egyptian life and we do know that the early Sumerians had the barbaric practice of burying servants alive with a dead monarch, we are obviously regarding only the pitch of mental development. As a rule scholars prefer to say that the Egyptians, Mesopotamians, and Hindus became civilized about or a little before 3000 B.C.; and we again obviously mean that the mind had so far developed that men built cities and had an elaborate social or political organization, fine pottery and metal-work, and written language.

In non-scientific literature we use the word with an entirely different meaning. We rightly lay stress upon the moral or idealist elements. We ask, for instance, not merely whether a nation can be called civilized which organizes its resources for aggressive and acquisitive war and employs the foulest and most brutal means to attain its ends, but whether even we should grant the title to democratic nations which would gladly see war abolished but retain, even struggle in the interest of a minority to retain, a social order in which dire poverty and suffering exist side by side with wasteful luxury, and the average character is far below the level to which we could lift it. To this we may reply that there is no sharp line to be drawn between civilization and non-civilization. There are imperfect civilizations with varying degrees of imperfectness. And the advance in the direction of a complete civilization does not require any philosophic definition. We best express negatively what we mean by civilization. A nation approaches the complete standard of civilization in proportion as it eliminates cruelty, injustice, the exploitation of the helpless, selfish greed, debased taste, violence, ignorance, crime, and the common petty defects of character. It is, in other words, best measured by the degree in which we move away from the barbarism of a thousand years ago. On the most careful consideration it seems that the advance, as far as it has gone and in so far as it promises to go farther, has been won by the reforms

or emancipations which I have examined and called contributions to civilization.

From the facts I have given, none of which are in dispute in serious history, it is clear that most of these reforms and emancipations had been won or were assured of success by about the year 1870. For the last 50 years, therefore, it must have been clear to any serious social student that skeptics of one shade or another, and in the 19th Century with a predominance of Atheists, had had an enormously greater share in the work than their proportion to the general population would suggest. Indeed the facts I have given compel us to say that in each department of reform the majority of the leading and most self-sacrificing workers were skeptics. This ought to have put an end decades ago to the claim that men and women need Christian or religious inspiration to devote themselves to social service or the welfare of their fellows. But the kind of writer or preacher who is accustomed to make this claim pays no attention to historical facts. He cherishes a lot of ancient myths about what paganism failed to do and Christianity did in the past. Of what is happening under his eyes he seems to take no notice or he confines himself to a type of literature which misrepresents the facts. He continues to warn the world that the progress of civilization will be suspended and social services in particular will be abandoned if skepticism—rather Atheism, since four-fifths of educated folk are today skeptics—ever becomes the philosophy of the majority.

It is a foolish contention because, clearly, the Churches have had nothing to do with the establishment of our schemes of free general education, service of the sick poor, better conditions and in most countries cheap insurance for the workers, removal of woman's disabilities, reform of law and prison-treatment, and so on. Moreover, the people who threaten these social services today and are most obstinately opposed to the extension of them, are not the advanced organizations of the workers in which Atheists are most numerous, but the capitalists and their journalistic and other allies who almost uniformly support the Churches. However, the time has gone by for argument on these points. We have in our time seen the establishment of an atheistic civilization, and any man who is in sincere doubt as to whether Atheists do their share, or far more than their share, in promoting real civilization and unselfish service will look to Soviet Russia for the reply.

I describe Russia as a materialistic and atheistic civilization without waiting for the results of the religious census. Even if this were to show that 50,000,000 out of the 170,000,000 people of Russia were still Christians it would make no difference in connection with my present inquiry. Indeed, if we listened to religious critics who say that Russia is a totalitarian state like Italy and Germany, or that it is despotically ruled by a score of Communist statesmen, the answer is all the simpler. Every single one of these statesmen is an Atheist and Materialist. But if we consider the facts of the situation, that the Communist party of many million workers rules Russia through them, the answer is still definite enough. They are all Atheists. Every man and woman who has a share in the construction and functioning of the Soviet state is an Atheist, from the smallest local group or council to the members of the Gosplan or

the body of Commissaries of the People. It therefore does not make the least difference how many million old folk who just do the day's job and are paid for it are still Christians.

We have therefore to complete our inquiry into the social record of skeptics by examining what Atheists do when they find themselves in unchallenged control of one of the largest nations and countries of our time. To suggest that we cannot reach any safe conclusion because of the flatly contradictory nature of literature about Russia is wrong. In just those respects in which we have to test the Russian civilization there is least dispute about the facts. Such questions as whether the Russian workers are as good as American, whether they build houses or construct and run machines as well as the British, whether they already have as comfortable homes and as high wages as the French, and so on, are not the questions—whatever the answer may be—which we have to ask here. And lest it be thought by any reader that I am selecting a few of the more favorable aspects of Russian life and arbitrarily ignoring the less favorable, I will follow a line of procedure that is beyond cavil. I will take the contributions to civilization with which I have dealt in successive chapters of this book and simply ask whether the Russian authorities have in each of these respects carried on the fine record of skeptics in the past.

It is only proper to remind the reader, first, of the tremendous difficulties which the builders of the Soviet civilization had to face. Czarist Russia was very charming for rich people, but it was for the mass of the people the poorest, most neglected, most ignorant, most dirty and unhealthy of the leading civilizations. The death-rate, 32 per 1,000, was appalling, although four-fifths of the people lived in what are understood to be the healthy conditions of rural life. Drunkenness, crime, prostitution, etc., were worse than in any other country. The behavior-standard of all classes was below the normal level, for there was little education, and the priests were just drunken members of a mechanical ritual. Three years of war further demoralized the land, and there were then two years of a civil war of the bitterest description that destroyed nearly all that was left of the old productive mechanism and means of communication. Famine then further denressed the shuddering population, which was scattered over 8,000,000 square miles of very badly connected territory, and it was a desolation which Stalin and his colleagues faced when they started the First Five Year Plan in October 1928, less than ten years ago. Moreover, the whole world was hostile and several of the more powerful nations, with the sympathy and support of most of the others, might be expected sooner or later to renew the invasion. Russia had therefore to set about at once the creation of the greatest defensive force on earth and the far more costly creation, from the foundations, of an industrial plant which would supply all the needs of 170,000,000 people.

