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THE
ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES
OF THE CHURCH

BY
REGINALD THOMAS BROOKS,
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

A new series of books about religion! Who has written them, and what are they for?

The authors are all Congregationalists, and while we write to the churches of our own Faith and Order in particular, and to the Reformed churches in general, we do so for the sake of 'the Church which is to come.' We have tried to speak unambiguously out of our own rich tradition, but have sought to avoid that sectarian prejudice which is essentially unchristian. There can be no Congregational doctrine of God—or of the Church or society; but we believe that God means something to be given in all these matters to the universal Church through the history and witness of Congregational churches. We gladly confess ourselves debtors to all men: we have tried to pay our universal due.

Our aim has been simplicity without superficiality, profundity without pedantry. We have thought of our deacons and laymen, of our young people and the ministers who must speak to them. So we have written tracts, not treatises. A good tract should be provocative, but not provoking: it should speak the truth in love.

We believe our first duty is to Jesus Christ and his gospel. We should deny the very basis of our church order if we spoke as ourselves the authorities, or rulers over other men's minds. In everything we have tried to acknowledge and exhibit the Lordship of Christ, for he alone has authority over mind and heart, word and deed, in the Church and in the world.

To the churches we love and serve our duty is twofold—to make clear the wealth of their inheritance, and to indicate its significance for the present day. Our Congregational Fathers wrote much about the 'Communion of Particular Churches with One Another' which is highly relevant to the planned era which we are now entering. The 'New Order'

will extinguish us unless we become properly centralized, yet unless our centralization is spiritual in its foundations and in its authority, as our fathers pleaded, we may continue to exist, but not as a true church. To the early Congregationalists the centre of their whole life—sacred and secular—was in the church meeting. There alone were they true and responsible individuals in a true and ‘democratic’ community. The church meeting made Congregational churches possible, but it also made parliamentary democracy, in the New World as in the Old, possible too. Democratic society as well as Congregational churchmanship may well depend for its continuance upon our ability to reform the church meeting in Congregationalism. The last fifty years have witnessed an immense critical and analytic activity in Biblical studies and in theological science. For more than a generation many have been unable to see the wood for the trees. But now that very analytical process has given rise to a synthetic one, and a new era has already begun in both fields, with Congregational scholars now, as then, playing important if not decisive roles. A new hope of Biblical theology and Biblical religion is opening up for ministers and laymen alike. We cannot return to Owen or Robinson or Wellhausen; but we can—and we must—go forward to continue what they have begun, believing that it is God’s will that “they without us should not be made perfect.”

So we offer these books to our churches in the hope that they will help in the perennial task of enabling the churches to speak clearly to each generation, and in the prayer that they may be used of God to enable us to go forward together.

It remains to thank Independent Press for their readiness, in a time when great difficulties beset all publishers, to encourage us and to undertake the publication of the series. It is a cause of deep satisfaction to us that we should thus be able to speak to our own churches through our own Press.

JOHN MARSH.

Mansfield College, Oxford.

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I.—THE WHITING TO THE SNAIL

Those who call the Christian churches to take an active part in the discussion of economic problems and in the fight for social justice have often felt that their position was all too like that of the whiting in the mock turtle's song. As that persuasive fish pleaded with his friend the snail, so they have had to plead with their brethren,

“Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?”

Often enough the answer has been indecisive and some have even felt that the snail's response was the right one:

“But the snail replied, ‘Too far, too far,’ and gave a look askance—

Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance.”

That such an attitude has been taken is not surprising. Both within and without the churches people have been ever ready to bring forth weighty arguments against ecclesiastical intervention in economic affairs, and have foretold all kinds of dreadful consequences that would inevitably attend such action. And yet, as the dance goes on, more and more Christian men and women are found to support the churches' participation in it. When church leaders and church assemblies try out a few of the steps, they meet with applause as well as criticism. Naturally their dancing is a little ponderous and it may be that they have not yet got the motions quite right, but there seems to be a growing sense that the churches are failing to serve their Lord rightly unless they join in and do what they can. What justification is there for that conviction?

Perhaps the chief justification is the rather obvious fact that the members of the Christian Church Militant do not

live somewhere up above the earth among the clouds of heaven, but in the world. They are workers, or employers or members of the professions; they are citizens. Whether they like it or not, as individuals they have no option but to join the dance. They earn their bread and butter within the economic system as component parts of it, they elect the governments which determine the relations of the State to it. In a sense it is fatuous to demand that the Church shall not intervene in economic affairs: it is already and inevitably there in the person of its members. For the Christian is not subject to the Lordship of Christ only in church. He is called to serve God also in the work he does and the way he does it, in the way he casts his vote at election time. In all the activities of his life and in all its relationships (political and economic as well as personal) he remains a member of the Body of Christ, more or less obedient to his Word and Spirit. Every time a Christian worker enters a factory, Christ intervenes in the affairs of that factory. And so, in a sense, the Church intervenes. Its members cannot cut themselves off from the church every Monday morning and be re-admitted to membership every Sunday morning. What they do in the spheres of economics and politics the Church does.

Consequently, what the demand that the Church shall *not* intervene in economic affairs amounts to is not that it shall really keep out (which is impossible), but that its members shall be left to do their individual best without any official or explicit guidance from the churches to which they belong. Though the economic order of which they are part may seem to tie them hand and foot and control their relations with one another and with other men, still they must not look to their official teachers, nor to the synods and councils of the churches, to advise them what to do—because that would be for the churches to interfere in what was not their business. That is what the demand for non-intervention amounts to, and for the churches to accept it would be both cruel and stupid. We are taught that to fulfil the law of Christ we must bear one

another's burdens. Well, if a man does not simply echo the cries of the newspapers and fall in with the mood of the moment, the problem of deciding how to act in the economic field without infidelity to his Lord is a very real burden. If his brethren fail to give him all possible help in bearing it, they are certainly not fulfilling the law of Christ. Perhaps it is the realization of that fact which accounts for the growing conviction that the churches must make considered and solemn pronouncements on economic subjects.

But there are still those who object, and it is very profitable to pay careful attention to their objections. The objections must not be allowed to prevent the churches from giving help where it is so urgently needed, but they do indicate bogs and pitfalls which must be avoided and so help to mark out the true road down which we might go with profit. Let us, therefore, consider the three chief arguments of those who oppose ecclesiastical activity in the social field, so that we may see the perils which must be avoided and try to find a way past them.

The first protest comes from those who maintain that as soon as the Church applies its energies to social problems it turns aside from its true task of proclaiming the eternal Gospel, and is guilty of obscuring the fact that men cannot be saved by adjustments in the social order, but only by faith in Christ the Redeemer. Social justice cannot be attained till sin is uprooted from the human soul. That can be accomplished by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, it cannot be accomplished by social reform. It is therefore the first, last and whole duty of the Church to preach the Gospel of redemption. Social reform can safely be left to come to pass as the natural fruit of the seed which the Church sows in its preaching. So says one group of critics—and we shall be foolish indeed if we dispute their view of the reality and power of sin, and of the necessity of the grace of God in Christ to uproot it. So far they are right.

But why should the pursuit of social justice be regarded as an alternative to evangelism and not as an ally of it? After

all, we have to evangelize men and women who live in society and not in a vacuum. The kind of society they live in, the kind of economic relations they have one to another, greatly influence the kind of men and women they are—and therefore the response they are likely to make to Christian preaching. The nature of their work helps to determine whether or not they will listen to the Christian Gospel. If their working environment tends to dull their consciences, cramp their minds, encourage them to make no responsible personal decisions, then the work of the preacher will be so much the harder.

Of course, no man is completely determined by his environment. Just as there is no environment which can compel a man to be a Christian, so there is no environment which can positively forbid him to be a Christian—the Holy Spirit of God can break down all barriers. But environment can help or hinder. Persecution is a good parallel. It is possible to be a Christian even when you know that you will be thrown to the lions or put in a concentration camp for it. It is even possible to make converts under those circumstances. But nevertheless the Church very properly tries to secure conditions in which it is not persecuted. It asks for liberty to live under the Christian Gospel and to proclaim it. It tries to remove all political hindrances to the Christian profession. In the economic sphere the position is just the same. It is possible to lead a Christian life under any economic order. Nevertheless, some systems form a more appropriate setting for that kind of life than others. Though a man *can* make his work a Christian vocation even when he is a beautifully round peg banged into a perfectly square hole, still a different economic arrangement would make it easier for him to live as a Christian and easier for others to become Christians. Naturally, then, the Church will try to remove all economic hindrances to the Christian profession just as it does political ones. The Report of Dr. Temple's Malvern Conference makes this point. The Church as such "can never commit itself to any proposed change in

the structure of society as being a self-sufficient means of salvation. But the Church can point to those features of our existing society which, while they can never prevent individual men and women from becoming Christian, are contrary to divine justice, and act as stumbling blocks, making it harder for men to live Christian lives."

Let this first group of critics teach us, then, to make our Christian social action consciously the ally of evangelism—an opening of the way for the Gospel to go forward. Let us avoid all social teaching and action that would obscure the gravity of sin and the necessity for salvation of faith in Christ crucified and risen. In practice that means avoiding two opposite errors: on the one hand the error of asking a mixed society to live as though it were the kingdom of God (which means ignoring the power of evil), and on the other hand the error of putting out as Christian a social message which is merely an expression of the generally held convictions and aspirations of the time (which means ignoring the witness of the Gospel).

The first error is that which we commit when we use the New Testament as a law book from which to extract ideal legislation for the ordering of the economic affairs of this world. If we did it whole-heartedly we would ask the judges in our law courts to award a cloak to everyone who had wrongfully acquired a coat and we would insist upon the banks' adapting their policy to the command, "Lend, hoping for nothing again." Of course, we don't do that but the method is no less wrong because we add to it a little judicious watering down of the teaching of the New Testament. According to that same book "the whole world lieth in the evil one." Except within the kingdom where the power of the evil one is beaten back by the greater power of God in Christ, men have no power to live as Christians are taught to live. Indeed, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." It is fatuous, therefore, to seek to get the commands of Christ immediately and completely embodied in the statute books and economic system of the nation in its present

state of unbelief. Such a policy would be a contradiction of the Church's own teaching on sin, and by reason of its romantic utopianism would only encourage men in their conviction that they can save themselves. For the sake of our witness to the Gospel such a course must be avoided, and yet there must be no watering down of New Testament ethics. And the error opposite to this one must be given an equally wide berth.

That is our second error, the error of those who, out of deference to things as they are, set aside the Bible from which they might derive an authoritative message, and fall into line with the spirit of the age, repeating the platitudes of the day and calling it Christian social teaching. Truly we must take a modest, realistic view of the folly and sin of mankind, but equally everything we say must be an explicit assertion of the claim of Christ to be the Lord of all true life. It must be rooted in the Bible (without treating that book as a legal code). It must be positively Christian and not just vaguely progressive. Otherwise, those who say that the Church's intervention in social matters obscures the Gospel of Redemption will be shown to be right. They demand of us that if we speak on economic problems we speak a message that we have learned from the study of God's Word, and which yet allows for the fact that the kingdoms of this world are not yet identical with the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. The nature of the path which runs safely between those two errors we shall have to investigate shortly. Meanwhile, a second group advances objection to ecclesiastical pronouncements on social problems and we must give them a hearing.

These are the people who have a healthy distrust of conferences, speeches, resolutions and declarations. They want action, not words. And action, they point out, must be carried through by the men and women on the spot. The solemn decisions of a Church Assembly count for nothing against the actual behaviour of the men in a factory. Let the churches content themselves with the great task of making these people good Christians and leave them, by their actions

within the economic order, to reform society in a Christian direction. The objection to carrying this argument too far has already been stated: Christian individuals need to take counsel together, to listen to the teachers of the Church, and explicitly to state their convictions if they are really going to follow Christ in the very difficult circumstances of modern economic life. The protest is mentioned here only for the very valuable warning it contains. We must take care that our discussions and resolutions really are directed to helping the man or woman on the spot to be obedient to Christ in the actual circumstances in which he or she is placed. It is not always so.

When churches turn their attention to economic issues it is very natural for them to try and formulate long-range principles which can be clearly stated and easily applied to any situation at any time by anybody—Christian or pagan. To do this they detach themselves from the actual world and delve for their time-less principles in a world of philosophical abstractions. The result is not always happy. Sometimes we are presented with impeccable principles so far removed from the lamentable reality of the world that they afford no help at all to the man who wants to know what he ought to do now, things being what they are and he being what he is. Sometimes we are offered splendid vistas of the obvious, or tremendous platitudes to which all can assent with the greatest of pleasure and so comfort themselves with the thought that they are really very good Christians. If we measure the value of the Church's teaching on economic issues by the help it affords to those within the system or responsible for the State's conduct towards it, then a good deal of it gets rather low marks. That is even true of some of the teaching intended to be most practical and realistic. Among the Free Churches of this country no pronouncement on this subject has received so much commendation as has the pamphlet "Social Justice and Economic Reconstruction," issued by the churches now constituting the British Council of Churches. At the heart of

that document is an "Economic Charter for To-day," which sets forth immediate practical objectives. It includes such demands as the following: "Every man should be permanently entitled to a position in industry for which he is fitted"; "No nation or community should have its economy imperilled by the financial or political action of any other nation." Now, that the Christian does well to pursue these ends is indisputable, but surely everyone was aware of that already. What guidance do such statements afford to the worker or the voter? He knows that unemployment should be avoided and that nations ought to treat each other with consideration. But he wants to know what difference that makes to the actual decisions he must make in the factory, in the Trade Union, at the polling booth. These objectives are too far-removed from him, too indisputable. Everyone accepts them, every conceivable political party will be willing to include them among its aims at the next General Election. The individual stands at a junction and he wants help in deciding which of the various roads he ought as a Christian to choose. He turns to the churches and what they give him is all too often the name of some distant place which might conceivably be reached after a circuitous journey along any of the roads before him.

Let us, then, take a warning from our critics. Let the thought of the churches be directed to the actual decisions which their members have to make in the economic and political arena. Let us seek the mind of Christ for his people here and now, where they are, and not be content to offer them only general principles which they will find easy to commend but difficult to apply.

The third group of critics from whom we must take a lesson is that group which chants incessantly the plausible phrase, "Leave it to the experts." Economics is a very complicated subject. The utterances of untrained ecclesiastics are sure to be nonsense. Therefore, they say, leave it to the professional economist.

Of course, this view is unacceptable. There are many technical judgments which only the trained economist is competent to pass. But surely nobody is going to suggest that decisions about economic policy can be made in the light of technical considerations alone? The economist can tell us which policies are workable and which are not. He can say what will happen if we adopt this course, and what will happen if we adopt that. But how are we to decide whether we want that thing to happen? How are we to choose between equally workable policies? If one is preferred above the rest it can only be because its consequences accord better with our idea of what human life ought to be. And the question of what human life ought to be is a subject on which the Christian Gospel cannot be ignored. This leave-it-to-the-expert criticism applied logically means the death of democracy: we shall not for long acknowledge the competence of the ordinary voter to decide upon the Beveridge scheme if we deny the competence of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Yet there is a lesson to be learned from the criticism. We have no desire to waste our time passing theological judgments on technically unworkable schemes. So we will let the economist go first. Before we make any demands we will let him tell us what avenues are open to the community in its present condition, and what would be the practical consequences of following this one or that. Incidentally, we would do well to see that some of the economists are Christians as an additional means of ensuring that *all* possible avenues are explored. All economists in deciding which possibilities deserve investigation and in passing judgment upon them are bound to be affected by their personal ideologies. If some of them are Christians, we may be more certain that the roads leading in the directions we prefer will receive proper attention and that their practicability will be estimated. But what we want from the economists, Christian or pagan, is a clear statement of the practical possibilities and consequences. After that we can use our Christian insights to solve the problem of choosing

between them. We can put aside our text-books and take up our Bibles, ready to learn therein which way Christ would have us go.

“Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the dance!”

II.—METHOD

At this point we have to consider just how the Bible is to be used if we are to get useful answers to social questions. One method has already been rejected: the kingdoms with which we are dealing are not the kingdom of God. The laws of that kingdom as set forth in the Bible and focussed in Christ are a revelation of what society should be, and serve to show up the imperfections of the societies we know, but it is no use trying to impose them upon a largely unredeemed humanity. Apart from the grace of God in Christ they are unworkable, and we must recognize that in forming our policy. At the same time, we must beware of watering down the teaching of the New Testament in order to make it more acceptable to the world. What we say to the world about its economic problems must be an expression of full-blooded Christianity, undiluted and authoritative. What, then, can be done?

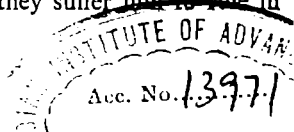
The first thing to remember is that the Bible tells us what man really is—the subject of an earlier booklet in this series. And if we know what man really is, we begin to have hold of a yard-stick for measuring proposed changes in the structure of society. Without it, we would be unable to distinguish between better and worse. According to Ephesians, which we will take here to be representative of the Biblical outlook, true humanity is made known to us in Jesus Christ, in whom God himself came to the world as perfect man. Had he not done so we would not have known what man really is meant to be, because the world has fallen away from God and is in the grip of an evil which “darkens men’s understanding” (iv 18), making them blind to the truth about themselves. But now, as the climax of a long series of preparatory acts of God, the Lord Christ has come and has made clear what God meant when he created man. He is our standard and our measure: what we

seek to attain is "unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (iv 13). Here, then, is the first contribution which the Bible makes to our understanding of social issues: it gives us (in both Testaments) a portrait of Christ which, because it shows us what men are meant to be, is our standard of measurement. We have to ask of every suggested reform whether it will help or hinder men in attaining their true nature. Strictly, nothing else matters. But the Bible also indicates how this portrait of Christ can be brought right up to date and set right alongside the life of contemporary society.

The Bible affirms that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and will be present and powerful in the world to the end of time. By union with the risen Lord, men and women of every generation, though part of a fallen creation, can be endowed with their true humanity, receiving from him that genuinely human life which without him they could not attain nor even envisage. This new kind of life is lived in the Church—in the body of Christ, the community of those gathered under his Word and Spirit. According to the Apostle Paul, we attain to that "full-grown man" of which we have already spoken as we give ourselves "unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (iv 12). In the same Epistle he refers to the church, in which Jew and Gentile are one, as the token of God's purpose for the whole creation. The heavenly beings who shouted for joy when the earth was created have since been watching the tragedy of humanity astray from the glorious path appointed for it. Now at last they see God's plan working out. They see what he has been doing all these years and how he is restoring harmony and peace to the created world. Now at last in the Church of Christ there is a spot on earth where they can see divisions healed and God's purpose for men accomplished—"to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God" (iii 10).

And so in the twentieth century we ought to be able to see the life of Christ manifested in the life of the Christian Church. There the true humanity Christ reveals is actually bestowed on twentieth century men and women. There they are knit together by the Spirit of God into a true community, a pattern of what community life is meant to be for angels and men to look upon and learn from. That is why the Church has economic consequences. Whether it wants to or not, while it is faithful to its Lord, ruled by his Word and indwelt by his Spirit, it is a sign to all the world. Just because it is a true community, it is a condemnation of all false communities. Just because men and women within it really live and have truly human relations with one another, it is a condemnation of all false conceptions of man and of all economic systems under which men have inhuman relations with one another.

The subject of the Church's sin is one that must be dealt with later, but already it forces its way in. In the purpose of God the Church is a pattern in the world of true life and true community. But in practice the nearest pub may well betray more signs of true community than the nearest church. Class distinctions, bickerings, jealousies, divisions enter in to hew asunder the limbs of the body of Christ. The power of sin seems to lay hold of men and to forbid the building of true community within the Church, just as it does outside. Nevertheless, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians iii. 17). And the Spirit of the Lord still does attend the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Gospel sacraments. Ever and anon the disruptive power of the devil is broken, and our churches become true churches. Then it is that they become true communities in which the nature and meaning of human life can be learned and experienced. Then it is that they are in a position to pass a Christian judgment upon the economic orders of their day. The churches cannot expect to extend the rule of Christ in the economic affairs of the world, except when they suffer him to rule in his own house, the Church.



To resume. When the churches want to derive from the Bible some word that will direct their approach to the economic problems of their day, the first thing for them to do is to glean from the Bible a clear and authoritative picture of what kind of creatures men are meant to be. The next thing for them to do is to let the Bible rule their own life, so that they can become true communities and places where men experience truly human life. At this stage the ethics of the New Testament have to be taken very seriously indeed. Nothing is to be watered down. Nothing is to be ignored. For the church is a community of people who *are* living in the kingdom of God (as well as in an earthly kingdom). It is a place where divine forgiveness cleanses away the faults and stains in human nature, where God's Spirit coming upon sinful men makes them into real men. Within this community—and in all our contacts with the world outside—we are called to live as true children of God. We do not ask a non-Christian community to live like that, because we know that apart from Christ sinful men are quite incapable of living as true children of God. But when God takes away our sin and gathers us into the Church over which he rules, then he gives us (without our having in any way merited it) an opportunity to live as Christless-men cannot live. As Churchmen we have to accept the highest of standards. We have to aim at that kind of life which God made known to us in Christ: the truly human life of man as a creature of God. Doubtless we shall make poor use of the limitless resources of divine grace and shall sinfully turn aside from our objective, but in the repeated act of our forgiveness and adoption by God we may both see *and taste* that corporate life which is God's eternal purpose for mankind.

All this implies a much closer, more intimate form of church life than most of us are familiar with. A congregation which undertakes no common tasks and in which the members are almost strangers to one another is obviously not displaying or experiencing true community life. Church reform must come first if we are to have any effect upon the social order (in

Congregationalism a revival of the Church Meeting is especially called for), but again this is a subject which must be postponed to the last chapter of this booklet. What we have to do now is to complete the account of how a Christian church ought to form a judgment upon any actual or proposed economic arrangement.

We have got to the point where, by God's grace, the Church has received a picture of true humanity and is experiencing something of the twentieth century form of it in its own corporate life. The next step is for the members to go out into the world. It is no use hoping that their judgment will be sound unless they do. They must go into all the fields where men labour, or organize or plan—and they must go as labourers, or organizers or planners. They must actually experience the working of industry, trade and commerce, otherwise they will never be in a position either to judge the present order or to envisage the alternatives. And as they go, they must bear in mind that picture of true humanity and cling to that experience of it which they have found in the Christian Church. When they find that the economic system leaves them free to live out that truly human way of life, they will give thanks. When they find that the system puts difficulties in the way, when they find themselves cramped, when the living out of their faith is hindered by the system under which they are working, then they must take careful note of the fact. *For this is the material for the Church's judgment of the economic order.* The Church cannot demand that industry be ordered as though the world were the kingdom of heaven. No, but when industry needlessly cramps the practical expression of the Christian faith, needlessly hinders the living of the Christian life, then the Church can protest. The Church cannot insist upon an economic order under which men and women will have to be Christians—it does not exist. No, but the Church will naturally support and work for that economic order which, of all possible economic orders, leaves men and women most free to be Christians. The Church cannot demand an economic

system in which all men will treat each other as men treat each other within the community of the Church. No, but the Church should oppose a system which positively hinders men from treating each other like that, and should support that workable alternative which gives men most opportunity to do it. It cannot acquiesce in the economic encouragement of inhumanity.

What is needed is for church members to have a clearer vision and experience of true human life, and a more sensitive appreciation of the ways in which it may be thwarted or stifled by the nature of a man's work. They would then bring back into their Church the material out of which a sound, practical, and really Christian judgment upon economic questions might be formed. With this material to hand, a church ought not to shirk discussion of actual proposals for economic reform, so that the members may guide each other as to the attitude that ought to be taken to them. Although the working of a proposed economic arrangement cannot be actually experienced before it has been carried out, still, if the technical economists have done their job and provided a fairly clear picture of how it would work, then people who have had experience of the field in which it is to be applied ought to be able to envisage what it would mean in terms of Christian living. They have experienced the checks and hindrances in the present system: they ought to be able to visualize whether these would be removed by the proposed reform, whether they would remain, or whether other checks and hindrances to the Christian life (perhaps more serious ones) would take their place.