It is in the light of these conditions that we must consider what Russia has done in 10 years, yet it found the means to establish what all but the most hidebound critics admit to be the finest social services in the world. Just in those circumstances which most statesmen would make an excuse for neglecting the social services

these Atheist statesmen made them one of their primary concerns. But, as I said, we best avoid the charge of prejudice or partiality by taking the contributions to civilization in the order in which I have considered them in this book, and this means that we must take first an aspect of Russian life which critics declare to be quite indefensible.

A man of common sense reads no longer the kind of criticism of Russia which was common four or five years ago. The people deliberately accepted the sacrifices in the way of personal comfort which their leaders declared to be necessary if they were to create an adequate defensive force and a vast industrial machine and at the same time realize the humanitarian ideals. Much of the privation—in the matter of housing, for instance—will have to be endured for years, but the country is rapidly overtaking its requirements and most of these old jeers are out of date. The one point on which recent critics seem to agree is the denial of political liberty. Of the two to three hundred books on Russia which are now published every year in the English language the hostile books grow less numerous or less serious—we must remember that there is a rich market for such stuff, and the agents of Japan and Germany encourage it more than ever—and the appreciative books are the majority. But even some of the latter persist in putting Russia on the same political level as Italy and Germany, and “tyranny” is the most confident charge of the more hostile writers. If we choose to regard the shattering of the old political tyranny as the first contribution to civilization in which skeptics have had so generous a part, what must we think when Atheists, on obtaining power, seem to set up just such a tyranny?

There was a time when most of us felt that here there was a serious difficulty. Not that we admitted that Soviet Russia had just taken over the despotism of Czarist Russia, in which the tyranny was used to protect the appalling exploitation of the people by the monarchy and nobles, whereas in Soviet Russia it is used to protect a system in which the mass of the people are nobly served out of the state's resources. Nor do we recognize that Russia is a totalitarian state like Italy and Germany. In these countries an iron discipline is maintained for the protection of the Nazi or Fascist party and the realization of its military aggressive plan: in Russia it is maintained in order to prevent political changes which would lead to a very considerable worsening of conditions for the workers. This has surely been made clear by just those prosecutions of leaders which have led even some Socialist writers to weaken in their admiration of Russia. Either, they said Russia was “rotten to the core” or Stalin was getting rid of—why not say murdering?—his rivals.

In studying Japan and Germany for the purpose of writing booklets on them in my A B C series I found that both countries spent very considerable sums in preparing the way for their aggression in China and Russia by bribery and corruption. I should not waste time in arguing with any man who thought them incapable of doing this. We have seen far more repulsive practices in their wholesale murders of women and children in China and Spain. In any case, we now have unchallengeable evidence that plotting and wrecking, organized by leading officials, existed in Russia.

An American engineer, John D. Littlepage, who for nine years had been employed in a high position in the mining industry in Russia, published a series of lengthy articles on his experience in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He has no sympathy with Communism and finds much to criticize in Russia. But he gives (especially in article on January 1, 1938) a mass of quite indisputable evidence from his own observation that "industrial sabotage is a commonplace in Soviet Russia" and "it often bears evidence of being directed and organized in high places." He saw this as early as 1932 and continued to see it until he left in 1937. He is convinced from what he saw that the leading Communists who confessed in court to having organized industrial wrecking were telling the truth. I cannot here summarize the mass of evidence he gives or the explanation he advances, but his testimony puts it beyond doubt that Communist leaders and workers have conspired to wreck the Soviet civilization and weaken its power of resistance to invaders during the whole of the last six or seven years. Trotsky said of the first batch of leaders who confessed their guilt that they had received a promise that their lives would be spared. They were executed, yet the second and third batch confessed just as freely. I will not here venture upon explanation, beyond saying that these are men who have not been trained as the young are in Russia today, but the fact of a widespread conspiracy against the state is now establishing quite apart from the evidence given in court and the confessions. That chronic state of conspiracy seems to me to justify the Soviet authorities in employing a large secret police and withholding the normal condition of free political life. It is merely refusing freedom to conspire against the state.

How the failure to understand these conditions and the peculiar Russian psychology which results from them weights the scales of some critics against Russia is curiously illustrated in Dr. Sherwood Eddy's latest book *Russia Today: What Can We Learn From It?* He finds four great evils in Russian life. The fourth, the absence of religion, we dismiss with a smile. If Russia has without religion done all the wonderful and humane things he describes, we simply conclude that it is not the inspiration Dr. Eddy imagines it to be. The first evil is "a paralyzing and ineffective bureaucracy:" at which also we smile when we read, in Dr. Eddy's own book, how mightily and beneficently effective the bureaucracy has been. The second and third evils are the denial of liberty and the danger of a violent reaction. To these Dr. Eddy devotes 30 pages, much more of rhetoric than facts, and he then devotes 300 pages to the fine things that the "paralyzing and ineffective bureaucracy" has accomplished. We find much the same defect in the critical work of Andre Gide. He has page after page describing such healthy social life as will be found in no other country, but his temper sours and he begins to carp at furniture in apartments of the workers, buildings that are not to his taste, etc. His real grievance is the curtailment of liberty. That Russia has, by weeding out its industrial wreckers and political plotters and dealing very drastically with them probably saved the world from a greater war than that of 1914 does not seem to occur to these critics. It is, nevertheless, the opinion of many of the best observers of events in Europe that the discovery and removal by the Soviet

authorities of their military traitors and industrial wreckers has done more than anything else to check the bloody ambitions of Japan and Germany and lessen the chances of a world-war.

The second reform which we studied was the abolition of slavery. We might make out a case for considering that millions of the peasants in pre-revolutionary Russia were in not much better condition than slaves and were treated as such by the noble land-owners or, since these were generally spending their blood-money in the dissipations of the capital, by their local agents. We will, however, confine ourselves to the facts. The modern continuation of the movement for the abolition of slavery is the war upon racial prejudice. Country after country in Europe has reverted in effect to the principle of the great Catholic oracle, Thomas Aquinas, that the Jews are the slaves of Christians and has set up the grossest idolatry of its own race or blood. In America the abolition-movement is still incomplete and will remain incomplete until the last trace of a color-line has been abolished. The program of reform has still a vast amount to accomplish in the way of the destruction of racial injustice.