At the present time this task of estimating the scope for Christian living which the economic order might afford is urgent. The economic order is in a state of flux. There is a genuine opportunity of choosing the form which it shall take in the future. No one proposes that the emergency arrangements for directing industry in time of war shall be made permanent in days of peace. Of course, the steps which are

taken now to deal with the problems which war presents are bound to affect the shape of things to come—and so Christians ought to take every opportunity of influencing immediate decisions in such a way as to achieve the maximum of freedom for Christian living consistent with a full contribution to the war effort. However, the great and resounding decision will have to be made later. It is for that that we should be preparing ourselves now in the hope that we shall be able to help men towards the attainment of their true stature then. The Prime Minister has announced that we can expect a General Election soon after the conclusion of the war. He has sketched a Four Year Plan which will be one of the alternatives from which we have to choose. Other plans are being sketched in other quarters. What would be the verdict if people who had experienced both life in the world of economics and life in the Church of Christ were to test those plans (or such of them as are pronounced technically workable), asking which would give men most freedom to live as men are meant to live? Which plan would give the Church most scope to make its witness and to call men to their true nature by calling them to faith in Christ?

The following pages are a guess at the answer to these questions. They are only a guess and necessarily constitute a work of imagination. This method of reaching a Christian judgment on social issues can only really be applied by a church meeting of Christians who spend their days in the work of the world. A solitary parson sitting at home by a typewriter can only use his imagination: he cannot *experience* the conflict and the tension which an economic order can impose upon the Christian life. Nevertheless, his imaginings may serve a useful purpose, if only as an illustration of how to apply the method. Let it never be forgotten that the cause of Christ can only make real headway in the economic field through the action of those who work in it, or who use their political power to influence it.

III—CONTROLLED CAPITALISM

Mr. Churchill's broadcast of 21st March, 1943, was a valuable simplification of the great economic issues. He has given us a rough but clear picture of the avenue down which he would lead us if we chose to have him as our leader in the post-war period. Although reluctant to be explicit about his policy in an unknown future, he apparently feels that to have some idea of the form of society towards which we are moving will encourage us to fight more vigorously against those who would deprive us of our liberty to live in the way we wish. The system he envisages may be called one of Controlled Capitalism. It deserves to be considered first in this survey partly because of the eminent source from which it emanates, partly because it is representative of the hopes of all those who wish to see a continuance of private enterprise without a continuance of the abuses which have arisen under it; partly because, of all the plans which have any hope of capturing popular approval, this one involves least divergence from the system we have known in the past. If the time has come to sketch this picture of the future, then the time has come for the churches to scrutinize it and to ask whether the Gospel Church, as the pattern of true community, fits better into this picture than into the others that are being painted. But first we must get some fairly clear idea of what life would be like if we took the road suggested. Here is a task for the expert economists. Let them tell us what would happen if we adopted the Four Year Plan, then we can decide whether we want such things to happen or not. However, since we are not yet in possession of any such expert portrait, we shall have to make a very amateur guess for purposes of illustration. Any one who thinks the picture painted untrue to the intentions of those who advocate Controlled Capitalism, or untrue to the way their policy would work in practice, will have to correct the picture and then apply the tests again.

The great idea, in the economic field, seems to be to build an order in which economic tyranny, whether that of individuals or of impersonal forces, will be broken by the exercise of political democracy, and yet in such a way as to leave socially desirable private enterprise unshackled by State control. Thus "the modern State will increasingly concern itself with the economic well-being of the nation, but it is all the more vital to revive at the earliest moment a widespread, healthy and vigorous private enterprise . . ." To achieve this, taxation must be brought down from its present "unprecedented and sterilising levels." Mr. Churchill is explicit on the subject: "We must expect taxation after the war to be heavier than it was before the war, but we do not intend to shape our plans or levy taxation in a way which by removing personal incentive would destroy initiative and enterprise." In some fields enterprise may need to be positively encouraged by means of State subsidy. The agriculturist in particular may expect the State to put a coin or two in the mouth of his bags of grain so as to encourage him to produce the food the nation needs and to sell it at the price the people can pay. "If the expansion and improvement of British agriculture is to be maintained—as it must be maintained—and a reasonable level of prices is to be maintained—as it must be maintained—there are likely to be substantial charges which the State must be prepared to shoulder."

From such hints as these we begin to get a picture of the world it is proposed we should live in. If you can run a business and make it pay, then go ahead. If you have goods to sell that people want (or can be persuaded to think they want), then get as much as you can for them. If you make big profits, then expand your market and make bigger profits. If you do not make profits, then sell out or close down or turn over to some other line of business. Production will be controlled by whether or not it pays to produce—the assumption being that those things will then be produced which people most want, because those are the things they will pay most for.

ready to let money be his master instead of his tool. Thus *The Times* of the day following his speech made the point that "the Prime Minister seemed throughout to speak of 'money' as a static and limiting factor and to ignore the extent to which the dynamic social and economic policy can create the new wealth out of which it is financed. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has explained again and again that the limit on our war production is set by the availability of man power and material, but not by the availability of 'money'. It will be tragic if we fail to learn the application of this fundamental truth to the policies of peace." If, then, we add the comments of the *Times* to the statements of the Prime Minister, we get the impression that a feature of the future landscape will be State intervention in the field of finance to secure stability throughout the economic order.

There is, then, to be a real attempt to control and direct the activities of the economic machine, but private, profit-making concerns are to be left to take up the options the Government leaves open. The injustices and inequalities that have been wont to result when men have been left free to compete with one another for the goods of this world are to be largely ironed out. That is to be the task of the social services which will include all-embracing schemes of social insurance (the Beveridge Plan or something like it) and an efficient health service. One injustice with an economic basis will be abolished by the provision of equal educational opportunities to all children, irrespective of the income of their parents. If all goes as it is meant to go, we shall move steadily towards an economy based squarely on a national instead of a class foundation. It will give scope to enterprise and reward to resource, while assuring justice and sufficiency to all. It will be sensibly related to the economies of other nations through the management of the exchanges and of international currency. So there we are. That is the countryside through which the Four Year Plan seeks to lead us, painted as its warmest admirers might paint it. What we have to decide now is

whether we want to be led in that direction. How much scope would there be in such an environment for truly Christian living? In what ways would truly Christian living be hindered?

It is at this point that we have, in imagination, to send out our Christians from their church communities into the various parts of the economic field and to catalogue the checks and difficulties which they experience. Perhaps we had best begin with what seems likely to be the most important economic unit in this country—the largish industrial enterprise, financed by loans and by share capital, operated as a profit-making concern by directors, managers and various grades of workers. Let us seek out the Christians in one such business and follow them around for a bit. First (since his alarm clock probably rings earliest) let us follow the Christian worker.

It is a Monday morning when we join up with him. That does not necessarily mean he has a headache (remember he is a *Christian* worker), but it does mean that his memories of the Church, its Gospel, its worship and its life, are fresh and vital. Our friend reminds himself, as he begins another week's wage earning, that he has been taught not to set his whole heart on that kind of treasure which is subject to corruption. He must lay up treasure in heaven, and he gives thanks that the security of this Four Year Plan (working well) does leave him free to look beyond the things which are seen and temporal. The perils of riches are almost identical with the perils of poverty. Both conditions breed a too exclusive concentration on earthly goods. The man who goes in dread of unemployment or of poverty through sickness is severely tempted (just as the rich man is) to lavish much anxious thought upon his little pile, to covet and scrape and to forget the purpose for which God created him as it is revealed in the Scriptures. But when the worker can rely upon Government action to deliver him from unmerited unemployment and upon Sir William Beveridge's thoughtfulness to help him in case of sudden need, then he is free to lift up his head and look round, to ask where he is and where he is going to, and what is human life all about

anyway? The Christian worker is glad of this. It makes it less of a struggle for him to take that attitude to life which he has learned in church to be the right one. It also gives him a better chance of getting his Christian viewpoint over to his fellow workers—although, of course, there are plenty of lesser matters (such as football, films and flirting) with which they can fully occupy their minds when the dread of poverty is removed.

But now we have arrived in the works. Our man has his hands on the actual material with which he works. When it leaves his hands it will be one stage further on the way from raw material to finished, usable product. Yesterday those hands held the bread and the cup of the Holy Communion. What they do to-day must not be a contradiction of what they did yesterday, any more than the lips which yesterday praised God may to-day curse men (James iii 10). That Communion was a reminder that the physical products of God's earth and man's labour can be offered to God in solemn dedication and received back from him pregnant with blessings. The effectual signs of Christ's presence were brought into being by sun and rain and toil. And as the dedication of the first-fruits in Israel of old was a symbol of the dedication of the whole harvest, so the dedication of the bread and wine is a symbol of the dedication of all the products of Christian labour and industry. This worker in a modern factory is no exception. The thing which leaves his hands must be something he can lay before the feet of Christ as a part of his homage and his service. Consequently he cannot be careless about what his work produces, what it will be used for and whether it will meet a genuine human need. He must see that his labour is directed to the fashioning of something that can without blasphemy be dedicated to the holy God.

It is perhaps at this point that the worker will experience his most serious difficulty. What he has most to fear is finding himself in the grip of irresponsible, impersonal economic forces which just sweep him along without his co-operation or

consent. A cog in a machine he must be, but he should dread being a cog in a machine driven by he knows not who, producing he knows not what. The Christian cannot allow the entire responsibility for his actions to be taken out of his hands. His actions are *his* actions and he it is who will have to answer for them before the judgment seat of Christ. The Christian must know and care whether or not his labour produces something he can properly offer to God as an act of praise. For instance, the Christian worker in a printing press is not at liberty to print truth and falsehood with equal readiness. He cannot offer to God a piece of smutty, demoralizing literature with the plea that it is technically good printing and that is all he is responsible for. Of course, he cannot go into a detailed examination of the social consequences of every job of work he undertakes, but at the same time he cannot disclaim all responsibility for the general policy of the producing unit of which he is a part. The Christian worker must surely claim some personal share in the decision as to what use is going to be made of his labour. The trouble is that he may have great difficulty in getting his claim recognized.

There are probably three directions in which he may look for an opportunity of fulfilling his Christian responsibility: he may be able to help direct his labour into channels that can be conceived sacramentally by exercise of his political power as a member of a democracy; or by exercise of his economic power as a member of a Trade Union; or by seizing the opportunity provided by the increasing readiness of managements to take counsel with workers' representatives when making their plans. Do any of these, or does a combination of them, deliver our Christian worker from the bondage of uncontrolled forces and enable him to lay a worthy offering on the Lord's altar? We must investigate them one by one.

The political power of the worker is his share in determining where and how the Government shall intervene in the industrial field. If he feels that his labour is producing something

unworthy of the Lord's altar, he can agitate to have the effort of that industrial unit compulsorily redirected. The Government can always forbid a factory to manufacture what it has been manufacturing. It can be taken over and made to produce something more socially desirable. In extreme cases—if it were making poison gas for use by gangsters, for instance—this would probably be done. But under the order we are now considering, such action is to be taken *only* in extreme cases. So long as the product is not positively anti-social in its nature, anyone may produce it who thinks he will make a profit out of producing it. That is what the encouragement of 'private enterprise' means. And it might well happen that the Christian worker would be invited to join in the production of something that would pay, was not anti-social in the extreme sense, and yet could not naturally be regarded as a worthy offering to God. For instance, it might pay better to produce non-essential luxuries for the rich rather than civilized comforts for the poor, but the Christian might not be happy to see his efforts expended in that direction. Or again, he might be asked to help (by advertizing) to work up a demand for an article that satisfied no real need. Such activities would be 'respectable' and would be profitable: consequently private enterprise would probably undertake them and the State would probably countenance them. If the Christian did not like it, he would have to seek other remedies than political action.

What, then, of economic action? Can the Trade Union help to see that labour is expended in a worthy cause and contributes to the satisfaction of the real needs of those whose needs most deserve to be met? Potentially the power of workers' unions is immense, but it is questionable whether the system we are contemplating would enable them to make a really vital contribution along these lines. While the aim of the directors of industry is to make the maximum amount of profit, the aim of the industrial unions is likely to be to secure for the workers the greatest possible share in those profits. All other objectives are likely to be subordinated to that end.

They will be hindered from contributing to the formulation of the general policy of their industries by the fact that they meet the other parties concerned most often as rivals. Even though both sides may be seeking only what is their just due, still they are 'sides'. The significance of this conflict to the Christian we shall consider later when we are watching the other 'side'. The point at the moment is simply that under this proposed system the Trades Unions are not perfect instruments for the Christian worker who wants to influence the decision as to what use shall be made of his labour: they are too much concerned with the appropriation of profits at the expense of the shareholder.

Thirdly, how about these conferences where workers and managers meet together to thrash out the work's problems? If the Christian worker agitated for the provision of these facilities and then made full use of them, might not his object be achieved? Again, we have a proposal with great potentialities and serious limitations. The trouble would probably be that such conferences would be free to make decisions about everything except the things the Christian was most worried about. They would be invited to discuss the technique of production, the hours of labour, the welfare of the workers and so on, but not general policy—not what was to be produced and for whom. That would be decided (if anyone made conscious decisions about it at all) somewhere higher up, in the regions we have yet to explore. The workers' conference would be expected to take it for granted that the works was going to produce those things which the higher powers thought it would pay best to produce. It would discuss not what, but how. Given the decision about what goods are going to be turned out, how are we going to do it most cheaply and most cheerfully? That would be the subject before the conference—and it is a subject on which the Christian worker might well have something important to say. But still it does not meet the need of the man who feels his labour is being misdirected. So long as it is directed profitably the powers that be seem con-

tent to let it go on being directed in that way. He can only make his personal decision, give up his job and seek some other place where his hands will be fashioning something which does not make a mockery of the bread and the wine they held on Sunday.

No doubt that is what the courageous and resolute Christian will do—always has done. But it betrays a weakness in the system. Unless he makes the great effort and takes the great risk of throwing up his job, the worker's efforts in a large industry are directed from some remote centre over which he has no control. He who knows himself to be answerable before God for the consequences of his actions is not allowed to share in the decision as to what those actions and their consequences shall be. The heroic Christian can overcome the difficulty, but it takes heroism. This is one of the checks or hindrances to the Christian life for which we are looking. We shall have to see whether any of the other schemes can overcome it. Schemes of profit-sharing which do not give power to the workers naturally do nothing to remove the burden.

This particular difficulty in the contemplated post-war order is, of course, one that was present in the pre-war order, and it is interesting that it was often seized upon and condemned by those who sought to pass a Christian judgment upon the economic issues of the time. For instance, there was a conference in Oxford in 1937 on "Church, Community, and State" at which all the Protestant and Orthodox Churches were represented. Its report included these words: "A . . . feature of the existing situation which is repugnant to the Christian conscience consists in the power wielded by a few individuals or groups who are not responsible to any organ of society . . . The power which these wield is qualified at many points by trade unionism and by the law. On the whole, however, the action both of trade unionism and of the State has been confined hitherto to establishing and maintaining certain minimum standards. Almost the whole field of economic strategy, which in the long run determines what stand-

ards can be maintained, escapes their control." Then in 1941 came Dr. Temple's "Malvern Conference," followed in January, 1942, by the report of a Committee of Industrialists and Theologians set up to give more detailed consideration to certain parts of the Malvern Report. In the Committee's Report we find this: "The lack of any participation by labour in the control of production is a manifest sign of the broken fellowship of our economic life. The broken fellowship must be restored in such a way that all those engaged upon a given enterprise or in any national service should be consciously aware that they are jointly responsible to the community for such service or enterprise." Four months later a report presented to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland complained that, "there is a very serious *anarchical* element in our present economic life, leading to a sense of helplessness in face of remote and uncontrolled forces determining the course of human existence."

These reports taken together represent a serious protest against any system which deprives the worker of personal responsibility for the work he does, leaving him to get on with what he is told to get on with or else get out. The Christian worker, testing his life in such a system against the kind of life he has found in Church, condemns it. He does so, not only because his personal freedom to obey Christ is limited and because he personally may have to take violent and sacrificial action if he is to produce things worthy of his Lord, but also because of the way in which it encourages irresponsibility in others. In the life of the Church every man knows himself to be answerable to God and to his neighbour for the consequences of his action. In industry men find their actions controlled from some point above and beyond them. This inevitably breeds a resigned, indifferent temper not readily responsive to the Christian Gospel. 'They' will decide this, 'they' will forbid that, 'they' will see the other thing doesn't happen; it's not for the likes of us. That kind of attitude is encouraged in men and women who are hardly in any sense

masters of their own working lives—and are therefore incapable of surrendering them to the Lordship of Christ. And the attitude can very easily be transferred from the economic field in which it is begotten to the religious field: God and grace and judgment, that is 'their' business (the religious bosses) not ours; we live as we're told, we go where we drift, we drift to . . . who cares? Let's go to the pictures.

IV. MORE ABOUT CONTROLLED CAPITALISM.

We have now to climb a little higher up that much advertised ladder at the bottom rung of which our millionaires are usually proud to have started. We must ask how Christians would fare in Mr. Churchill's world should they be placed in responsible positions as managers, directors, financiers, civil servants. First, the managers.

Management has now become a quite distinct function in the industrial order and is beginning to attain the status and consciousness of a profession. According to a recent book on the subject ("The Managerial Revolution," by James Burnham), managers are those who carry out "the technical direction and co-ordination of the processes of production." It is their job to plan the bringing together of productive powers and to supervise the co-operative effort by which they produce commodities. To the ordinary worker they are superiors and leaders. Yet they themselves are men under authority, for they are not usually the owners and policy-makers. In the factory itself they may have no superiors, but ultimately they are answerable to the directors and shareholders and strictly they are employees, however highly paid. The Christian manager seeking a Biblical parallel to his case might find it in the judges or captains whom Moses set over thousands, and hundreds, and fifties and tens. They were all under the authority of Moses, but appointed to rule independently within certain limits and over a certain area.

And if our Christian manager were to read the charge delivered to these men, he would find that in the exercise of their authority they were answerable not only to Moses but to God. "Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously . . . for the judgment is God's." (Deut. i 16f). In the life of his Church, too, he would find a similar attitude taken by those who were set in positions of authority or

charged to supervise a particular piece of church work. The Sunday School Superintendent, for instance, is appointed by the church meeting to rule in his own particular field. The church meeting (as the instrument of Christ) is in one sense his superior. It asks him to give an account of his stewardship and can dismiss him. But that does not mean that his whole duty consists in satisfying the church meeting, and that so long as he rules the school in a way acceptable to the meeting he is faultless before God. No, "the judgment is God's": the church officer must rule as the agent of Christ who is the only true King in the Church. The standard by which he must judge his conduct is nothing less than its conformity to the purpose of God.

The Christian manager will know that this applies to the whole of life and that even when the piece of work he supervises is not church work, still he must answer for it not only to those who have appointed him, but also to God whose kingdom he is called to serve. Now it seems that in the economic order we are at present imagining the manager may find that he is answerable to the two authorities on different and sometimes incompatible grounds. There is no incompatibility between the service of God and the service of men: indeed, we are clearly taught that the first involves the second. If his employers were asking him so to organize work in the factory as to produce what the community needs, in conditions which enable the workmen to remain human, then he would feel confident that in trying to follow the judgment of God he would be trying to satisfy his employers. But if he is working under private enterprise for a profit-making company, the standard set him is rather different. The assumption behind his appointment is that he is to organize things so as to maximise the income of the shareholders. No doubt they would not want him to sweat his workmen for the sake of their dividends, but still considerations of public good must always be offset by considerations of profit. The private owner is free to meet moral obligations out of his own pocket,

but the manager is dealing with other people's money. The fundamental assumption of the system of which he is a part is that he will do his best to multiply that money. Suppose he were offered necessary raw materials or machinery at a price lower than he had been accustomed to pay, but by a firm which aimed to undercut and eliminate his old suppliers. In such a case the judgment of God might go one way, while the judgment of profitability went another. What is the manager to do? No doubt the true Christian would emerge from such a conflict unscathed spiritually, but there is here a real obstacle which the economic order puts in the way of Christian living. The temptation is to ignore the judgment of God and to make all decisions by simply working out the figures. Basil Smallpiece (from one of whose supplements to the *Christian News-Letter* much of this section is taken) quotes some one who describes the profit rules as "the neatest device yet invented for avoiding responsibility." "If we so choose," says Mr. Smallpiece, "we do not have to worry whether our proposed action is right or wrong in itself, or whether it will hurt anyone else. All we have to do is to work out the figures—and if it seems likely to pay, we do it; if not, we don't. As to the consequences for other people, modern life is so complicated that they are generally out of sight, and, therefore, out of mind." Clearly, then, the profit test puts a real strain on the Christian manager's resolution to be a responsible servant of his Lord. And let us not cheerfully consent to the continuance of such an obstacle on the ground that it tries and strengthens faith. "Hindrances have to come, but—woe to the man by whom the hindrance does come!" (Matt. xviii 7—Moffatt's translation).

Besides, we must consider the effect on those multitudes of our fellow men who will take the profit-rule for granted and never experience the conflict between it and the judgment of God. It will surely encourage them to avoid all serious moral decisions and will confirm a totally false set of values, both of which things will incline them to ignore the Christian Gospel.

Listen again to the Report of the Oxford Conference: "When the necessary work of society is so organized as to make the acquisition of wealth the chief criterion of success it encourages a feverish scramble for money, and a false respect for the victors in the struggle, which is as fatal in its moral consequences as any other form of idolatry. In so far as the pursuit of monetary gain becomes the dominant factor in the lives of men, the quality of society undergoes a subtle disintegration."

Now let us have a look at those directors to whom the manager is answerable, and on to whose shoulders he can (if he likes) shift the responsibility for his decisions simply by saying that they have appointed him to maximise profits and that he is not allowed to consider anything else. Probably it will not be difficult to find a sincere Christian among them, one who believes the same Gospel as the Christian worker and the Christian manager and who may even belong to the same church. If he believes that Gospel, he will know that his belief should find expression in love—which means the seeking of others' good without considering their attitude to him, whether it be friendly or hostile. If he belongs to the same church as, say, the worker, he will know that they two are capable of perfect fellowship in the sacraments of the Gospel. If he belongs to a church whose work is directed by a really live church meeting which seeks to interpret the mind of Christ, then he will know that the right thing to do with conflicting convictions or interests is not to submerge them in a superficial unity nor to harden them into parties or cliques, but to express them, face them and overcome them. John Huxtable has shown in an earlier number in this series how conflicts in a church meeting can be resolved not by compromising between the two views, but by reaching beyond them to a third view which embraces the truth in both the antagonistic ones. In this way conflict can be made to bear fruit instead of breeding disruption.

Now all these things have implications for the director's

work. As a Christian he is called to express unconditional love in all his doings, but he, too, is handicapped by the fact that God and the community are not the only powers to whom he must render account. He is the representative of those who have a financial interest in the business—the shareholders, bankers, and all others who have invested money in his concern. He, with his fellow directors, is responsible for the formulation of policy, but it is assumed that the aim will be to make the business as stable and as profitable financially as is possible without transgressing the law. Again we can see that there may well be a conflict between this demand, and the demand of Christian love. Love compels the director to seek the good of the whole community. If his firm discovers a new technique or a new machine capable of increasing production, it would be good for the community that everyone should be told about it at once so as to increase the productive power of all engaged in this work. But that would bring down the price of the product. It would be much better for the shareholders of the lucky company if all other companies went on producing in the old way at a high cost (which would keep prices up), while the one firm reduced its costs and either pocketed the difference or sold at a lower price and tried to capture the whole market—after which prices could be raised again. Or in different circumstances it might be profitable to buy the patent of a new invention with the deliberate intention of preventing its being adopted elsewhere, since that might render the company's present equipment obsolete. The community might benefit by the use of the new discovery, but the company would not. What does the Christian director do then?

Or what would he do if his Board were offered some way of attaining a disguised monopoly that would benefit the shareholders at the expense of the consumers of the product? All manufacturers of his product might be invited to agree to a fixed price or a limited output—either of which might be a way of increasing profits through raising prices above what the

consumer would otherwise have to pay. And there are other ways of attaining a virtual monopoly without coming out into the open as a monopoly and so inviting the State ownership which Mr. Churchill recommends in such cases. One way, funnily enough, is to get the industry "nationalized." Not properly nationalized, of course, which would mean that the nation took over the *ownership* of the concerns, but officially nationalized in some way that left the shareholders still consuming the profits. In London, for instance, the State enforces a monopoly in transport, forbidding wicked "pirate" buses to compete with the virtuous vehicles of the L.P.T.B. It is, in some respects, a kind of nationalizing of London transport, but the profits of the undertaking are still distributed among private shareholders. Now, if something of the sort could be achieved by the Directors of other industries, it might be a very profitable way of avoiding too strenuous (and price-lowering) a competition for post-war markets.