No one questions that Soviet Russia leads the world in this respect. Slav and Semite, European and Asiatic and African, meet there on equal terms. Paul Robeson is almost equally familiar with America, England, and Russia, and he is one of the most enthusiastic admirers of Russia. One may say that this is natural in a country that sprawls over half of Europe and half of Asia and includes such a remarkable variety of peoples, but this is only part of the explanation. From the first the Soviet leaders determined to carry out in their republics the traditional Socialist ideal of abolishing all class and race-distinctions. They have done so. From their early years the children are warned against the prejudices about "lower races" which survives everywhere else and are taught the brotherhood of men.

There is one practical application of this which most writers on Russia omit to notice. Round the fringe of the vast Russian territory, especially in Asia but also in what used to be regarded as unfavorable and almost inaccessible regions in Europe, there are many small populations, numbering a few hundred thousand to a few million, which Czarist Russia had never attempted to civilize. Disease and death flourished in their malodorous villages, and their tastes and pleasures were on the barbaric level. In my A B C booklet on Russia I showed how within 10 years numbers of these backward and neglected peoples have been brought up to the common level of the Soviet civilization. They now have adequate medical services, schools, theaters, movies, libraries, etc.

Just as I write this book another report on one of these reformed areas reaches me. The Kirghiz Republic covers a very large area in western Asia, and until the Revolution the people, who were mostly wild nomads at what the anthropologist calls the level of barbarism, were so cruelly treated and exploited that between 1903 and 1913 their number actually decreased by 10 percent. They are now fully organized in scientific agriculture and industry. Peasants were granted 2,000,000 acres for collective farming, and some of the collective farms already have an annual revenue of more than a

million roubles. The "Wild Stone Land," as the natives called the country before the Revolution, had in 1937 a national budget of 270,000,000 roubles, and it assigned 115,000,000 roubles of this for the purpose of education. Twenty years ago the country was completely illiterate. Now it has 1,800 schools and several universities; and there are 150 libraries, 300 clubs, and 250 movies in the provincial towns. The capital, with its fine tenement-blocks, parks, public buildings, etc., reflects the astonishing new wealth of the Republic. Moscow has simply taught the Kirghizians how to develop their natural resources, which are very considerable, and the ragged and sullen population of 20 years ago now form a well-ordered, healthy, and extremely prosperous state. Twenty such stories could be told. Russia is teaching the world that on Materialist principles instead of sending religious missionaries and bibles what we call lower races can be transformed in 10 years.

The struggle for enlightenment was the next reform we studied, and what Soviet Russia has done in the way of education is so well known that even the more reckless critics dare not question it. They will tell you that the teaching is narrow in scope—meaning that children are not, as in other countries, crammed with a mass of useless information but brought up practically to be useful and socially-minded citizens—that there are not nurseries for all the children under the age of three and not convalescent homes or holiday-camps for all the 30,000,000 school-children of Russia. This is mere petulance. Of course Russia's work is far from being completed. What the open-minded man will prefer to notice is that the Soviet statesmen who little more than 10 years ago contemplated the wreck of their productive system and had the gigantic task of creating a vast industrial machine and a most costly armament nevertheless at once set aside such sums for education that a nation which was 80 percent illiterate is now entirely literate except for a few refractory old folk, provides the best opportunities in the world of technical and higher education, and has (while critics still mumble about the cruel treatment of the intellectuals) one of the finest bodies of scientific men and apparatus in the world.

It is useless to give figures since, like all Russian statistics, they rise phenomenally every year. During the last two years 4,500 new schools were built at a cost of 1,385 million roubles, and 1,077 schools, accommodating more than half a million pupils, will be built in the towns and cities in 1938. Most of the new schools are built on the most modern principles: light and well ventilated, with wide corridors for play in winter, laboratories, workshops, and canteens. But for educational statistics I must refer the reader to any one of a hundred books or annuals. The figures of books printed annually—by the government, of course, and on a carefully considered plan—newspapers, pupils at the dozen different types of schools, etc. rise to almost astronomical proportions. But so much has been written on Soviet education that these things may be taken for granted.

The only point I need here press upon the readers attention is that the Soviet statesmen have, while the industrial and military demands upon their resources might have been made an excuse for neglecting education, not merely not neglected it but have taken

measures for the welfare and happiness of the children as well as their training which are without parallel in the civilized world. One enthusiastic visitor has said that Russia lives and works for its children and youth. Not only is all education free and without snobbish distinction of classes, but there is a most costly scheme of caring for the child outside of school hours. Parks and theaters for children only are constructed in the towns. Recreation, often the best that Russian entertainers can supply, is provided in the vacation, which opens with a sort of welcome of the children by the adult community. Holiday-camps and convalescent homes increase in number every year. The writer who fancies he has discovered a defect in Russia because it has not yet provided a fine free summer vacation for every one of its 30,000,000 school-children is an ass. Old and rich countries which have not had to find tens of billions of dollars for new construction (machinery, hydro-electric, factories, housing, public buildings, schools, roads, canals, railways, etc.) in 10 years and have not had to spend half or a third what Russia spends every year on defense do not do one tenth what Russia does for the health and happiness of their children and young folk.

Liberal and even some Socialist journalists were asking a month or two ago, when they failed to understand the recent trials in Russia, whether it is possible that Stalin and his associates are just cold-blooded men who get rid of their rivals by judicial murders. It is Stalin and his colleagues who are supremely responsible for this vast expenditure on not merely the training, but the happiness and health of the children. They display a fineness and warmth of sentiment which is conspicuously lacking in the expenditure on children of other governments. And there is the same sound sentiment and idealism in connection with the next point in the program of reform we have traversed: the treatment of women.

Most of us remember the melodramatic lies which were put into circulation in the early years of the new Republics. Women were declared by the authorities to be the common property of men, it was said. Sadistic officials had beautiful young women brought to them on framed charges and condemned them to what the novelist calls the fate that is worse than death. Good Christians everywhere shuddered as they learned that the first fruit of Atheist government was, as they had been warned to expect, that the country had plunged into an orgy of rape and promiscuity. The irony of it was that all this was supposed to have happened under Lenin, who was a cold Puritan with an ascetic detestation of free love. "Licentiousness in sex-life is bourgeois," he said; and to a good Bolshevik that is the last word of condemnation.