In all these cases the Christian director would be in a very unenviable position. To stay out of a price-limiting agreement, or a production-restricting agreement may be the prelude to a boycott and to the ruin of shareholders, managers, workers and all. Not to seek the maximising of profits is to disturb the tacit assumption on which the whole economic order is built. Yet it does, in some circumstances, seem to involve a real contradiction of the Christian calling to seek the good of all. It is rather like that making the ephah small and the shekel great of which the prophet Amos took such a poor view.

And there is another source of worry for the conscientious Christian director. He learned in church meeting that true community is built by facing conflicts of interest and opinion, by expressing them and resolving them. But in the world of competitive private enterprise his responsibility to financial interests seems all the time to be compelling him to widen the rifts and to encase the opposing forces within definite warring parties. He may try to maintain friendly personal relations with the leaders of rival firms, but it is not easy to meet them

fully and frankly as human beings when you have to conceal your processes from them in the hope of stealing their markets. And what is difficult between the director and his competitors, is even more difficult between the director and his workers. That worker with whom the director shared the communion of the body of Christ may sometimes, together with his fellow workers, send representatives to meet the Board of Directors. Inevitably they meet as antagonists. It is obvious that the shareholders benefit financially (and the directors only represent their *financial* interests—their moral concerns, if any, are unexpressed) if the workers are paid the lowest possible wage consistent with good service. On the other hand, the workers benefit financially (and in their case, too, it is only financial interests which are represented—they are not consulted about general policy) if they can obtain higher wages than that profitable minimum. Consequently, the two parties are bound to be in conflict. And it is not a fruitful conflict, not one that can be resolved in unity. When agreement is reached there is not the harmony of opponents reconciled, but only the tense equilibrium of a tug-of-war in which the two teams are of equal strength. All the time a gulf is being made between the Christian directors and their Christian workers. When working life constitutes a large proportion of a man's whole experience, it is difficult for him to establish genuine Christian fellowship with those who in the sphere of work stand over against him as members of a rival group.

All the time we must remember that the grace of Christ is sufficient for his people in these difficult circumstances, but still it is a strain upon their faith, and it may well make others who are *not* Christians tougher in their resistance to the Gospel. The man who experiences conflict and division in the whole of his working life is not an easy mark for the Gospel which speaks of unconditional love and of harmonious community.

And now it looks as though we had better have a very straight talk with these 'financial interests'—the shareholders

and bankers and suchlike. They seem to be the cause of all the trouble. It is because of their expectation of profit that the people actually inside the industry are hindered from simply doing what seems right. Bring out the villains that we may arraign them! Who is first on the Shareholders' List? Why, it's the Rev. Simple Simon. And the next? Old Mother Hubbard—a widow. They don't look at all villainous. Still, we must not be deceived by appearances. Ask them why they have not taken steps to see that the industry in which they have invested is directed to the public good in preference to their personal profit. They look a little dazed. "But," they say (very truly), "we know nothing about industry. We would not know what *was* for the public good and what was not. We have never been to a shareholders' meeting and would certainly produce chaos if we tried to fix the company's policy." We cannot deny this. It is useless trying to fix the blame on these people. We must try the bank which recently made a large loan to the company we are investigating.

Here we find the manager (a Deacon in the Congregational Church near his home) quite unperturbed. The loan was made in the usual way according to the rules laid down for him. Adequate security was obtained and the usual terms agreed to. It was not the policy of the bank to interfere in the running of the concerns to which they made loans. They asked for security and that was all. Wouldn't think of dictating to their clients. Not their business. Again, we cannot deny it.

But are there no villains in the piece? No brigands of finance juggling with shares and sucking the blood of the proletariat? Well, there may be some somewhere. But the important point is that it would make hardly any difference to the people whose difficulties we have witnessed if there were no such tricksters. It is the system which sets them their problems, not the personalities operating it. It is a system in which no one is conscious of being finally responsible for the policy of the largest and most important industrial units. The worker can shift his responsibility to the managers. The

managers can shift it to the directors. The directors can shift it to the shareholders. The shareholders don't know they have got it and are totally incapable of meeting it. The baby is passed on and on until finally spirited away. In the end the whole concern is found to be ruled not by human considerations at all, but by the impersonal principle of profitability. On the fringe of things stand the civil servants, set up (if they take a Christian view of their function) to give praise to them that do good and to be a terror to the evil. They are answerable only to God and the community, but are forbidden to interfere with industry except when it oversteps certain wide boundaries—for instance, by advertizing the fact that it is now a monopoly. If they dare to trespass on the fields of private enterprise, they are treated as interfering ignoramuses who know nothing of the stern demands of real enterprise. They are driven to mummify themselves in red tape.

Now, our analysis, if it is true, has exposed certain difficulties which the Christian will experience in any system which retains the profit test as that which determines what shall be done and how. It is therefore a criticism of Mr. Churchill's new order, and of any other which clings to that element—any, for instance, which sought reform simply by putting more spending power in the pockets of consumers. But we must not be unduly shocked just because Christian living is going to be hard if this system is adopted. It is bound to be hard in any system that will work in this evil world. We shall only reject the Four Year Plan if we find some other workable plan that would leave Christian people more free to serve the Lord of all.

V—MORAL SOCIALISM

If you have been told of a certain clergyman that he is a "High Anglican," you are often supposed to know almost exactly what his doctrinal and ecclesiastical views will be. In fact, however, there are a dozen different positions he might occupy and still be called by that name. There is a similar ambiguity about the term "Socialist." It is often supposed that all who take that title are pretty much of one mind, but in fact they often hold violently antagonistic views—while also, of course, agreeing about certain features of the society they wish to see in the future. We have now to try and put Socialism to the test and to decide upon the desirability of its schemes from the Christian point of view. In such a brief treatment we must inevitably do some lumping together of Socialist parties which are really quite distinct from one another, but not even for the most superficial examination can we lump together *all* Socialist plans. There is one great division we shall have to recognize, and that is the division between what we shall call "Moral Socialism" and what we shall call "Class Socialism." The Moral Socialists (they do not, of course, call themselves by that name) might be regarded as the descendants of Robert Owen and other 'Utopian Socialists'. They hope to see Socialist methods of production introduced without any revolutionary overthrow of our present Parliamentary method of Government, and nowadays most of them look to the present managers of industry and commerce as the people most likely to introduce and to operate the new system. They may be called 'Moral' Socialists because they usually seek to commend their proposals by stressing their just and humane character. Many of these groups regard the church documents we have already quoted as standard text-books.

On the other hand, Class Socialists (or 'Scientific Socialists' as they like to call themselves) fix all their hopes upon the working class, maintaining that the experiences of that class under Capitalism will drive it to and prepare it for its supreme and inescapable task—that of terminating the class struggle by the introduction of socialism. Little is expected from the managers and the 'trained minds' of the technicians now in charge of industry, because, says John Strachey, "the greater number of these trained minds have been so trained that they do not desire, and indeed cannot even imagine, any systems of society other than capitalism. They have . . . a trained incapacity for the job which they are asked to do. It is only the un-mistrained workers who can in a majority desire, or even conceive of, the total replacement of the present economic and social system by another." Socialists of this school do not (in theory, at any rate) appeal to moral principles of justice and humanity. Men's morals are too much affected by their economic circumstances for that. Instead the appeal is to the desire of the exploited for liberation and to the ultimate inevitability of Socialism, with the consequent advisability of throwing all one's weight into the fight for it now so as to avoid generations of strain and suffering.

But now that we have roughly distinguished two Socialist schools, we must begin to scrutinize the first of them. Our first task, remember, is to get into our minds a picture of the path along which that school would lead us. Since we cannot consider each of the various parties within it, our best course will be to take a representative from among them and examine that. We will take the Common Wealth Party as our sample because it is active just now, because it is becoming increasingly popular and because it has been good enough to provide us with a fairly clear picture of the order of affairs it wishes to introduce—notably in its pamphlets and in Sir Richard Acland's book, "What it Will be Like."

Common Wealth declares that its basic principle is expressed in the dictum: "What is morally wrong *cannot* be politically

or economically right." Its members frequently speak of the necessity of a spiritual revival if the new society is to work. They also regard the economic proposals they make as expressive of an awakening concern for spiritual values (implicitly denied in the present system) and as able, if adopted, to liberate new spiritual energies. There is, however, no very clear explanation of the relation between their moral principles and their concrete proposals.

Chief among these proposals is that of withdrawing the great industrial and financial resources of the country from the sphere of private ownership and control, and transferring them to the sphere over which the community rules directly. Through Parliament the whole people will then consciously plan the operations of its economic system, instead of allowing it to be ruled by the test of profitability. Special steps are to be taken, however, to prevent the establishment of a bureaucracy in which full detailed orders would be handed out from the top and slavishly obeyed by those below in the famous "Theirs-not-to-reason-why" frame of mind.

For one thing, the community plan is not to cover the whole economic field. The owners of all large enterprises are to be bought out (i.e., assured of an income not so much less than that to which they have been accustomed as to involve a drastic reduction in their standard of living) and the production of all essential commodities is to be controlled by the Government, but *small-scale* private enterprise is to be encouraged to continue (and if necessary to commence) in order to fill up the gaps which will be left.

Even where public ownership does prevail, there is to be the highest possible degree of decentralized control so as to leave plenty of scope for personal initiative (as distinct from private enterprise). According to Sir Richard Acland the country's chief industries would be operated in something like the way now to be described. The supreme authority must first be informed of the amount of labour and materials available, and of the productive capacity of those resources when applied

in various directions. The information would come ultimately from the people actually engaged in the work of production and would be passed up through the channels of which we are shortly to hear. On that basis the Cabinet and Parliament will have to answer three questions. "The first question is, What part of our resources shall we devote to the production of goods for immediate consumption, and what part shall we devote to the production of more permanent assets? The second question is, What particular goods shall be produced by that part of our resources which we decide to devote to goods for immediate consumption? The third question is, Which of the desirable permanent assets shall we produce first, and which can be postponed till later?"

When these questions have been answered in whatever way seems to conform most nearly to the will of the people, then the decision will be communicated to an important body of well-qualified people known as 'The Economic General Staff'. It will be the duty of that body to translate the general plan into terms of specific orders to the relevant industries. The boot-manufacturers must be told how much footwear will be wanted in the coming period (and whether new factories can be erected or old ones expanded in order to produce it), the brick-makers must be told how many bricks will be wanted to fulfil the Government's building programme, the makers of tractors must be told how many tractors will be required to maintain the desired level of agricultural production, and so on.

Of course, the General Staff is bound to miscalculate sometimes. But it is hoped that it will not miscalculate requirements so seriously that its over-estimates cannot be offset by building up stocks nor its under-estimates made good by drawing upon them. After all, such a body ought to be able to make as good an estimate of what is required from each industry as is made when each producer in that industry makes his own guess at how much of the product he himself can sell—which is the present method. If the trouble turns out

to be that estimates of the resources required to carry out the official programme have been too pessimistic, and if as a consequence the various industries do not take in all the available labour, then projects which it had once seemed necessary to postpone could at once be put into operation. Unemployment (except that of men who had finished one job and were being prepared for another) would never be allowed to continue, for it would always pay the community to have men producing something rather than nothing. It does not always pay a particular firm to employ the unemployed, because in certain circumstances a man whose wage is £4 a week might produce only £3 worth of goods. Private enterprise would never look at such a proposition, and consequently the community as a whole loses £3 worth of goods. And in the end it still has to support the man and his family. Under common ownership it would pay to let him earn part of his keep rather than none of it, and he would be set to work producing his £3 worth of goods until an opening could be found for him to expend his energies more productively. So (it is maintained) the miscalculations that would be revealed, and the adjustments that would have to be made in the working out of the economic plan would never involve the catastrophic upheavals to which the capitalist system has accustomed us.