Dr. Sherwood Eddy, being a religious moralist, may be expected to tell us if there is in Russia, which he knows well, any more sexual freedom than there is in America. He tells us that, on the contrary, "there is a stern, almost Puritan, element in Soviet morality" (p. 158). The organized youth of Russia adores the memory of Lenin and follows his lead. The young folk lead a campaign against the drunkenness and looseness which remains from Christian days amongst their elders. The movies are from the Puritans point of view, the cleanest in the world. There are no scandals in the theatrical world. Vice leads to degeneration, they say, and the entire

educational organism, from the primary school to the theater, is used for bracing character. Dr. Eddy puts it (p. 160):

The chief influence for the new morality comes not from social convention or penalties, nor from the restraints of the older generation nor any external religious sanctions, but from the self-governing authority of the youth movement itself and from the discipline of its periodic cleansings.

Compare with all this the situation in America as described in Mr. Ben Lindsay's books! We will trust that Russian youth is a little more human than Dr. Eddy represents, but it is certainly funny to read that one of the real fruits of Atheism in Russia is that one of the most drunken and free-living peoples in Europe—pre-revolutionary Russia—has become the most sober and puritanical.

Prostitution is not, as is sometimes said, extinct in Russia but it is well on the way to extinction. One reason is the complete equality of the sexes which the new Russia recognizes. Russian women are not fighting against sex-disabilities. The younger women, having grown to womanhood since the Revolution, have never-known such disabilities. What they ask is that the men shall, except in appropriate moments, forget the distinction of sexes. They are fellow citizens with the men and are equally willing to work or fight for their great civilization. They are welcomed, and the census-figures just published show that 35 percent of all the paid workers of Russia are girls or women. There are 30,000 woman-doctors (nearly half of the whole body), 100,000 engineers and technicians, 225,000 employed in hospitals and convalescent homes. 1,250,000 in teaching, and nearly 10,000,000 in business and industry. A mother who is pregnant is relieved from work, with full pay, for six or eight weeks before and after childbirth. She may then take her baby to work with her, and it will receive every care from trained nurses in the creches which are provided in connection with the factories; though, naturally, the provision of such creches is still far from complete.

Since no private philanthropy is needed in Russia, we pass over our next test of the benevolence of skeptics and come to the treatment of criminals. Here, as in the case of the treatment of children, Russia leads the world: and these are two of the best tests of the idealistic quality of a civilization. Amongst the more reliable literature about Russia I would particularly recommend *Factory, Family, and Woman in the Soviet Union* (1935) by Professor Susan W. Kingsbury (of Bryn Mawr) and Professor Mildred Fairchild: *Playtime in Russia* (1935), edited by Hubert Griffith, one of the leading British dramatic critics, and written by 10 experts on art and sport: *Twelve Studies in Soviet Russia* (1932) by a dozen British economists and other experts: and *Moscow in the Making* (1937) by Sir Ernest and Lady Simon, Professor W. A. Robson and Professor J. Jewkes. Not one of these 29 writers is a Communist (only a very few are Socialists), but each is a recognized expert on his subject and went to Russia to study the situation there.

The most reliable account of law and prison-life in Russia is in *Twelve Studies* and is written by Mr. O. N. Pritt. K. C. Mr. Pritt is a distinguished lawyer with an exceptionally high university education. He knows Russia and the Russian language well and attend-

ed, and approved, some of the big political trials. He gives a favorable account of the law and the courts and says of the police that "on the whole the right to arrest is more limited than it is in England," but I have space only to reproduce some of his observations on the prison-system. "Everything" he says, "that Russia has recently done is what English reformers have preached for years," and "the Russians apply fully and logically the theory that imprisonment must be reformatory and not in the smallest degree punitive, and they regard society as sharing with the criminal the responsibility for his crime." The accused has a right to the free service of an attorney if he desires, though the judges are more helpful than in other countries and may dismiss a guilty man simply with a reprimand or a word of advice.

There are two types of prisons to which those guilty of serious offenses may be sent. One is, as in other countries, a "closed prison," but these linger from pre-revolutionary days and it is expected that they will disappear. Even the closed prison, however, is very different from a British jail or an American penitentiary, not to mention the concentration-camps of Germany. They are controlled by the prisoners themselves, who impose penalties on delinquents. All do a normal day's work and receive normal pay for it, so that they regard themselves rather as members of a labor-colony than inmates of a jail. There is no military regimentation of the kind that is usual in jails. The inmates mix freely with each other and with the guards. They are provided with little manuals of their duties and their rights, may smoke freely except at work, and have many visitors. Solitary confinement is very rare, and all are periodically examined by psychiatrists and may be removed to mental hospitals. They are frequently allowed to go home for a week-end, and most of them have a fortnight vacation in the summer. A mother may have her baby with her in the prison—the cells are brightened with flowers and pictures and the common rooms are often attractive—as she may, if her home is near, be allowed to go out to it several times a day to feed the baby. When the sentence is served a man or woman goes out into the world without any stigma, and there are far less recidivists than in countries where the penal system is more severe.

This humane treatment has helped so much in the reduction of crime—there were 200,000 prisoners in 1914 and, in spite of the great increase in population, only 80,000 in 1934 and less today—that a still more lenient system of "social correction" is replacing it. "One of the most encouraging phenomena of modern Russia," Mr. Pritt calls this new system. Men and women who have been found guilty of even serious crime are housed in large open villages or "labor communes." They are not allowed to have alcohol, must not marry without the consent of the group, and must be indoors by 11 p.m. Otherwise the life is much the same as in other large villages. There are no prison-walls, and they are told that there is "nothing to prevent their departure (one could not call it escape) save the likelihood that they will not be allowed to return." Remember that the writer of this is not a young Communist but one of the most distinguished and most cultivated barristers in England. Youths, he says, occasionally do leave the colony but they generally come back: On the other hand, many of the men and women refuse to leave when

their sentence expires. They frame the certificate of restoration of citizenship and hang it on the wall, and they remain in the village, marry, and rear families.