But we were tracing the progress of this economic plan from its inception to its execution, and we had got to the point where the General Staff will hand out provisional orders to the various industries. It will *not* hand out instructions as to how the orders are to be fulfilled. That is for the industry itself to decide. So, as the next step, the orders will be considered in each industry by a Council of that industry. On the Council there will be representatives of all sections of the industry and of industries allied to it. Together they will consider how the industry can most efficiently do what it is asked to do. If it is to be expanded, then they will have to decide which factories it will be best to enlarge or (in consultation with the

General Staff) where new ones had best be built. If output is to be reduced, then they will have to consider which factories to close and where to draw in. At all times they will have to allocate the provisional orders they have received among the producing units they represent. And so we arrive at the individual factory.

Here Common Wealth intends that the provisional allocation which has been received shall be made known to and discussed by the whole factory staff. A small executive will actually run the factory when it is in action and the members of that body will be the people best qualified to judge of the appropriateness of the order that has been allocated to them, but nevertheless the whole body of factory workers is to be consulted about all matters of general policy, and the whole body is to be invited to discuss whether the output asked for is what ought to be expected from them, or whether something less or something more would be nearer the mark. When a decision has been made, it will be communicated to the bodies higher up, necessary adjustments in the General Staff's plan made, and the provisional orders replaced by definite orders. These will become the targets at which the factories must aim in the coming period. How they will reach it is for themselves to determine.

That point is important. Socialism, we must learn, does not mean that factories will be run by civil servants sent down from Whitehall knowing everything about forms in triplicate and nothing at all about production problems. They will be run, if possible, by the expert technicians and managers who run them now—though paid by and answerable to the community and its representatives instead of the shareholders and their representatives. In any case they will certainly be run by people whose industrial experience qualifies them for the job. These experts will receive their orders from the council of the industry (as now they do from the directors). They will consult with the council about methods (as now the individual units of an amalgamated group of factories

seek the direction of the Board which runs the whole amalgamation). But ultimately they will be free to choose which of the alternative methods is to be followed. Their factory balance sheet, together with other information, will show whether or not they have made wise decisions. On that will depend whether the scope of their authority and influence is to be increased or diminished.

In "What It Will Be Like" we are even told that those responsible for the running of an industrial unit will be free to make capital investments at their own discretion. The objections to that procedure are met in this way: "If each factory executive is free either to buy or not to buy a crane, I quite admit that the Economic General Staff will have to estimate the number of cranes which its total programme will require, and that this estimate may prove faulty. This may lead to a certain amount of disequilibrium. But let the alternative be squarely faced. If each factory executive is not free to go out and buy a crane, then the only alternative is that they shall 'indent' for a crane as we do in the army to-day, and some branch of the Economic General Staff will have to decide whether they shall have it. This way, it seems to me, leads to the very stagnation and bureaucracy which the opponents of Common Ownership fear. I believe our resources, when fully employed, are so great, and our power of making a general estimate of the number of cranes that are required will be found on the whole so adequate, that we can well tolerate a certain amount of the alleged 'chaos' in order to be quite sure that each executive can really run its own factory in its own way."

Under the executive in each factory there will come, of course, the ordinary workers of all grades. Every effort will be made to secure their contribution to the formation of policy and to apply the inventions and improvements which the man doing the job can often see to be possible and desirable. But in the ordinary running of the factory the workers will get orders and have to obey them. The appointment of foremen

and other leaders will be guided by the vote of the workers from whose midst they are to be drawn. Workers will be free to accept employment where they choose, each individual factory being responsible for the recruitment of the man-power it needs. The local branches of the Ministry of Man-Power will be in touch with all employing units, and when it is found that there are too many applicants in one direction and too few in another (so that the community's plan looks like being frustrated), then extra publicity will be given to the needs of the industries short of labour. If this is not enough, attempts will be made to improve conditions in the unpopular fields, and as a last resort slightly higher wages might be offered. For the ultimate good of the community there will always be large numbers of men and women being trained for skilled work, and so migration from one occupation to another will be easier than in the past.

One other question must be answered before leaving this slight sketch of Common Wealth's new order. What about incentives? What will incite men and women to give of their best when 'getting on' no longer implies the possibility of collecting a large fortune? In answer we are told that there will be many incentives. First, it is hoped that when every extra effort redounds directly to the good of the community rather than to the good of one's employer, then most people will be ready to make that effort for the community's sake. A far more enlightened and vigorous patriotism is hoped for when we can all feel that Britain is really 'our Britain'. The feats of the armies and peoples of the U.S.S.R. are pointed to as evidence of the devotion and energy we may hope to see. But we are not to depend only upon altruism. Other motives are to be so harnessed as to get from people what the community needs from them, even when they are not willing to give it simply for the community's sake. After all, it is pointed out, not many people nowadays can really expect to collect a fortune. If they compete for promotion, it is not only because of the money involved but also because they

desire to see themselves in positions of greater authority and responsibility. They want more scope for the exercise of their ability. Now, that motive can obviously continue to operate under Common Ownership. Indeed, if promotion is to be entirely on the ground of recognized merit and no longer influenced by the question of whether a man went to the same school as his boss's son, then we might hope to see the desire for advancement inflamed rather than snuffed out. Even the desire for monetary gain, though it is not to be encouraged, is to play its part. The man who works hard will be advanced above the man who does not, and his promotion will secure for him a slightly larger income. It is not intended that it should be very much larger, or we shall be in danger of a scramble for the 'plums' in which more generous considerations would be forgotten and the whole new order endangered. The persistent slacker will be the object of social censure, and if necessary the subject of psychological treatment.

Many other parts of the proposals would have to be considered in order to form a complete picture of the Socialism we are now considering, but there is no space for it—and in any case we are illustrating a method rather than applying it thoroughly. Proposals in regard to agriculture and the freedom of the press are especially important, but we must pass them by if our theological tests are to be applied at all. What we have to do, remember, is to envisage the experience of Christians going out from the community of the Church into the secular community Common Wealth would build, and then to ask whether they would find it an environment which harmonized with their church experience or whether it put obstacles in the way of living the kind of life and establishing the kind of relationships which they found among the redeemed of Christ. What must we say about that?

The first thing that must be said is that in many ways the Christian churchman would find himself quite at home in such a system as this. For one thing he would rejoice to know that the economic machine was now being controlled by

people who knew that they were controlling it. In carrying out the Church's works of mercy he will often have come into contact with those who have been oppressed and misused by the economic system. The Gospel will have taught him to do everything in his power for their relief. In the past he has been hampered by the fact that a system which is driven by irresponsible forces and guided by the application of impersonal tests cannot be appealed to. There is no one who regards himself as responsible. But under such a system as Common Wealth envisages (if it could be worked—which is our assumption throughout), that would no longer be the case. The system is brought under the conscious control of particular bodies and individuals. There would always be someone who knew himself to be answerable for what was done in a particular field, and who could be urged to remedy the injustice which had been uncovered. Such a responsible exercise of power would make the civil community bear a stronger resemblance to the redeemed community of the Church than it now does. The Church recognizes that all its activities must be ruled by its own decisions, not controlled by external forces which do not acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. Congregationalism even makes each individual congregation finally responsible for all that it does. The decisions of church councils and church officers have to be examined and accepted or rejected according as they seem to accord or not to accord with God's truth. Thus we are made to realize that we are responsible in God's sight for what we do and cannot shuffle off our responsibility on to other shoulders. The system we are now trying to picture would encourage men to realize that in the economic field, too, they must answer for the use or misuse of the talent committed to their charge. They would no longer be in the grip of forces which deprived them of personal responsibility.

If we picture to ourselves the lot of the Christian worker under Common Wealth, we can again see points that might be made in its favour. He will have learned in church that he must serve God with his hands as well as with his heart. He

will have learned it from the exposition of the Scriptures, from the place of material objects in the sacrament of Communion, and from the fact that the church meeting in its attempt to fulfil the will of its Lord has to grapple with all kinds of practical business affairs. And now the supporters of Common Wealth propose to build a system that would leave him *free* to use his hands in the service of God. If he is convinced that his present employment does not permit him to do that, then he is to be at liberty to leave it without fear of unemployment. It cannot be guaranteed that he would get exactly the job he wanted, but the provision of training facilities and the full use of the nation's resources would make it easier by far for him to pass from one field to another, and much more likely that he would be absorbed in the field to which he thinks himself called. Moreover, when he is in a job, the use of his powers would not be determined by forces over which he had no control. As a citizen he would have a share in deciding what things the community was going to produce, and as a worker he would have a share in deciding the policy of his particular undertaking. The factory conferences would be occasions when people planned together the work which they were to carry out together, and the Congregational churchman would find the model of them in his church meetings. In those, incidentally, he would already have learned something of the art of making responsible corporate decisions, so he ought to be able to play a constructive and a leading part in their industrial parallel and by that means advance the policies most in accord with his Christian faith.

Higher up the ladder men and women in positions of authority might hope to be delivered by Common Wealth from some of the tensions and conflicts in which they are at present involved. When industrial leaders are responsible to God, the community and the shareholders, there are many occasions of divided allegiance—to benefit the shareholders, for instance, may mean to defraud the community and to sin against God. But if they were responsible only to God and

the community, then (although the possibility of tension would not be done away) the occasions of conflicting loyalty would surely be reduced both in number and complexity.

As a final point in favour of this proposed new order, we might note that its supporters expect the whole temper of it to be more satisfying to the Christian than the temper of present-day Britain. This is a system which is designed to stir up in men a desire to render service rather than a desire to make gain—although its introduction does not have to be delayed until the desire for gain has been uprooted. Instead of the pursuit of monetary gain being the dominant factor in men's lives, the whole organization of society would tend to evoke from men a desire to do their best for the community. And naturally the Christian would be happy indeed to see an economic system which acknowledged and encouraged a standard of values so much nearer to that set forth in the Bible and acknowledged in the Church.

But no change in the structure of our society is going to bring heaven down to earth, and we must now look for the defects. We must try to imagine how the sin of man would express itself under Common Wealth and ask whether its power would be sufficiently curbed by such a system, before we decide that this, rather than any of the alternatives, is the proposal for a Christian to support. What is really needed is for the people who work in and know the industrial field to try and envisage what spiritual difficulties and temptations would arise if their own industries were run on the lines suggested. If all the members of a church were to do this and to express their convictions at a church meeting, then that Church would be in a position to make a really informed and Christian judgment on the issue. Without that, not much can be done. Yet even an outsider can guess at some of the tensions and conflicts that would arise. Picture again, as we did before, a typical industrial unit, and see what will happen to those who work in it.

The ordinary manual worker, if he is a Christian, will turn

up in the morning anxious to give of his best to the service of God and the community. It is not to be expected that all his fellows will arrive in the same mood. What about the slackers—the people who have no great desire for promotion, no social conscience, are not greatly distressed by being looked upon by the ‘good’ workers as defrauders of the community, and are no longer driven by the threat of painful unemployment? The presence of such men and women in the team will inevitably limit the Christian’s contribution and will seem constantly to frustrate the effort he feels called to make. And when promotions are made, he will find that the numerous elections and the smallness of the constituencies involved have provided new scope for bribery, for the working off of personal grudges and for furthering the interests of exclusive cliques. Of course, the Christian may decide that it is better to put up with slackers than to drive them by the threat of dire poverty (which is not so very effective a goad anyway), and that it is better to suffer under the occasional misuse of economic democracy than to continue under economic dictatorship, but all the same these things will be felt to be obstacles and restrictions denying him the scope he wants in which to render full service.

Nor will conditions be perfect for the management. Christian managers will rejoice in the large measure of local responsibility that is given them. That the man on the spot should be responsible for what is done on the spot and not the mechanical instrument of a distant authority will appeal to them as harmonious with the principles governing the appointment of officers in true churches—particularly in Congregational Churches. But still there *is* a distant authority which makes a plan for the whole community and it is part of that plan which the management has to carry out. If the managers exercise their own discretion over a wide field, the community’s plans may be frustrated. If they submit themselves to the plan, what has become of their independence? Managements who have had their output allocated, but are left to find their

own labour and materials and to work out their own policies, may feel that they are serving a customer who declines to make it clear beforehand what he wants but may grumble when the job has been done.