On the day on which I write this my paper reports that Dr. Inge continues his inglorious campaign against Bolshevism, which he so hates that he has joined and speaks for "the Friends of National Spain," or the gangs of international butchers who are bombing the women and children of Spain. What drives him to this sordid association is, he says, that he "hates cruelty, persecution, whether religious or anti-religious, and organized and systematic lying." Franco is, he says, "a gallant Christian gentleman" who is simply preventing his country from being fouled by Bolshevism. Such is the way in which four-fifths of the people of America and Great Britain are duped by the newspapers they read. The genuine work of Bolsheviks is, as I have shown, described for us by one impartial expert after another, yet the world is flooded with lies about it. I have referred to a work by Sir Ernest and Lady Simon and two British professors of law and economics. After months of reading about the life of Moscow they spent a month in the city verifying their conclusions. Let me explain that Sir Ernest Simon, brother of the well-known Sir John Simon, is a wealthy Manchester merchant, at one time Lord Mayor of that city, and an orthodox Liberal and individualist. Yet here is his final verdict on Moscow and its civic rulers (p. 234):

I believe that they have the best constitution yet devised for effective city government, that their leaders are men of integrity, enthusiasm, and ability, and that the advantages of Socialism and the one-party system for town-planning purposes are of overwhelming importance. If there should be no great war, if the population of Moscow does not exceed five millions, if the government maintains its present integrity and strength of purpose, I believe that at the end of the Ten Year Plan Moscow will be well on the way to being, as regards health, convenience, and the amenities of life for the whole body of citizens, the best planned great city the world has ever known.

As to the other symposium on Russia which I recommended, **Playtime in Russia**, its studies of art, sport, and recreation hardly concern me here, but it is curious to read how the editor almost complains in his introduction that, while he chose 10 experts who did not know each other, were certainly not Communists, and were instructed to criticize freely, the papers he received from them were uniformly eulogistic.

This chapter has already run to such length that I must be content to sketch very briefly other services which the authorities provide in Russia more generously than they are provided, if they exist at all, in other countries. Take the medical service. In Czarist Russia the people were so ignorant and so foully neglected that of every 1,000 children that were born 275 died during the first year. There are now four or five times as many doctors, and, apart from a very few who are allowed private practice, they are employed by the state to keep the people in health. The social insurance of the workers covers free medical service, and there are thousands of free sanatoria, hospitals, and convalescent homes. The provision of parks, of which the workers hardly dreamed in Czarist days, is very

lavish, and every type of recreation is found in them. Small model towns are in many places built for children. Parents who work during the day may leave their children here and have them fed and generously cared for at a price, according to age, of from a dime to a quarter a day.

Critics invariably retort here that, while the authorities boast of their parks and free theaters, their magnificent Moscow underground railway and ship canal, the model industrial towns they have built for the hundreds of thousands of workers in the vast new industries, and so on, housing in Russia remains a scandal. They will not take the trouble to realize the magnitude of the task. In spite of the terrific demands for capital-construction and defense, in spite of world-depression and world-hostility, no less than \$2,500,000,000 was spent upon housing during the run of the first Five Year Plan (really four years and a few months), and even greater sums have been spent since then. If building proceeded as it has done in England during the last 10 years, when there is supposed to have been a building-boom, it would take Moscow alone 25 years to catch up with its housing requirements. But no one could expect Russia, with all the demands upon its treasury and the shadow of a terrible war cast upon it, to proceed at the same pace as an old country with a highly organized building trade like England. Critics forget, moreover, that the aim of the Soviet authorities is to supply workers with housing accommodation at a price not exceeding one-tenth of the weekly wage. In English and American cities the rent is nearer one-fifth of the wage, and what the worker gets for it is often atrocious.

But I must not here go into such matters or into the general question of the economic life of Russia. It is enough to say that the statistics which lie before me show that the wealth produced is rising by great leaps every year, wages are constantly advancing, prices are just as constantly falling, and the quantity and quality of consumers goods are improving every quarter. Economically, and in every aspect of life that depends upon the collective wealth, Russia is still in the making. What has been done in 10 years is stupendous, and the country will be before long the richest and most powerful that ever existed. But my purpose here is to show that even in the days of penury and privation the Soviet authorities set about the realization of a magnificent plan of social welfare, and that when the creation of capital enterprises is complete and the crushing burden of militarism can be laid aside, Russia will be not only the richest country on earth but the country in which wealth is used for the welfare of the people as it is not elsewhere and never has been. Atheist Russia crowns the splendid record of skepticism in social service.

CHAPTER XIII

SKEPTICISM AND THE WORLD-REACTION

I am in this book concerned entirely with facts, not arguments, and I therefore refrain from discussing why it is that, whereas very little social advance was made as long as Europe was solidly Christian, skeptics have inaugurated a new age and been found in such numbers in the van of every reform-movement. A leader of the Oxford or Group Movement, the popular writer Mr. Beverly Nicholls, recently said that, while no one could now accuse Materialists of a lack of idealism, it was entirely inconsistent with their creed. He seemed to think that he was replacing the foolish old jibe at Materialism and Atheism with a new and reasonable objection. He was simply talking very old and familiar nonsense. When he explained that truth, beauty, and goodness are realities which can have no legitimate place in a Materialist philosophy, he was relying upon a theory of their nature which goes back to Plato. They are not spiritual realities—to say this today is a piece of mythology—but relations of material realities. Truth the correspondence of thought to reality, has not merely a legitimate place in Materialism but is its first and most vital requirement. Beauty is a quality of things or a relation of things to our emotions which it is no more inconsistent with our Materialist creed to appreciate than is the enjoyment of a bottle of wine. Goodness in any sense which the word has today, is a relation of behavior to the social needs and correct or generous social behavior is just as valuable in an Atheist community as in any other.

If we wanted to argue on these matters, we need only point out that when a sensible man or woman discards that heaven is a myth he or she naturally wants to see life on earth improved as far as possible; and all experience as well as common sense show that this can be done only by collective action to remove the evil legacies of the past and behaving as if we were all members of one family. One of the most stupid of arguments used in this very tiresome field of religious controversy is that an Atheist or Materialist cannot logically have or cultivate emotions. Apologists of this type represent skeptics as sheer cold thinking machines and make no attempt to explain why all this cold logic of three generations of skeptics has been accompanied by such growth and warmth of social sentiment as the world had never known before. But with all this dreary argumentation I have dealt elsewhere and will here continue to confine myself to facts.

And it is obviously necessary to round off this factual study of the social record of skepticism with a candid consideration of the state in which we find the world today. We have seen how skepticism has grown in every age when men advanced in knowledge and had freedom to discuss it, and how in all marked ages of skepticism there

was a high record of social service and reform. We saw how the occurrence of these conditions in ampler form in modern times led to a larger growth than ever before of both skepticism and social benevolence. Since the skepticism, which now generally takes the form of Atheism, has spread in our time more widely and more rapidly than ever, it would seem, if the historic law I have formulated is sound, that social reform also must be advancing more rapidly than ever. On the contrary, the reforms which have been won over half the world have been destroyed and at the moment it is brutality of the old medieval type that is spreading from country to country. How do we bring this fact into harmony with our historic law that the social welfare improves in proportion as skepticism spreads?

Let us recognize in the first place that it is impossible for even the most desperate apologist to claim that the world-disorder of today is the genuine logical outcome of a spread of skepticism. During the later years of the last century, when the more conscientious Christian apologists realized that the world was not growing worse as skepticism spread, the plea was raised that for a generation or two the world might still continue to move forward by the sort of social momentum that Christianity had given it. The idea was that Atheist leaders of reform, who seemed to be so numerous, were men in whom the dynamic of the Christian ethic was still active although the doctrines were discarded. As one writer picturesquely put it, we idealists who had quitted the sanctuary had brought away some of the oil with us, and it would sustain the light of our lamps for a time. One can imagine such men now claiming that the world-development confirms their theory: that we Atheists have burned up our oil and have now only the inspiration of our own creed.

This is little better than controversial rhetoric, but the reader will feel that there is need for a very serious analysis and explanation if recent developments in the light of or in relation to the historic law which I have proved in the preceding twelve chapters. The first step toward such an explanation is to point out that the brutality which darkens half the world is not a new historical phenomenon which we might be tempted to ascribe to new conditions such as the remarkable spread of Atheism in the last 20 years. This brutality is precisely a return to the social and moral condition of the world when Atheism was almost unknown and substantially the whole population of Europe was Christian. After what I have said in this connection we need not labor the point, but I will give one illustration. The British Howard League of Penal Reform has recently sent its chief representatives to visit the jails of every country in Europe—Italy, Germany, and a few others refused to allow the inquiry—and they have compiled a terrible report. It is enough for my purpose that the newspaper in which I read a summary of the report puts over it the heading: "Prisons Ruled By Terror: Backsliding Into Torture Days." Exactly. In the worst evils of our time—arbitrary arrest, torture of prisoners, war on civilians, denial of liberty, etc.—we have just slipped back into what religious people call the Ages of Faith. It would be too humorous to suggest that the effect of a spread of Atheism is to cause men to revert to the social behavior of a time when all behavior was directed by the Christian creed.

The next aspect of the situation to be considered is that in

nearly every case of national degeneration the religious creed or creeds and authorities of that nation fully support the reactionary leaders. Of this again we need offer little proof. In the booklet on Japan in the A B C series I gave the evidence that, as is not disputed by anybody, the entire Buddhist priesthood supports the aggressive and brutal program of the militarists, capitalists, and politicians, receives heavy subsidies for reconciling the Japanese people to this and preparing the way, by international conferences and colleges, for the spread of Japanese domination over half of Asia. I gave evidence that the Roman Church in Japan also is enlisted in the work, and decisive proof of this has since been published. Japanese papers boasted that the Pope had ordered all Catholic priests and bishops in Japan to support the aggression against China. When this news was published in the American press, the Catholic American authorities, dreading the effect upon the public, raised the usual cry of lies and libel. Whereupon a leading representative of the Associated Press gave away the fact that the news was given, or rather sold, to them by the Pope's own Press Bureau (one of the most venal in Europe) in the Vatican City. The truth is now well known.

Of Italy, the second most aggressive and most brutally callous nation, it is unnecessary to speak. The entire Italian Church supported the rape of Ethiopia, and the Pope has publicly and repeatedly blessed the performances of Mussolini's 20,000 troops in Spain. The Pope was the first to send a diplomatic representative to Franco and the last to send him a mild protest against the murder of civilians—18 months after this new type of "war of liberation from Bolshevik tyranny" had begun. Germany is in some respects an exception, and we must consider it very seriously, but in this connection it offers no difficulty. The Nazi government is at loggerheads with the Catholic and part of the Lutheran Church, but this is by no means because they condemn Hitler's aggressive program. On the contrary, the Pope publicly presses for a reconciliation in order that he may, by his influence on 15,000,000 German Catholics, support Hitler in the most criminal of his schemes, the attack upon Russia.

Poland is probably the most Catholic country in Europe. It was also the first country to resort (in 1919) to the brutal practices which disgrace civilization today, and it has had the full support and cooperation of the Church in its outrages on civilians, torture of prisoners, etc., from that day to our own. In Yugo Slavia, where the penal reformers found a shocking condition of tyranny and injustice, both the native Catholic Church and the Pope and his Church are so eager to support the government that they have fallen into a deadly quarrel with each other. In Rumania, where the visiting reformers found that the authorities had cut down by 50 percent the expenditure on criminals while doubling the number of them—they now allow two cents a day for feeding and 30 cents a year for clothing prisoners in the overcrowded jails—the authorities of the Orthodox Church look on as complacently as they do at the threat to the Jews while the king dallies with a Jewish mistress. It is the same in Bulgaria, where there is black tyranny, and, in Greece. In Austria it was the Catholic Church which treacherously ruined the beneficent Socialist government of Vienna and opened the way for its

own destruction by the Nazis. In Brazil and other South American Republics the Church warmly supports the dictators in all their brutality.