For instance, suppose there was a Christian on the management which was debating whether to buy the new crane of which Acland was speaking. He will realize that an official decision has already been made as to how much of the community's resources are to be devoted to the production of permanent assets and how much to the production of goods for immediate consumption. But that decision is really only the sum of a lot of decisions about whether to have a new crane (or something else that will increase the value and efficiency of capital equipment, but will draw labour and materials away from the job of producing things for immediate use). And now here they are making part of that decision as though they were at liberty to do just as they liked. If they do use their freedom in that independent way, then the planners will have to learn that what they must really do is not so much *plan* the allocation of resources as make guesses at what a host of independent managements are going to decide. But if, on the other hand, the Christian's conscience compels him to try and mould the local decision so that it will really fit in with the national plan, he is still not going to find it easy to decide whether that means yes or no in relation to this particular crane. He will know, of course, what output is required at once from his factory, and if the crane is absolutely necessary in order to achieve that output, then he will confidently approve of its purchase. But the crane will last more than one year, and probably it will only be worth getting if output is to be kept at a high level for some time. In the immediate period production might actually be higher if time and energy were *not* devoted to installing new equipment. And the same applies to the making of repairs. What the manager really wants to know is whether capital is to be devoted with a view to maintaining a high output from his present machinery for

a long time, or whether capital expenditure is to be cut down in favour of a high output at once (which would certainly be the more desirable thing if there were new methods to be introduced as soon as old equipment was worn out). One manager may go all out for immediate results, and then be reprimanded for having failed to maintain the value of his equipment. Another may devote his resources to improving the working efficiency of his factory, and then be told that it was immediate production that was wanted, not increased capitalization. And the Christian manager who wants to fit in with the plan will not know which course is desired. He may know how much new capital equipment his industry as a whole is expected to take in, but that will not tell him whether a new crane would be justified in his particular case because he will not know the needs and demands of the other independent managements involved. It is as if the £500,000 of the Congregational Reconstruction Fund were to be spent by a number of local bodies, and each one was left to decide for itself the amount of its expenditure. None of them would know what to do in order to make the total come to just £500,000.

But supposing that to escape this burden of uncertainty and lack of synchronization between national decisions and local decisions the scheme of things is altered. Suppose each management is told either to maintain the present value and efficiency of its equipment, or to increase it, or to allow it to diminish. In that case there will be a great reduction of that desirable local independence—that responsibility of the man on the spot for what is done on the spot.

Similar difficulties would probably afflict the manager in the recruitment of his labour staff. He might find himself competing with neighbouring employers for the available labour (which he may not attract by raising wages) by offering swimming baths, dance halls and all kinds of paraphernalia which he really regards as unnecessary and ridiculous but which have the desired magnetic effect upon young workers.

The use of such things as bait for catching workers will be especially obnoxious to the Christian because he does not want the desire for comfort and amusement to dominate the decisions which people make. It would only serve to estrange them still further from the Church's idea of men being 'called' to various tasks. And yet if the difficulty were avoided by allocating labour along with the allocation of output, then what would have become of the worker's freedom to choose his own job?

Christians with the requisite experience could probably envisage similar practical (yet religious) difficulties that would get in the way of farmers, journalists, civil servants and so on. We certainly ought to try and bring them to light and weigh their importance before making our final decision. But the fundamental question we must answer before putting our weight behind Common Wealth (or one of the bodies with a similar policy) is, Dare we place this system in the hands of sinful men? Of course, sin can pervert any system, but we seek one which will check the ill effects of its working rather than one which will enable sinful acts to have ever more resounding consequences. These proposals seem to trust a great deal to the willingness of local units to conform their actions to that which will be of most benefit to the whole community. Should they turn out to be unready to do that, then the central authority must over-rule them and take steps to replace the individuals responsible. Thus there appear at the centre points from which great power is wielded, and these we may be sure would be eyed by the most greedy and domineering members of the community as well as by the most public-spirited. Economic power, though irresponsible, is still somewhat diffused. We dare not replace it by concentrated political power unless we believe that there is sufficient wisdom and energy in the land to exclude from power those who would use it oppressively or in any other way that might serve to turn men aside from the truly human life made known to us in Jesus Christ.

VI—CLASS SOCIALISM—

A first acquaintance with the literature of Marxism gives the impression that if these writers are correct in their economic judgments, then we need not waste time discussing whether this system or that is desirable from the Christian point of view. Questions of preference do not enter in because, desirable or not, Socialism is physically inescapable. It must come. Now, that seems to rule out all religious judgments and to reduce the whole thing to an issue which can only be decided by competent economists. But when we look more closely at this assertion of the inevitability of Socialism, we find that there are two provisos attached to it—not always explicitly. Socialism is inevitable *in the long run*, and *human nature being what it is* (i.e., what Capitalism has made it). In that case Christians must still apply their religious tests, because, even if the Marxists are right in their analysis, we still have to decide whether to use our power to hasten the coming of Socialism, or to delay it as long as possible in the hope that some new development (such as a great religious revival) will open up new possibilities to mankind. Back we go, then, to our old method: first picture the life of society as Marxian Socialists would build it, then test that against the life of the church where God's idea of a true society is revealed in concrete form.

For the picture-painting part of the process it will again be best to take a single representative out of the group under discussion, rather than attempt to generalize about them all. This time our sample consists of Mr. John Strachey's book, "The Theory and Practice of Socialism," from which a quotation has already been made. From time to time we may look over Mr. Strachey's shoulder at Karl Marx who stands behind him, or at Soviet Russia which lies spread out as a map before

him, but still the body of our picture will be taken from the one source.

Parts of it can be drawn even more sketchily than other have been, because of their resemblance to what was described in the last chapter. Strachey, like Acland, wants to see a community which consciously plans the allocation of its economic resources, yet without regimentation of the human beings involved. The plan is to be made in consultation with the producing organizations, and before it becomes law a conference of all workers in each producing unit will discuss the portion allotted to that unit. There is no place in Strachey's scheme for even small-scale private enterprise in the sense of one man employing others and himself pocketing the difference between the wages he pays them and the value of the goods they produce, but anyone wishing to start a legitimate business is to be free to do so either alone or on a co-operative basis. In the latter case all the workers will share the profits in a proportion determined by the amount of work each has done. In the case of organizations run by Government Bodies (either national or local), all workers are to be paid by wages, but the amount will again vary according to the quantity and quality of the work done. These differences in income will continue until the new social environment has so modified human nature as to make possible the adoption of the rule "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

A measure of decentralization and local responsibility is assured by the fact that the goods produced by any particular unit will not necessarily be appropriated by the Government and disposed of through fixed channels at fixed prices. They may be offered direct to the consumer on a genuinely competitive market. Much of the work of distribution is expected to be in the hands of consumers' Co-operative Societies.

A measure of individual liberty and responsibility is assured by the fact that workers are to be free to occupy themselves in whatever sphere they choose, provided there is an opening

for them. Unemployment will be unnecessary, so everyone who wants an income must work for it. Those who work as free-lances (writers, parsons, etc), will have to persuade someone to pay them for their services.

A new order of society will correspond to this new economic machinery. There will no longer be two classes with opposite interests—those who live by wages, and those who live by the difference between wages paid and the value of goods produced. "The less of any given total of production goes to the capitalists, the more goes to the workers, and vice versa. This flat opposition of interest is the basis upon which is built up the whole fatal dichotomy of modern society. It is impossible to exaggerate the benefit of the merging of these opposed social classes into a homogeneous community, all the members of which derive their livelihoods from the same source and whose interests are, therefore, genuinely compatible with each other." This termination of the class conflict by the victory of the working class will be reflected in the political field by the pushing to the fore of the working class institutions now existing and by the development of new organizations designed to place effective power in the workers' hands.

Marxian Socialists do not claim, as Moral Socialists do, that the temper of the classless society will be favourable to the Christian Church and the Christian religion. Indeed, they expect that it will ultimately prove fatal to both. They think that religious belief is very largely produced as an attempt to compensate for the uncertainty and suffering inflicted by the economic systems of the past. Since the economic system of the future is not going to subject men to that kind of strain, we may expect religion gradually to fade out of the picture—as the Cheshire Cat did before Alice's very eyes. It is true that other facts tending to create religious belief seem likely to survive (such as the tiresomely persistent fact of death), so the grin may be in evidence long after the body of the cat has vanished. In the end, however, the total disappearance of religious ideas is certain, and Marxists will not hesitate to

speed its parting by means of rationalist propaganda. "For religious mythology is profoundly inimical to the specifically scientific attitude to the universe which must be the mental climate of a free, socialist society. Surely citizens of such highly developed communities as Britain and America are now ready to face the need to give up the profoundly immature way of thinking and feeling which is represented by religion? Is it not time that we grew up and faced, as adults, the universe as it is, and not as the fancies of the childhood of our race have pictured it?"

All this, however, does not mean that the Church is to be persecuted. Its persecution is unnecessary. Of course, it must be deprived of State support, it must be disestablished and disendowed, it must be prevented from using its power to obstruct the economic and political reforms of Socialism. But provided these conditions are fulfilled, it can be left free to order its own worship and to pit its religious teaching against the rationalistic teaching of the followers of Marx and Freud.

One other feature of Class Socialism remains to be indicated. It is perhaps the most distinctive and most important. It is the answer to the question, By what means is this new order to be set up? The adequacy of the present political machinery, the willingness and ability to co-operate of the present managers of industry, and the docility of those whose source of income will be cut off, are all misdoubted. It is only the working class, the mass of men and women whose interests are opposite to the interests of the capitalists, who can introduce socialism. The way forward is to develop the unity and class-consciousness of the workers until they are ready to seize power, to hold it against those who must try to snatch it from them, and to set up their own genuinely democratic organs of government. This will be represented as an unjust attack upon hard-won civil rights and liberties, but (so we are told) it will be in fact the only means of obtaining genuine liberty (political and economic) for the bulk of the people.

The minority who really were free under Capitalism (because they controlled the means of production) will indeed have their liberty restricted, but when they set up as the champions of the immortal cause of human freedom they will really only be crying for their lost dividends. No doubt they will sincerely convince themselves that freedom is in peril, and in case they should convince anybody else their outcry will have to be restrained. "Thus we must face the fact that, for a period, the British and American workers will almost certainly be compelled to restrict the civil liberties of the dispossessed classes to an extent that these classes will consider outrageous. But even during that period the degree of liberty enjoyed by incomparably the greater part of the population will have been enormously extended." In any case, in view of the way Capitalism obligingly concentrates the control of the economic machine in the hands of a few great monopolies and combines, we may expect the change from it to Socialism to be a less difficult and less costly business than its own introduction was. We might quote Marx's "Capital" at this point: "The transformation of scattered private property based upon individual labour into capitalist property is, of course, a far more protracted process, a far more violent and difficult process, than the transformation of capitalist private property (already, in actual fact, based upon a social method of production) into social property. In the former case we are concerned with the expropriation of the mass of the people by a few usurpers; in the latter case we are concerned with the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people."

So there we are. That is the appearance of yet another of the roads leading forward from the spot on which we stand. Ought we as Christians to walk that way? Some would think an affirmative answer ruled out in advance by the complete incompatibility of our views on religion with those of the men and women who would be our leaders and fellow travellers on such a route. It behoves us, then, before doing anything else, to try and answer the preliminary question, Does the

Marxian Socialist's atheism make it impossible for the Christian to co-operate with him in the building of a classless society?

The first thing that must be said in answer is that we certainly cannot but regret, repudiate and combat the notion of the Christian religion held by John Strachey and his like. We respect their sincerity, needless to say, but we pray for their enlightenment. In particular we long to see them grow out of their childish way of thinking that an idea must be infantile because it came into the world several centuries before Karl Marx. It is an unscientific attitude which would be repudiated as obviously nonsensical in any field save that of religion. Then again, we would like them when explaining away religious belief as a mere compensation for economic evils to deal occasionally with the *Christian* religion. The optimistic picture of a sentimental deity which so effectually insulates the soul of the man in the street may indeed have the sort of history which the materialists ascribe to it, but it has very little to do with the divine lightning of the Word of God. Perhaps the Biblical faith, the faith of the martyrs, the faith with the stumbling-block of the cross and the miracle of the resurrection at its heart, would be a much more difficult thing to rationalize and explain away as a human invention. Perhaps, indeed, it would turn out to look less like wishful thinking than does John Strachey's own winsome hope that some of the sting of death may be taken away "when men really feel part of an ever-continuing social organism." Surely anyone in search of a narcotic would prefer this smooth doctrine to the uncomfortable Christian concept of judgment. Obviously we must try, in all humility, to help the Marxists to do better on this part of their subject.