Thus in every country in the world except one where there is a dictatorship or semi-dictatorship with the usual tyranny, arbitrary arrests, torture of prisoners, aggressive militarism, etc., the Churches—in Japan Buddhism also—fully support the new development. The one exception is Germany, and the sole reason for it is that the Nazi authorities refuse the cooperation of the Churches and openly declare that they are not now worth cooperating with. When this fact is taken in conjunction with my first point, that the degradation of today is a reversion to Christian times, it will be realized that the skeptic has no need to blush. But there is a third and even stronger point.

Reserving Germany for special and careful consideration, we see that wherever Atheism has attained power or in proportion as it has attained power in any country the historic law that it particularly promotes the social welfare is confirmed. One of the chief symptoms of debasement in the Fascist or semi-Fascist and religious countries I have named above is the complete abandonment of all reforms that had been won in the administration of law in the treatment of prisoners. The Howard Society has now put this on official record. Compare with this what so reliable an authority as Mr. Pritt tells us about law and "social correction" in Russia. That the Soviet authorities are stern in condemning men who conspire against the state or who weaken its defense against the open threat of invasion by economic wrecking we fully admit; though even here there is no torture, and the trials in open court are approved as sound by distinguished foreign lawyers. And the only other country in which a quite enlightened policy is followed in the treatment of criminals is Mexico. There also the jails are for reform not punishment, and the inmates have remarkable privileges in the way of visiting their homes or friends. Is it just a coincidence that the statesmen and leading officials in Mexico have for years been Atheists, as in Russia, and are bitterly assailed by the Church?

A second symptom of the growing degeneration is that funds have been diverted from education and social welfare to the construction of an aggressive military machine, and the schools and colleges themselves are prostituted in the service of this aggressive ideal. International congresses of teachers in recent years have given full evidence of this, though the general fact is not disputed. Expenditure on the children has sunk in all the Fascist-religious countries I have named, and the degradation of the teaching in colleges and universities is deplored by all educationists. The condition of the workers steadily sinks, and schemes of pensions and social welfare are abandoned.

Contrast with this the action of Atheism wherever and in proportion as it has obtained power. Russia loathes the need of defensive militarism and has no dream of aggression, but in spite of the terrible burden that has been thrust upon it unprecedented sums have been devoted to education and the care of the children. Mexico is probably next to Russia in devoting its resources to constructive purposes, especially education and the welfare of the mass of

the people. It was exactly the same in Vienna during the years when Atheist-Socialists held the civic power, and in Spain during the two or three years when the Socialists and Radicals—all anti-clerical—controlled the government. It is the same in Turkey, where President Ataturk and all his leading men are Atheists, and priests have been excluded from every part of the public life. They may not even wear their distinctive costumes except in church or mosque and during actual services. Yet Turkey has, in proportion to its small resources, made the same progress in education and humane legislation, and the country is entirely free from the brutal military swagger and greed of the Fascist countries.

There is another way of looking at these facts. It is that the idealism of a country is proportionate to the degree of power which Atheism or Atheists have in controlling the policy of that country. In this connection we need not as I said, consider how many millions of the people are still Christians. They have no share in the actual administration of the country's funds. It is the creed of the statesmen and of the chief agents for carrying out their laws and plans that matters. In Russia these are all dogmatic Materialists and Atheists—they have been for 20 years—and religion is more thoroughly excluded from public life than in any other country; and we have seen that Russia is the most idealistic of all modern and ancient civilizations. In the next rank we must certainly put Mexico and Turkey, if we bear in mind that like Soviet Russia, the present rulers took over a very backward and illiterate national body. As late as 1927, when the real work of reconstruction had just begun, only one Turk in 13 could read and write; and you will not forget that the world ran into the great depression just after the constructive work began. Yet there are today 820,000 pupils in the schools and colleges of Turkey and a very large number of social reforms, including the complete emancipation of woman, have been carried. We add next the splendid work which was done by Socialists during their few years of power in Austria and Spain. Probably we should put next in point of social achievement the three Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. These are also next in regard to the power of Socialism and Communism.

We might, in fact, take a broader view and consider that the countries which have resisted the Fascist corruption best are just those where skeptics outnumber believers. The United States does not here come into consideration because it is too far removed from the taint to be in serious danger. France, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are the outstanding examples, and they are the countries of Europe in which, apart from Russia and Germany, Atheism has spread most widely. Spain is making an heroic effort to resist the corruption that is being forced upon it, and in Spain the Catholics had shrunk to the position of a minority. The Irish Jesuit Father Gannon estimated that they at the outbreak of the Civil War numbered "10 to 15 millions"—say about 12 millions—which is less than half the population. Portugal, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Yugo Slavia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, Poland, etc., with the majority of their people Catholics of one shade or other, easily contracted the taint; and it would not be surprising to the close observer of these developments if Catholic Belgium and

the mixed religious population of Holland were the next to be corrupted.

Germany is the single exception to this very plain law that skepticism has not only led in every country to an era of social reform but is most effective in preserving the nation from the relapse into medieval barbarism. If the base conduct of England, which I fully admit, in indirectly supporting continental Fascism is quoted, we may reflect that, while four-fifths or more of the people are now acknowledged by the Churches to be skeptics, the great majority of the men who compose the present administration and follow a policy that disgusts at least half the country are Christians and in close alliance with the Church of England. This year, moreover, may see a great change in British policy and leadership.

Germany is the single exception to all the generalizations which the facts I have given compel us to make. We might be content to plead that with so many proofs of the connection between skepticism and social welfare on the one hand and so many, on the other hand, of connection between Church-power and national degeneration a single exception need not disturb us. If, however, we courageously face the facts, we find that the exception is less significant than at first sight it appears.

Hitler and his leading (and worst) lieutenants are certainly non-Christian skeptics, though to what extent they are Atheists they never disclose. I would, however, admit that most of the leading Nazis and probably the great majority of the members of the party are Atheists. My support or sympathy has been sought by Nazi agents in England on that express ground: which was a very futile appeal, since I regard them as traitors to all the humanitarian ideals for which, as the record in this book shows, Atheism has always stood. My latest advice from even the Catholic provinces of Germany is that the Nazi "persecution of religion" has left the people cold and they are drifting in large numbers into skepticism.

The same advices, it is true, inform me that the body of the people have no enthusiasm for the Nazi military swagger and dreams of conquest. This is probably true of the great majority of the German and Austrian people. But the fact remains that, whereas we claim that a skeptical ruling class means social progress, in Germany it has meant social retrogression. This would be a formidable difficulty if we were foolish enough to claim that skepticism in power always follows the policy of humanitarian reform. We might as well claim that every skeptic is enthusiastic for social reform and every wealthy skeptic is a philanthropist! Such claims would be ridiculous, and we may therefore expect to find exceptions in the collective social conduct of certain groups of Atheists. It is some satisfaction that we have only one such exception to consider.

The situation in Germany is in part due to the history of that country in the 19th Century, when it had to be unified and modernized by the successive conquests which gave it an exceptional military tradition: in part to the disastrous blunder of the victorious Allies of 1918 in thinking that they could keep Germany permanently in an inferior and crippled condition: and in part to the extraordinary power of social education or perversion which modern science has created. I have traced the stages of the degeneration in my

History of the World Since 1918. Hitler concocted an entirely serious creed from the meanderings of Houston Stuart Chamberlain about the nobility of the German race and the more or less humiliating circumstances in which he saw Germany after the war. It is probable that most of his early associates (Goering, Goebbels, Roehm, etc.) regarded him as a dreamer and merely wanted a new party and power in it. Atheists most of them may have been, but they were just a bunch of unscrupulous adventurers. They had one link. They detested both Catholicism and Socialism, yet they saw Germany in the few years before Hitler cheated his way to power ruled by these two forces.

They slowly formed a party, we must remember, by dangling before the people a semi-Socialist program in which the military clauses form a small paragraph and the plan of aggression is deleted, while large measures of social and economic reform were promised. Then came, as in Italy and elsewhere, the not unfamiliar perversion of a political party. There was always a weakness in opposing a semi-Socialist and vague program to the full and definite program of the Socialist and Communist parties, and the Nazis were easily persuaded to sell it to the rich industrialists and land-owners. The acceptance from these of vast funds for propaganda and electoral purposes completed the perversion of the party, and it attracted to its swastika flag great numbers who sought only office or the places and property of the Jews. It had no longer anything to do with either religion or skepticism. It was a political body determined to reach power by hook or crook and to reward its supporters with police, military, political, or other lucrative positions. It had, in short, become just one more division of the capitalist army for the world-suppression of Socialism, and nothing else mattered. The program of social reform had to be replaced, and this was done by using every trick of press and censorship, radio and movie, parade and school, to hypnotize a large part of the nation into the belief that the first requirement was to make the nation militarily strong and able to dictate terms to its former conquerors. Lying about Jews and Communists and all the other evils were logically involved in the plan.

This, remember, is not an excuse but an interpretation. The great body of German Atheists, the 20 million Communists, Socialists, and Radicals, loathe Hitler and his program of medieval or ancient German combativeness, while the great bulk of the members of the Churches support this part of his program and quarrel only with what they call his interference in their domestic affairs. These circumstances alleviate the one notable apostasy from atheistic humanitarianism. It is, in any case, if there is any real meaning in the phrase, the exception that proves the rule. This rule, that an age of skepticism is an age of social reform, emerges from the whole of history and is amply confirmed in contemporary life. In the vast majority of cases skepticism in power means progress; just as in the vast majority of cases of retrogression to the barbarism of the Middle Ages the medieval Church is there to bless the weapons, however foul they may be. The corrupting influence has been the scare of the wealthy by the spread of Socialism and Communism. The world was threatened with a comprehensive reform, the ideal of

which has issued mainly from the heroic labors of three generations of skeptics. But wealth and the command of the organs of public instruction were still in the hands of the threatened privileged minorities, and the great struggle began. The Eighth Crusade is on. Popes, bishops, nobles, soldiers, prostitutes, merchants are, as before, all in it, now supported by the tremendous force of modern capitalism and the capitalist press, radio, control of schools and publishers, etc. The situation today is not that the social record of skepticism has failed. It is that the social record of Christianity has been violently restored.

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THE FOUR EXPLORERS.—There were four explorers who were making a trip into a desert. As the problem of food was important, it was necessary for each explorer to tote enough grub to last him five days. After the four men had gone a certain distance, one man turned back with just enough food to last him until he got back to his starting place. The second man did likewise, and so on. How many days' journey did the last man make into the desert and return safely?

SEVEN DINERS PROBLEM.—One of seven guests of a restaurant dined there each day; a second dined there every second day; a third every third day; and so on to the seventh, who ate there once every seventh day. After how many days would the entire seven appear at the same time?

SPEED PROBLEM.—When traveling in opposite directions, two trains take three seconds to pass each other, and when traveling in the same direction, they take 35 seconds. If the faster train has a speed of 38 miles an hour, how fast is the other train going?

THE GALLON PROBLEM.—A man had four bottles which contained four-fifths, five-eighths, three-sevenths, and two-ninths gallons, respectively. What is the least number of gallons of water, expressed by a whole number, that will

exactly fill these bottles without waste?

WHICH IS THE GREATER.—six dozen dozen or half a dozen dozen?

PORTRAIT PROBLEM.—A woman pointing to a portrait of a man, said to her brother: "That man's mother was my mother's mother-in-law." What relation was the woman to the subject of the portrait?

DINER-CASHIER PROBLEM.—J. P. Pavleji, Milwaukee, Wis., says this puzzle is going the rounds: A man walked into a restaurant and ordered a full dinner. After the waiter brought it in, the man didn't eat, but got up and walked to the cashier and wrote this on a piece of paper—102004180. The cashier looked at it and put it into the register. How do you explain this?

NORTH POLE PROBLEM.—An airplane leaves the North Pole and flies straight South for 30 miles. It then goes 40 miles West. What distance is it from the Pole at the end of this trip?

WORD PROBLEM.—What word represents the present tense of the verb of which "wrought" is the past tense?

MARRIAGE PROBLEM.—Many years ago a man married the sister of his widow. How did he do it?

JUMPING PENNIES.—You have six pennies set in a row and you are to stack them in two piles of three pennies each, but each penny in jumping must pass over three pennies.

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The Lindbergh-Hauptmann Kidnap-Murder Case

BY MARCET HALDEMAN-JULIUS

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