But in the meantime, does their attitude make it impossible for us to help them set up their new economic and political order even if we approve of all but their atheism? True, they would strip the Church of all State support and discredit its teaching, leaving it nothing but the power of its own Gospel

with which to retaliate. But perhaps Churchmen—especially Free Churchmen—could even find it in their heart to like that prospect. With no power save the power of God behind it, the Church could still bear its witness and wait in humble confidence for that witness to be blessed. But though we need not fear such a situation should it be forced upon us, it is not so certain that we could with a good conscience wish for it and work for it. Probably most of us believe that the community as a whole does derive benefit from the Christian observances prescribed by the State, though they may often be so formal and insincere as to be mere mockery. Could we quite cheerfully part with Morning Prayers in Parliament or the schools and with the inclusion of Scripture on the syllabus of all State educational bodies? No doubt we could get along without these things if necessary, and it would be better to do that than to force them upon people whose observance of them would lack all spiritual reality, but is it something we can encourage? Some might dare to say, Yes. They would rather see religious instruction and Christian worship confined within the boundaries of the Church than see them carried on with muddled motives and even more muddled ideas by a mixed community of Christians and non-Christians. But many more would feel that the exclusion of religion from the public activities of the community is a change that must be strenuously resisted. Perhaps it would have to be made a condition that Christians can only lend their active support to the carrying out of the Marxist programme of social and economic reform if assurance is given that there will at all times be really adequate opportunities provided for all who so desire to seek God's counsel and to invoke God's blessing upon the public activities of the community, and that children shall have as many and as good opportunities for learning the fundamentals of the Christian faith as they will have for learning the rationalist criticisms of it. If there is any hope of securing these conditions (together with the promised freedom from religious persecution), then we can at least consider whether the

economic aspects of the Socialist new order are such as to deserve our support.

To do that we shall have to undertake the sort of investigation that was suggested in the last chapter. Much of what was said there is applicable here, so now we can confine ourselves to the points at which the Class Socialist programme differs from the Moral Socialist programme. Three such deserve special mention.

The first is that whereas Acland proposes to allow small employers to continue to pay wages and to take their own income from profits, Strachey proposes to forbid this and to insist that such independent producing units (and they need not be small ones) shall be run on co-operative lines—all the workers taking their income in the form of a just proportion of the total profits. The capital would be the common possession of them all and the policy would be the common responsibility of them all. The workers would not hand over their rights and responsibilities to an employer in return for a fixed wage. The Christian would probably find such an arrangement harmonious with the conception of true community which he had learned and found in Church. The individual Christian cannot disown the acts of the Body of which he is a member. He is part of that corporate unit and has to bear responsibility for the doings of that of which he is part. And if he works in a co-operative farm or factory, he will be glad to find that in the secular field, too, he is treated as a responsible part of the unit to which he belongs. Besides, it gives him a real chance to advocate public-spirited policies even when they are not likely to be the most profitable ones, because now he no longer bears the reproach that such policies mean giving away other people's money but not his own. Soviet practice suggests another advantage which the Christian will appreciate. Many co-operatives have much of their capital equipment provided or loaned to them by the State. So the man whose desire to serve and whose creative impulses have been quickened by the Gospel will not have to scrape together

the necessary capital before he can set to work to meet some need that he has perceived or to apply some new invention or new method which he has originated. He will have to persuade others to join him in his enterprise and to persuade some Government department to provide the materials, but the desire to create and to serve which has been awakened in him will not be frustrated by the fact that he has no wealth of his own and no wealthy friends to sponsor his idea.

But we are getting back to ground which is common to all Socialists. The second point which we are to examine as representing a difference between Marxists and Moralists is that the former do not aim at making the change over to Socialism through the machinery of our present Parliamentary Democracy. It is an admission which makes most Christians shudder. We all like a quiet life and would much prefer to see the new order brought into being smoothly by the continuous operation of the political machinery with which we are familiar. But then probably most Marxists would *prefer* that if it were possible, but they don't think it is. And behind their doubts the Christian may discern something with which he can sympathize; namely, an awareness of the revolutionary character of progress—what might almost be called, in religious terms, an awareness of the blinding effect of sin. The Christian, looking back upon the history of his Church and of the ancient Israel of which it is a continuation, can see clearly enough that when God has delivered a new truth to men or called for a new obedience from them, the new revelation has always been violently contested and has established itself only after a sharp conflict with the old ideas and the old ways. Sometimes the machinery of the Church has been so well adapted to the old that it has proved incapable of functioning under the new and has had to be abandoned. At the Reformation the Roman Church machine had to be scrapped and replaced, because it could not or would not be made the instrument of evangelical religion. At the coming of the Saviour the nation of Israel had to be abandoned and replaced by the

Christian Church, because Israel could not or would not become the people of the crucified Messiah. Any Church Order which does not contain within itself adequate provision for its own reformation by the Word of God may make it impossible to progress peacefully and constitutionally from a less adequate to a more adequate form of churchmanship. So much the Christian can see within his own community, so he will not find it too surprising or shocking if in the secular community it should turn out that our political machinery is also too well adapted to the old order of things to be itself the means of introducing a very different order. He will, however, be very wary of casting out the familiar, if the last state of that society is going to be worse than the first. He will not forget that the violence of a revolution may itself make the original objectives of the revolutionaries impossible of attainment.

Thus we come to our third point. The Socialism of this chapter differs from that of the last in that it regards its first and greatest duty (one which must be carried out before Socialism can be introduced) to be the uniting of the working class and the awakening of its class-consciousness. Most Christians are favourably disposed towards unity in all spheres, but how about all this class-consciousness? Is that something of which we can approve?

Before answering we must listen to the Marxists themselves who assure us that the awakening of class-consciousness does not mean the stirring up of bitterness, hatred and resentment. It simply means making the workers aware of the actual causes of their distress and of the only remedy for it. It is to be compared with the action of a doctor who must tell his patient what is wrong, even though all nice-minded people would much prefer that such things should never be spoken of.

There is no reason why the Christian should not accept this explanation, but still he will probably find that as applied in practice the awakening of class-consciousness amounts to an attempt to build up the unity of the working class on the single

basis of opposition to the capitalist class. Now, such a negative bond is certainly not what maintains the unity of the Church. There members are bound together not just by the existence of a common enemy, but by mutual love—love which springs from a common faith, a common hope and a common allegiance. The Christian worker will not be happy in seeking a unity of a very different sort among his workmates. He will know it to be a false, superficial unity, and he will be very much afraid of its breaking up when the opposition which has created it has been overcome by it. To call for unity among all workers on the simple ground that all workers have a conflict of interest with the supporters of capitalism is to teach a dangerous lesson. Suppose that when the supporters of capitalism have been ousted, conflicts of interest should appear among the workers themselves—between agricultural and industrial workers, for instance? Will not the parties whose interests conflict have been taught to unite in opposite camps, each devoted to furthering its own sectional cause? And what becomes of community then? Soviet Russia has not yet been exposed to this test, because her workers have always had the pressure of outside opposition to hold them together. But the Christian cannot be content with so defective a bond of unity. If he decides to take the road to Socialism as marked out by the Marxists, then he will have to try and call the workers to some more catholic form of unity, a unity which is capable of embracing interests which are recognized to be diverse (as they are embraced within the fellowship of the Church), rather than one which (because of its accent on self-interest) is always liable to break up into competing sections.

VII—WHAT DOES "A" DO NEXT?

It would greatly add to the popularity and usefulness of this little book if in this its last chapter it were plainly stated what party Christians should support and how they ought to influence its policies. A few simple texts to show that the counsel given was thoroughly Christian would be all that was necessary to dispel all anxiety about social problems. Unfortunately, however, things have not been made so easy for us. It would seem to be God's intention that we should hear his call and understand his purpose for society only as we labour in the midst of the churning and complicated machinery of that society. Of course, the call will not be heard by those who have not studied the Bible and wrestled over it in earnest and solitary prayer, but neither will it be heard by the man who knows nothing *but* his Bible and has studied that in a mood (if not in a place) of cloistered seclusion from the world. Consequently, all that a final chapter can do is to call Christians to undertake the strenuous and urgent task which is set before us by the present crisis in the life of our community, and to recapitulate some of the things which will have to be done if the Church is really going to make its contribution to the right ordering of affairs in the post-war world. There are three necessities which have now to be underlined. First, the churches themselves must become real communities in whose midst the redeeming work of Christ has had effect—though still marred, no doubt, by our persistent sin. Secondly, we must bring this powerful and highly individual corporate life into ever closer touch with the life of society as a whole, so that the harmonies may be appreciated and the discords sharply felt. Thirdly, as our Christian judgments are formulated we must embody them in effective political action. Those three points will now be taken in order.

If we are to learn God's will for men in the Bible and to find it to any extent taking contemporary and concrete form in the churches, then those churches must be places where the Gospel is held forth in word and sacrament, where it is gladly received, and where the members (either explicitly or implicitly) covenant together as our Congregational Fathers did "to endeavour to walk together in all God's ways and ordinances according as He has already revealed them and shall further make them known to us." They must be churches where men and women really come together and act together in spite of all their individual peculiarities and awkward corners. One of our urgent tasks is to try and make these united churches truly Catholic Churches—that is to say, churches in which all sorts and conditions of men are gathered together in one Body, not sectional churches the bulk of whose members are drawn from one class, speak one kind of English and dress in one kind of clothes. We have enough denominations content to 'cater for a certain type'—as though they were hotels. What we want are churches whose membership embraces all the types and classes of the community, and which are nevertheless able to live and plan and act as single corporate units. It is in such churches that we shall learn the true meaning of community, and it is idle to hope that the Gospel of Christ will reach with power to the people outside the church until we have allowed it to have that effect upon us within it. Rev. Alexander Miller has put that point forcibly: "It is vain to imagine that the closed ear of our generation can be opened by any evangelistic technique, by added fervour or by an intensification of passion in preaching. Every preacher in the land can explode with fervour, but the church will never have a hearing again, either from the poor or the rebellious, nor can it expect God to honour its witness, until as a community it orders its life in conformity to the Gospel." And that means not only that we must subject ourselves to God's rule in planning the worship and the witness of the Church, but also in administering its finances, supporting its

ministers and even in the laying out of our own incomes. There are here vast areas in the life of the Church as a community which are almost untouched by any serious attempt at obedience to the rule of Christ. Tremendous, embarrassing and sacrificial tasks confront us.

The second necessity mentioned above is also no small order. To bring the life of the Church into closer contact with the life of the community would mean that we no longer allowed membership of the Church to cut people off from participation in the corporate activities of the secular community. Far too often church work and work on the local Council have been regarded as alternatives of which the first was distinctly the more Christian. If a man got mixed up in the activities of the town, he neglected the activities of the church. Consequently he was looked upon as rather an unsatisfactory churchman, if not positively a backslider. If that tendency still exists, it must be reversed. The work of the Council, the Youth Movements, the Trades Unions and so on must be regarded as perfectly proper spheres for the rendering of Christian service, and every church must be ready to follow with prayer, counsel and unfailing sympathy all its members who go out into those fields. If it is to do that, then the problems of society and the problems of the Christian in society will have to have a large place on the agenda of our church meetings. Those should be the occasions when Christian people return from their ventures into the world to renew their strength, to prepare for and to plan the continuation of the work which, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, they have undertaken. "Come ye yourselves apart a while," says Christ. And then go back.

When we do thus actively and deliberately link the life of the Church with the life of society, instead of just discussing social problems in the atmosphere of an academic debating society, we shall probably be shocked by our appalling incompetence as social reformers. It will require a considerable effort even to find out and to understand the changes which

act vigorously they may at least give more scope for the advance of that kingdom than would have been provided if we had held our peace. Babylon of old was not the theocratic society for which the prophets longed. In fact it was a rank pagan society and the Israelites carried captive there were acutely conscious that it was an unhealthy environment for their faith. Still, though its social machinery worked badly and unjustly, it did work. If it could not be replaced by something nearer to the ideal, then it must itself be made as near ideal as it could be. Through the prophet Jeremiah the Lord delivered his command to his people. It is the order delivered to all those of the city of Zion who tabernacle for a time among the cities of this world. "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

THE END

